

Aesthetic Value: A Challenge for Conservation

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Abstract

This thesis corrects the absence of research concerning how conservationists in leadership roles and their organisations' stakeholders value aesthetically the United Kingdom's National Parks and how this may influence conservation. This was achieved by providing insight into how divergent aesthetic valuation of the Lake District National Park, may influence conservation of natural capital integral to its cultural landscape.

A phenomenological approach enabled deep insight into the core beliefs, held, relational, eudaemonic, and aesthetic values of participants. Understanding was also advanced through a novel qualitative method combining photo elicitation and diamond nine ranking, triangulated by SWOT analysis.

Participants perceived the Lake District as a rural idyll, a complex mixture of myth and reality, reflecting their subjective perceptions. But these findings have implications for the real geographical space and the conservation of natural capital. This was illustrated by how the aesthetic value assigned by participants to natural capital, contributed to how they directly or indirectly influenced its physical management. Highly relevant because the conservationist participants in this research hold influential leadership roles in organisations which together own or lease over one third of the National Park. Participants from the anthropocentric National Trust valued aesthetically natural capital in the context of the Lake District cultural landscape, largely reflected in a landscape conservation approach. In contrast, conservationists from other organisations, usually in more eco-centric roles, valued aesthetically natural capital of wild character, mirrored in a nature conservation approach. Stakeholders showed similar aesthetic values and preferences for conservation of natural capital to the National Trust participants. But few perceived the damage that conservationists said natural capital was suffering through factors including climate change, overgrazing and a National Park Authority suffering yearly budget cuts.

A series of recommendations applies the findings to the conservation of natural capital in the Lake District.

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Photographs

The research participants provided all the photographs used in the combined photo elicitation and diamond nine ranking method. The other photographs were created by Neil Windett, with the exception of a small number of cropped images included within the following photomontages:

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Declaration

I confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis. It has not been submitted for the award of an higher degree at another institution.

Neil Windett

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Chapter One

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

No research has been identified concerning what conservationists in leadership roles in the United Kingdom's (UK) National Parks and their organisations' stakeholders value aesthetically in the cultural landscapes of these National Parks and whether this influences the conservation of natural capital. In seeking insight into this issue, this thesis takes a phenomenological approach, which holds the philosophical position that the world people perceive is both socially constructed and subjective (Moran, 2000; Lavery, 2003; Cerbone, 2006; Adams, C. and van Manen, 2008; Overgaard and Zahavi, 2009). Such insight facilitated by phenomenology is appropriate for how people value aesthetically natural capital, for the socially constructed and subjective perceptions of individuals may have real-world implications for the conservation of natural capital and the services it provides to society (Tilley, 1994; Oberkircher *et al.*, 2011; Bieling *et al.*, 2014; Johannesdóttir, 2016; Margaryan *et al.*, 2018).

Consequently, the research question of this thesis seeks to explore whether there are:

contrasts in aesthetic valuation of the Lake District National Park, between the leadership of conservation organisations and their stakeholders, if so, does such divergent valuation influence conservation of the National Park's natural capital?

1.2 Lake District National Park

The Lake District in Northwest England at 2,362 km² (Fig. 1.1) is the second largest National Park in the UK, only exceeded by the Cairngorms at 4,528 km² (National Parks, 2023). It has a distinctive geomorphology, contributing to a mountainous glaciated cultural landscape (Millward and Robinson, 1970, pp.43-71; Pearsall and Pennington, 1973, pp.43-58; King, C., 1976, pp.84-86), the 450-million-year-old igneous core of which, is the focus for lakes set within a classic example of radial superimposed drainage (Millward and Robinson, 1970, p.59). The Lake District boasts the highest rainfall, the highest mountain, and the largest natural lake in England (Lake District National Park, 2023). Like most National Parks in the UK, the distinctive

geomorphology also contributes to it as being perceived as a largely treeless cultural landscape of wild and mountainous character. In reality woodland and plantation forests cover 13% of the area, but much of this is located in the south east of the National Park. Similarly, the Lake District includes 42 kilometres (km) of coastline and estuaries of international importance for conservation but scarcely touched on in most strategic documents and visitor literature (Lake District National Park, 2023).

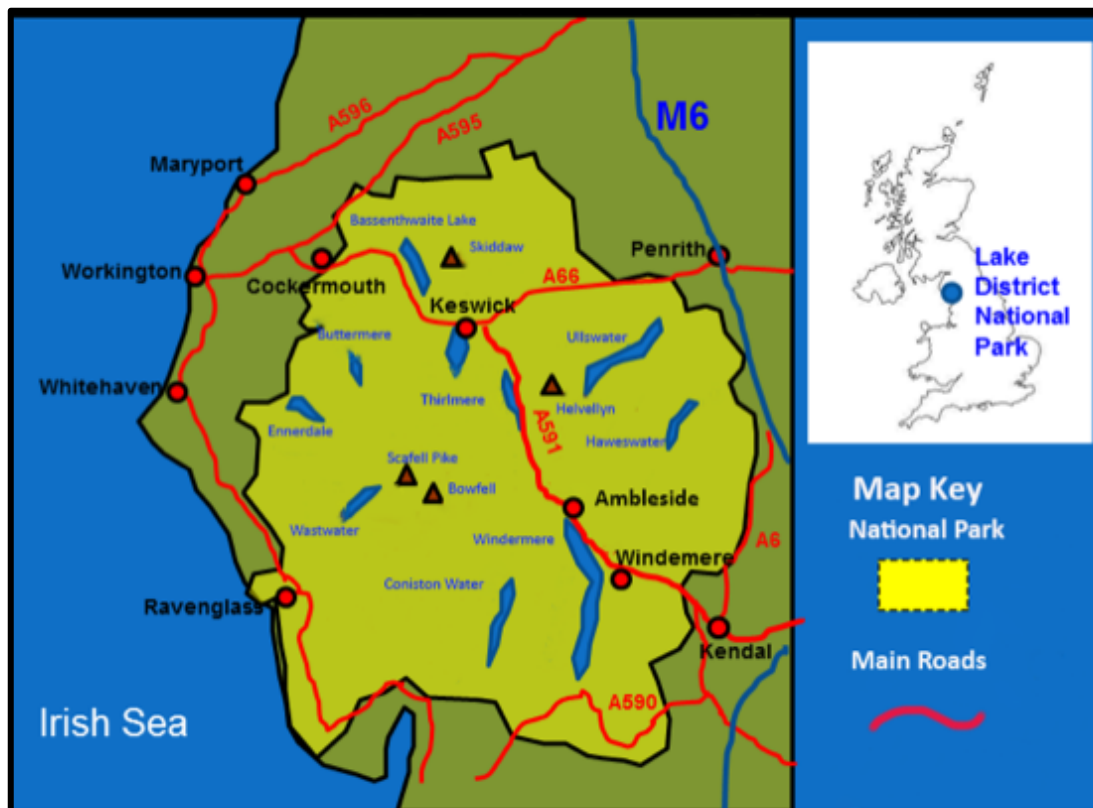


Figure 1.1 Location map of the Lake District National Park (Source: Cool Geography)

1.2.1 Hill Farming

The Lake District is widely perceived as a rural idyll of what many residents and visitors commonly term traditional hill farming, rather than “agro-pastoral agriculture”, as used in the nomination document for World Heritage Site status (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2016, p.48). It is a cultural landscape, created and sustained by human intervention and contributing to the complexity of how the Lake District is valued aesthetically. The natural capital integral to this cultural landscape delivers aesthetic, biodiversity, and other benefits for society, as exemplified by the unenclosed commons (Burton, R. *et al.*, 2008; Rodgers *et al.*, 2011; Olwig, 2016;

Winchester, 2018; French, 2022). Some hill farmers have rights to graze flocks of sheep and other livestock on these commons, influencing how natural capital delivers benefits for society termed ecosystem services. These flocks of sheep are hefted to their birthplace, a strong homing instinct associated with mountain breeds, particularly well developed in the Herdwick which is native to the Lake District.

Yet despite the importance ascribed to hefted flocks of sheep, there is tension between hill farmers and conservationists over the number of sheep required to sustain hefting (Walling, 2014, p.xv; McCormick, 2018). This animosity can partly be traced back to the work of farmers in increasing food production during the Second World War, followed by their subsequent commitment to the Labour Government's post-war drive for even greater output of food, valorising their role in feeding the nation (Edwards, M., 2018, p.10; Bateman, A., 2022). One consequence of this response to Government policy was a rise in sheep numbers in upland areas such as the Lake District, while sheep made way in many lowland areas for arable or more intensively farmed livestock. Sheep numbers reached their peak in the late twentieth century, but Government policy has changed since 'peak sheep', motivating farmers to reduce sheep numbers in response to financial incentives. However, many conservationists claim that sheep numbers remain too high and that overgrazing continues to damage natural capital. Persuading hill farmers to diversify into alternative income streams is generally a fruitless task, sheep being integral to their lives, socialisation influencing the beliefs that underpin their aesthetic values (Price, L. and Evans, 2009; James, S., 2016b; Wilson, J. and Tonner, 2020). Consequently, evidence indicates that most hill farmers value aesthetically natural environments with visually clear anthropogenic influences (Burton, R., 2012; Stotten, 2016).

1.2.2 The Picturesque and Romantic Movements

Seventeenth century visitors to the Lake District gazed upon this "agro-pastoral agriculture" and the legacy of these and later visitors helps maintain the perception of the National Park as largely treeless, and of wild and mountainous character. The well-established claim is that prior to the mid-eighteenth century, western civilisation did

not value aesthetically such natural environments (Hope-Nicolson, 1959, p.23). However, scant attention is paid to what resident farmers, miners and others may have valued aesthetically, it being accepted that only after the Damascene conversion of a cohort of mainly upper middle-class men, were a small number of wealthy people inspired to visit and gaze upon this geographically isolated and rainy outlier of rainy England (Taylor, John, 1994, p.17; Schama, 1995, pp.411-412; Macfarlane, R., 2003, pp.145-146; Parsons, 2008; Carlson, 2009, p.3). Embryonic Lake District tourism was thus instigated by the Picturesque Movement of the eighteenth century and the Romantic Movement of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Little consideration is generally given to evidence that people were not necessarily antagonistic about natural environments of wild and mountainous character before the Picturesque and Romantic Movements (Ray, 1692, p.202; Pliny the Younger, 1909; John of Ephesus, 1924, pp.229-247; Hollis, 2020; Whalin, 2021).

1.2.3 Fighting for Nature

Some of the most influential conflicts concerning the aesthetic value of the natural environment were played out in the Lake District (Ritvo, 2003; Ritvo, 2007; Thompson, I., 2010, pp.229-241; Haywood, 2012, p.25). It is notable how unsuccessful conservationists were in some of these conflicts, failing to prevent the development of the mere and surrounding wetlands at Thirlmere as a drinking water reservoir for Manchester, unable to rebuff claims that it held no particular beauty (Winter, J., 1999, p.176). The Thirlmere debacle is one example of how conservationists have in the past often failed to appreciate the interests of other stakeholders.

Those responsible for progressing the National Park concept that eventually underpinned the designation of the first 10 in England and Wales looked towards the American ones, both aesthetically and in terms of management. Consequently, a Thoreau inspired North American wilderness aesthetic, was a significant influence on the designation of the Lake District as a National Park (Sheail, 1976, pp.71-72; Green, 1981, pp.41-46). However, it is still possible to trace the influence of “agro-pastoral agriculture”, as this North American wilderness aesthetic owes much to the influence

of the Romantic Movement. William Wordsworth (1770-1850 CE) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834 CE) were popular in North America, and they had considerable influence on the aesthetic values of American writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882 CE) and Henry David Thoreau (1817- 1862 CE)(Emerson, R., 1836; Thoreau, 1854; Howard, 1933; Nash, 1967, pp.47-54; Bunce, M., 1994, pp.26-28; Cronon, 1996; Pace, 2003; Hall, M., 2013).

Some of the difficulties surrounding conservation of natural capital in the Lake District can be traced to glib use of the word nature as an invented category, where things can be filed away (Rolston, 1997, p.42). This, together with the legacy of the Romantic Movement and the scientific tradition, is said to have contributed to the split between eco-centric nature conservation and anthropocentric landscape conservation (Reynolds, 2016a, pp.95-121). It is claimed that this contributed to the formation of the Countryside Commission in 1968 (UK Government, 1968), with a countryside access and landscape conservation approach, contrasting with the then Nature Conservancy. The Countryside Commission and subsequent Countryside Agency provided strategically targeted grant aid for National Park authorities and organisations such as the National Trust, possibly influencing the aesthetic values of some employees.

Regarding contemporary visitors, their aesthetic values are more likely a complex manifestation of the rural idyll, influenced by selective appropriation of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements. For example, the works of Beatrix Potter (1866-1943 CE) and Arthur Ransome (1884-1967 CE) owe much to the Romantic Movement and these writers are likely to have had more direct influence on the aesthetic values of many visitors than the romantic poets. Numerous residents and visitors value aesthetically the cultural landscape created by hill farming and delight in the sight of Herdwick sheep, perceiving them as keeping the National Park tidy by maintaining a close-cropped grass sward, valued more aesthetically than biodiverse habitats (Burton, R., 2012; Stotten, 2016; Conrad, 2017, p.46; Szász, 2017, p.33). The combination of these influences contributes to the Lake District sometimes being

described as a tourism landscape, notably by those with a stake in its visitor economy (Huggins and Gregson, 2013; Daniels, 2016). Often celebrated as the focus of high minded leisure, it has the greatest number of visitors and highest per capita visitor spend of UK National Parks (Franklin, 2006; National Parks, 2023).

1.2.4 Designation of the Lake District National Park

The Lake District was designated a National Park in May 1951 under the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, revised under section 61 of the 1995 Environment Act (UK Government, 1949; UK Government, 1995). It was among the first 10 National Parks to be designated in the UK and all of which were located in either England or Wales. With the exception of the Pembrokeshire coast, all of these approximated to wild and mountainous character (Lacina and Halas, 2015; Cooper *et al.*, 2016). The word character is particularly relevant, because National Parks in the UK, including the Lake District, are anything but the pristine wilderness that many people understand National Parks to be. For example, the 2021 census revealed that the Lake District has 39,000 residents, second only to the more recently designated South Downs National Park in the densely settled south east of England (Office for National Statistics, 2024). Consequently, the Lake District does not meet the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) definition of a strictly protected area, but falls under category five of the classification system (Colley, 2021). This category is where the interaction of people with the natural environment over time has produced a district of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and landscape value (Dudley, 2008). This category reflects the purposes of UK National Parks, defined as:

“(a) Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the areas specified; and
(b) Promoting opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public.” (UK Government, 1995)

National Parks, such as the Lake District, also have a duty to seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of local communities in pursuit of their purposes.

However, in December 2023 the Protected Areas Working Group of the IUCN National Committee UK noted that although “*Conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage*” is the first purpose, this is only being partly achieved in UK National Parks (Brotherton, 1982; IUCN National Committee UK Protected Areas Working Group, 2023, p.59; Campaign for National Parks, 2024).

Of more fundamental significance is the Sandford Principle, as conceived by the Rev Rt Hon Lord Sandford (1920-2009 CE), which was enshrined in law in section 62 of the Environment Act 1995. According to this principle, where there is a conflict between the statutory purposes of National Parks, any relevant authority “*shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area comprised in the National Park*” (UK Government, 1995). The Government’s Landscapes Review recommended retaining and enhancing the Sandford Principle, the first purpose to read (Glover, 2019, p.135) “*Recover, conserve and enhance natural beauty, biodiversity and natural capital, and cultural heritage*”. While acknowledging the subjectivity surrounding the definition of natural beauty, it is uncertain whether this fundamental principle is always adhered to in the Lake District. Despite the above, the NFU claim that social and economic functions are neglected and demand that they be given equal weight (Robinson, C., 2018; Anstee, 2019).

1.2.5 Lake District National Park Authority

The Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) represents the public interest and has 20 members composed of 10 from local authorities and 10 appointed by the Secretary of State, representing national interests and Parish Councils from within the National Park.

1.2.5.1 Lake District National Park Partnership

The Lake District National Park Partnership (LDNPP) was formed more recently in 2006 and its membership consists of 22 organisations active in the National Park. The Partnership was responsible to the LDNPA for preparing the nomination of the Lake District for inscription on the World Heritage list. However, there is also a statutory

requirement for National Parks in the UK to produce a management plan, which in the Lake District needs to reflect the additional complexity of its position as both a National Park and a World Heritage Site. The statutory duty of producing the management plan is vested in the LDNPA, but the task of writing it was delegated to the Partnership. As a Partnership of 22 organisations, it could be interpreted as unwieldy, the membership composition failing to fully reflect the statutory purposes of *“Conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage”*.

1.2.5.2 National Park Management Plan

The management plan states confidence in *“ability to manage the Lake District successfully, as both a World Heritage Site and National Park”* (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2021b, p.15). However, while it makes reference to fundamental purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park, it makes no reference to the statutory Sandford Principle. Contradicting the claims of the NFU (p.7), the focus of the management plan is on seeking to foster social and economic wellbeing.

1.2.6 World Heritage Site

The Partnership places great emphasis on how the Lake District is a cultural landscape of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) to everyone, being designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as a World Heritage Site on 9 July 2017 (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2016; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2017). This OUV is said to be composed of three strands: identity, inspiration, and conservation. The influence of agropastoral agriculture on this cultural landscape is woven into each of these strands and underpinned the nomination of the Lake District for inscription on the World Heritage list:

“For the last 1,000 years a distinctive form of agro-pastoral agriculture has shaped the present day English Lake District. It continues to do so, creating and sustaining a landscape of great and harmonious beauty”. (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2016, p.48)

1.2.6.1 Identity

The nomination document for World Heritage Site status claims how agropastoral agriculture has shaped a coherent sense of identity and pride for the Lake District (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2016, p.487).

1.2.6.2 Inspiration

The nomination document details the inspirational role of the Lake District through a combination of nature and culture, once again highlighting agropastoral agriculture (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2016, p.505). It generally accepts the claim that people were antagonistic towards such natural environments before the mid-eighteenth century and does not address the selective appropriation of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements.

1.2.6.3 Conservation

The nomination document also details how identity, inspiration, and external threats to the Lake District, contributed to global influence in the form of the modern conservation movement (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2016, p.464).

1.3 A Lake District in Crisis?

Despite the assertion of “*harmonious beauty*”, little harmony is associated with the LDNPP (Ferguson, 2023), but this should be understood in the context of the LDNPA and the Partnership having to balance the three strands of OUV briefly outlined above with the management of the National Park, including incorporation in the management plan. Consequently, the Partnership has the duty of conserving a dynamic cultural landscape, including the natural capital integral to it, while not damaging the OUV. Difficult tasks not helped by swingeing budgetary cuts since 2010.

The Lake District is a unique cultural landscape of palimpsestic richness, still bearing traces of the ruins of its earlier form. But evidence indicates that aesthetic value commonly assigned to this cultural landscape may be having a negative impact on the conservation of natural capital. For example, in 2017 when the Lake District was

designated a World Heritage Site, only 22% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) were in favourable condition, compared with an average of 38% outside the National Park (Howie and Hall, 2018, p.19; Anonymous, 2023). Natural England and the LDNPA's own statistics highlight the poor condition of much of the National Park's natural capital and in particular biodiversity (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2018, pp.17-18; Glover, 2019, p.52). A World Heritage Site is an important international designation, as illustrated by the Spanish author Andrés Rubio highlighting the ridicule associated with the deletion by UNESCO in 2021 of *Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City* from the World Heritage List, due to the loss of OUV (Rubio, 2022, p.160). The former inept leadership of Liverpool City Council has placed the UK among an elite of three, the others being the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in Oman and the Dresden Elbe Valley in Germany. Despite ill-considered claims to the contrary, it is essential to retain World Heritage Site status, but some aspects of contemporary management may not be compatible with the purposes of UK National Parks, the Sandford Principle or even World Heritage Site status. Despite peatlands within the open commons being valuable natural capital that stores carbon, damage is being suffered through overgrazing, fire and atmospheric pollution. Globally scarce remnants of temperate rainforest are also being damaged by disease and excessive grazing by wild deer and domestic sheep. There are people from diverse backgrounds, who value aesthetically such degraded natural capital, failing to perceive the damage it is suffering. In the desire to maintain the authenticity of OUV, despite the global climate change emergency and biodiversity crisis, resources for storing carbon and supporting wildlife are being compromised.

This above overview raises the question of whether the aesthetic values of those with a stake in the Lake District, some of whom are key decision makers, influence the conservation of natural capital. Consequently, if such aesthetic values do influence conservation of natural capital, are all contemporary land management practices appropriate? If the Sandford Principle was systematically applied to the National Park management plan, might it reveal a drift in strategic direction from National Parks as envisioned in the Acts of 1949 and 1995? In terms of the Lake District and the wider

network of UK National Parks, there is no research evidence relating to whether the aesthetic values of conservationists and other stakeholders influence the conservation of natural capital. A research problem has been identified, so in order to develop coherent, institutionally consistent visions for conservation of the Lake District, research should be undertaken, so that the leadership of conservation organisations are aware of how they and other stakeholders in the National Park assign aesthetic value and whether this influences the conservation of natural capital. While the Lake District is a unique cultural landscape, this research will be relevant to other UK National Parks.

1.4 Personal Statement

My professional background is in further education, the voluntary sector and local government. For over 26 years I was responsible for planning, development and management of countryside recreation and conservation in Kirklees, West Yorkshire, the seventh largest metropolitan district in the UK.

There are several factors behind choosing the Lake District as the focus for my thesis, rather than West Yorkshire or perhaps the Peak District, as my involvement with the Lake District goes back decades. In the early 1980s I worked on numerous upland footpath restoration and conservation projects, the latter including a survey of woodlands in the southern Lake District, then recently purchased by the LDNPA. The diverse habitats and heritage associated with the southern Lake District developed my interest in this area, which to me is far more beautiful than the mountainous and often treeless core. Over the decades I spent many weekends and holidays in the National Park and relocated to the southern Lake District in 2016.

I expected conflict over issues of importance to conservation in the Lake District, incidents such as the destruction of the Thing-mound in Little Langdale being notorious (Shoard, 1980, pp.176-177). For although people may deduce that conservation is about addressing practical problems surrounding the management of natural capital and delivery of ecosystem services, in reality such problems are often based on less

easily resolved conflicts of deep seated beliefs and the values that stem from these beliefs. As a professional conservationist, a time consuming task had been seeking to resolve conflicts over the conservation of natural capital between landowners, local residents, community groups and voluntary organisations. However, I was surprised by what appeared to be a high level of conflict between diverse stakeholders in the Lake District. This was not necessarily confined to conservation and farming interests, but also between organisations with an active interest in conservation and within such organisations. I increasingly felt that variations in aesthetic value assigned to natural capital might be a contributing factor.

On 21 January 2025 I attended the Northern Nature, Culture and Place Forum in Leeds, which was well attended by Cumbrian delegates. Discussing with some of these delegates the polarised Lake District rewilding and cultural landscapes debate further strengthened my concerns and to quote one Cumbrian delegate's assessment "...they hate each other". Conflict can be beneficial, but research has shown that lack of trust, transparency and communication often contribute to such clearly visible conflict in conservation (Lynch *et al.*, 2025).

The terms natural capital and ecosystem services are used throughout this thesis, for these concepts are entrenched in national policy. *The UK Government 25 Year Environment Plan* is underpinned by an approach based on natural capital and ecosystem services, which was subsequently integrated in the *Landscapes Review* (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2018, p.20; Glover, 2019, p.40; Bateman, I., 28 May 2024). But the difficulty of overreliance on measures of monetary value is illustrated by how the more intangible ecosystem services delivered by natural capital, such as aesthetic benefits and spirituality, are what many people value.

Consequently, after consideration of quantitative methods such as Willingness to Pay, I decided to use qualitative non-monetary methods. These can help gain insight into more intangible values, such as how people value aesthetically natural capital in the context of the Lake District.

1.5 Research Question, Aims and Objectives

1.5.1 Research Question

Are there contrasts in aesthetic valuation of the Lake District National Park, between the leadership of conservation organisations and their stakeholders, if so, does such divergent valuation influence conservation of the National Park's natural capital?

1.5.2 Aims and Objectives

Aim

Are there contrasts in aesthetic valuation of the Lake District National Park, between the leadership of conservation organisations and their stakeholders?

Objectives

1. Identify the diverse aesthetic valuation issues, relevant to conservation of the National Park's natural capital.
2. Determine the aesthetic values of the leadership and stakeholders of organisations involved in the conservation of the National Park's natural capital.
3. Determine whether the aesthetic values, of organisation leaders and stakeholders, influences their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital.

Aim

Does the presence or absence of contrasts in aesthetic valuation between the leadership of conservation organisations and their stakeholders influence conservation of the National Park's natural capital?

Objectives

1. Identify whether the aesthetic values of both the leadership and stakeholders of organisations involved in the conservation of the National Park's natural capital, influence the management of that natural capital.
2. Identify any shared values where organisations involved in the conservation of the National Park's natural capital, can work in partnership with stakeholders on its protection, conservation, and enhancement.

1.6 The Research Context

As previously noted (p.9), the choice of the Lake District as the focus for this thesis is justified by the significant role that it played in the rise of the modern conservation movement, the legacies of these nineteenth century conflicts still informing debate over conservation in the National Park (Ritvo, 2003; Ritvo, 2007; Thompson, I., 2010, pp.229-241; Haywood, 2012, p.25; Monbiot, 2013a, p.157). Another legacy of these conflicts (Table 1.1), providing even further justification for this focus on the Lake District, is that large conservation organisations and others with interests in conservation own or lease over one third of the National Park (The Lake District World Heritage Project Partnership, 2013, p.20; Lake District National Park Partnership, 2016, p.32):

Table 1.1 Major landowners with interests in conservation

Organisation	Land Ownership
National Trust	21%
United Utilities	8%
Forestry Commission	4%
Lake District National Park Authority	4%
Total	37%

Diverse sites, covering a much smaller hectareage, are also owned or leased by conservation organisations including the Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust, RSPB, and Friends of the Lake District.

Regardless of the contribution of “agro-pastoral agriculture” to OUV, some conservationists blame it for the ills facing the Lake District, whether this is overgrazing, expansion of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, soil erosion, reduced biodiversity or flash flooding. This creates a degree of animosity with hill farmers, as most will explain that they were responding to Government policies and have no wish to damage the environment. Another factor contributing to this animosity is that although organisations such as the National Trust may own over one third of the National Park, they have very little control over the numbers of livestock grazing the

open commons in their ownership. Together with the economic and social issues facing hill farming as a way of life, such contentious matters can make for difficult conversations (Price and Evans, 2009; Harvey *et al.*, 2013, p.13; Mansfield, 2018). Consequently, it is beneficial for conservationists to have greater understanding of hill farming but particularly how hill farmers value aesthetically natural capital and the implications for conservation.

Visitors to the Lake District are a richly segmented market and include, residential visitors, day visitors, hill walking parties, and outdoor activity groups. Segmentation is evident in how outdoor activity leaders engage with the Lake District through complementary roles which may include informal leisure, participation in mountain rescue teams and practical conservation. These stakeholders impact physically on natural capital as evidenced by the need for *Fix the Fells*, but such impacts are generally localised. Other impacts may be more nuanced, by for example assigning aesthetic value to elements of the cultural landscape associated with the Picturesque and Romantic Movements. Consequently, conservationists should have a greater understanding of the how visitors and outdoor activity leaders value aesthetically natural capital and implications for conservation.

It has been argued that aesthetic value is assigned subjectively to this cultural landscape of wild and mountainous character. This is highly relevant to conservation, for the deeply held personal beliefs from which aesthetic values stem, may contribute to people in leadership roles having different aesthetic values to other stakeholders in the management of the Lake District's cultural landscape and natural capital (Mabey, 1980, p.27; Rose, 2004; Crompton *et al.*, 2010, p.9). A greater understanding of their own aesthetic values by conservationists in leadership and those of other stakeholders, should facilitate more effective conflict resolution and cooperation around the conservation of natural capital. Regardless of OUV, conservationists should consider the compatibility of the aesthetic values of past elites in the face of a twenty first century climate change emergency and biodiversity crisis .

1.7 Paradigm of the Study

Distanced and reductive methodologies create a risk of failing to understand how aesthetic value is assigned to natural capital. For example, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) have an important role in research regarding natural capital and diverse ecosystem services (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005; Reynolds, 2016, p.114). However, the use of GIS has also been criticised as contributing to Olympian visions, which may further distance both researchers and conservation organisations from the objects they are seeking to conserve (Tilley, 2012, p.16; Cooper *et al.*, 2016).

Other studies have applied qualitative philosophical approaches, methodologies, and methods to how participants from different backgrounds value aesthetically the natural environment (Suckall *et al.*, 2009; Sherren and Verstraten, 2013; Stotten, 2016; Winkler and Nicholas, 2016; Hague, A. *et al.*, 2022). These approaches offer insights into the intangibility of how natural capital is valued aesthetically and support for management decisions (Suckall *et al.*, 2009; Sherren and Verstraten, 2013; Edwards, D., Collins and Goto, 2016; Stotten, 2016; Waylen, van de Noort and Blackstock, 2016; Winkler and Nicholas, 2016). However, there is a distinct absence of knowledge concerning how conservationists and their diverse stakeholders value aesthetically the natural capital of the Lake District's cultural landscape or how divergent valuation might influence conservation of the National Park's natural capital. This thesis addresses this gap in the research literature¹.

Qualitative philosophical approaches, methodologies and methods can provide the high level of engagement required to gain insight into the complex, nuanced and subjective thoughts of people in leadership roles relating to conservation, and their diverse stakeholders (Berleant, 1992; Berleant, 1993; Berleant, 2013; Berleant, 2016). Thus, in meeting the aims and objectives of the research question and considering the

¹ 1. For compatibility with the terminology surrounding natural capital and ecosystems services, the terms aesthetic value or value aesthetically are used, rather than the term aesthetic beauty or simply the word beauty.

subjectivity of perception, it was decided that a phenomenological approach enabled deepest insight into how natural capital is valued aesthetically, while also providing support for conservation decisions. Phenomenology is effective in the investigation of smaller samples of participants, such as those in leadership roles relating to conservation, and is compatible with more than one qualitative method, facilitating triangulation of the data. The philosophical position of phenomenology is discussed in more detail in chapter three, but in essence the individual is important in phenomenology, and it takes the outlook that the world people perceive is both socially constructed and subjective (Tilley, 1994; Johannesdóttir, 2016).

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

A structure diagram has been provided here to facilitate understanding of the layout of the thesis (Fig. 1.2). This diagram will be used at the start of each subsequent chapter, the relevant headings highlighted, as an *aide-mémoire* to its overall structure.

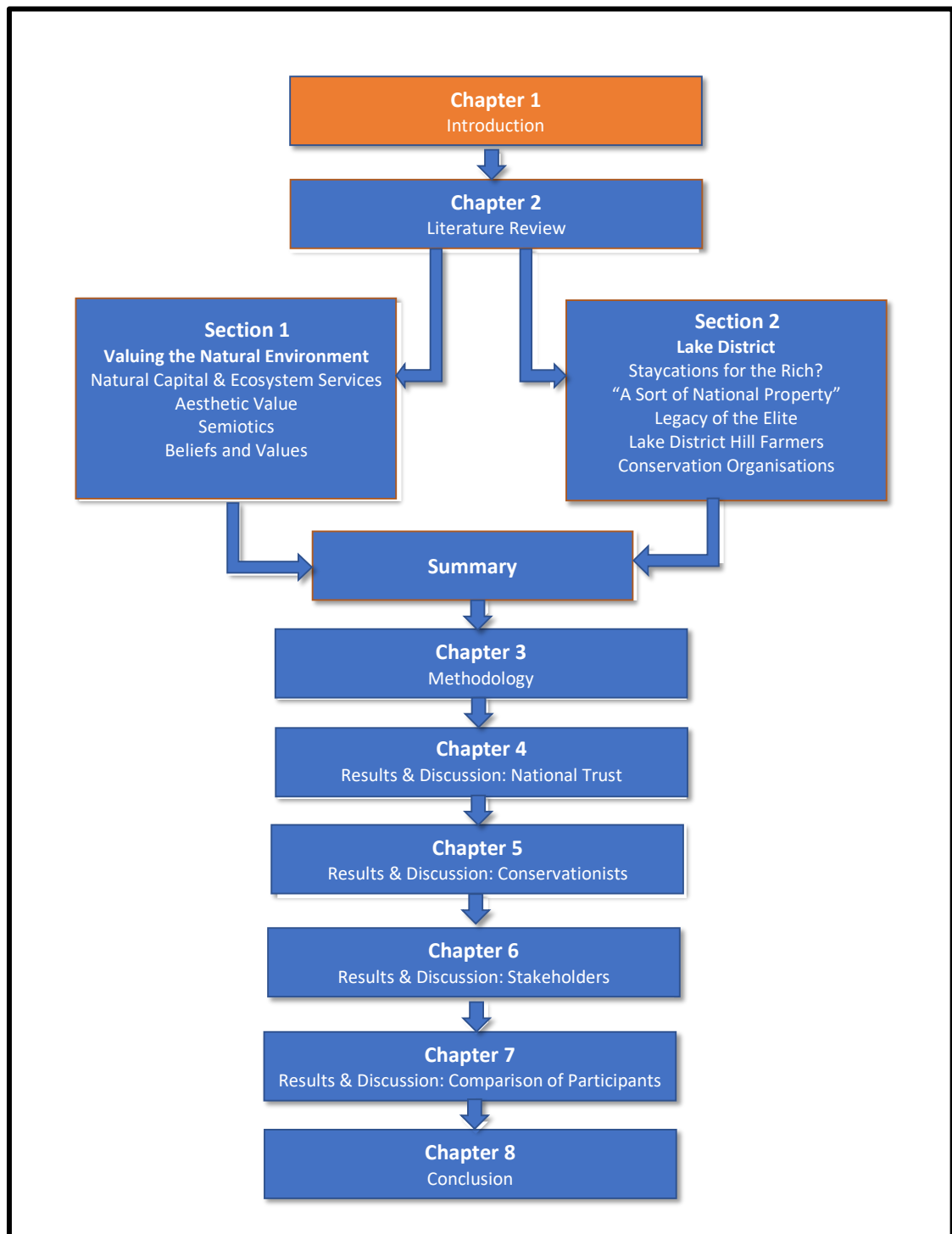


Figure 1.2 Chapter one in relation to the other thesis chapters

1.8.1 Overview of the Methods

Natural capital delivers ecosystem services and there has been debate over the attachment of monetary value to these services (Costanza *et al.*, 1998; McCauley, 2006; Townsend, 2007; MacAfee and Shapiro, 2010; Monbiot, 2014; Juniper, 2015; Spash, 2015; James, S., 2016b; Reynolds, 2016b; Muraca, 2016, p.150). Although many people value the bundle of ecosystem services known as cultural services, few would consider assigning a price to the more intangible ones such as aesthetic benefits and spirituality (Chan *et al.*, 2012; Hernández-Morcillo, Plieninger and Bieling, 2013; Plieninger *et al.*, 2013; Bieling, 2014; Plieninger *et al.*, 2015). Indeed, there remains opposition to the entire concept of natural capital but qualitative non-monetary methods can facilitate insight into intangible values, including how people value aesthetically natural capital in the context of the Lake District cultural landscape (Gould, Adams and Vivanco, 2020).

The methods were selected due to their compatibility with phenomenological analysis:

- A variation on photo elicitation designed by Newcastle University, incorporating diamond nine ranking of the objects in the photographs.
- A SWOT analysis in which participants identified key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in relation to the objects that they valued aesthetically.
- The transcripts and the photographs were analysed manually and with NVivo for Mac.

1.8.2 Outline of Thesis Content

Chapter one introduced the research context, a focus on the Lake District National Park, the research question, philosophy, methodology and methods. The study is placed within the context of the aesthetic value assigned to natural capital in the National Park.

Chapter two: Natural capital and the ecosystem services that it delivers, specifically cultural services, are critiqued before focussing on how natural capital delivers aesthetic benefits in the context of the Lake District cultural landscape. The review goes on to consider how environmental, historical, cultural, social, and semiotic influences, shape the beliefs and aesthetic values of stakeholders concerning the conservation of natural capital in the Lake District.

Chapter three: The subjectivity of aesthetic values in relation to natural capital informed the selection of the research philosophy of constructionism, which influenced the ontology of aesthetic value and epistemology of phenomenology (Fig.3.1). These in turn influenced the methodology of phenomenological analysis and the methods.

Chapter four: The National Trust owns over 500 km², or around 21% of the National Park. Thus, this chapter focusses on the leadership of their Lake District hub and explores how the participants value aesthetically natural capital including the main themes that emerged from analysis of the interviews and photographic data.

Chapter five: Focussing on people in leadership roles in conservation organisations other than the National Trust, including those in leadership roles relating to conservation in organisations where the primary purpose is not conservation, this chapter explores how the participants value aesthetically natural capital including the main themes that emerged from analysis of the interviews and photographic data. Evidence from the previous chapter is drawn together, compared, and analysed.

Chapter six: Focussing on stakeholders in leadership or significant decision-making roles from hill farming, outdoor education, and tourism, once again this chapter explores how the participants value aesthetically natural capital including the main themes that emerged from analysis of the interviews and photographic data.

Chapter seven: This chapter draws together and compares, analyses, and summarises the evidence from the previous three chapters. Any contrasts in aesthetic valuation of the Lake District's natural capital between conservationists and their stakeholders are identified, together with any shared values.

Chapter eight: The conclusions from this study are set out. The gap in the research literature that this study fills is re-evaluated, and the opportunities for future research are assessed. Also identified are prospects for conservationists to work in partnership with stakeholders on protection, conservation, and enhancement of the Lake District's natural capital.

Chapter Two

2. Literature Review

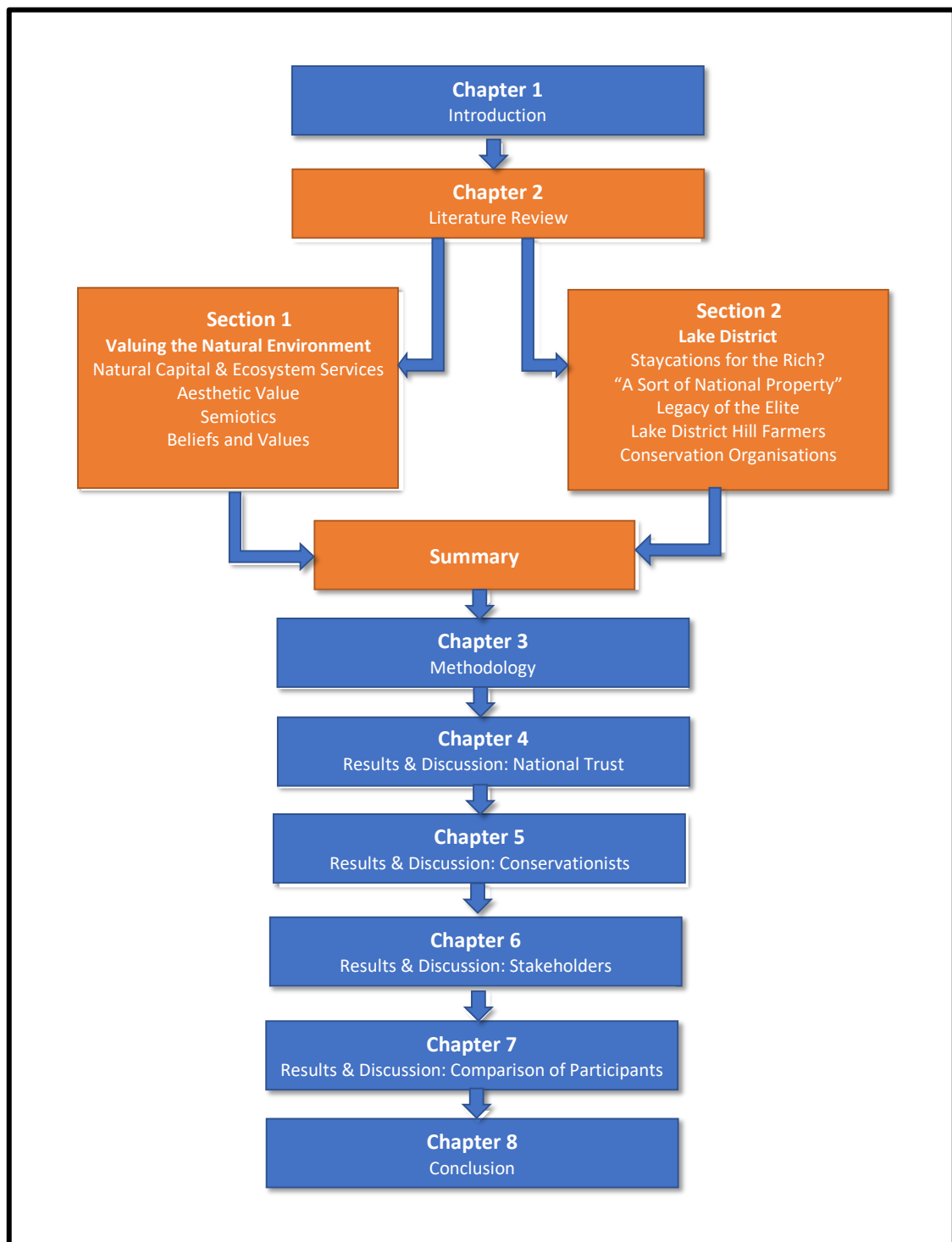


Figure 2.1 Chapter two in relation to the other thesis chapters

2.1 Overview of the Literature Review

Much of the cultural landscape of the Lake District National Park can be termed natural capital, which together with the ecosystem services that it delivers, will first be defined, and critiqued. The 'bundle' of ecosystem services termed cultural services will then be considered, before focussing in detail on aesthetic benefits, particularly how they influence management decisions regarding natural capital. The complexity of aesthetic benefits is considered by reviewing their association with semiotics, the study of signs, the Lake District carrying multiple signs with meaning, influencing how it is valued aesthetically. Aesthetic benefits are dependent on the beliefs that underpin aesthetic values, therefore, theories appropriate to beliefs and values in relation to natural capital are considered.

A diversity of historical literature relevant to the belief that before the mid-eighteenth century people did not value aesthetically natural environments of wild, and mountainous character such as the Lake District is reviewed (Fig. 2.1). Marjorie Hope-Nicolson (1894-1981 CE) provided academic underpinning for this belief as per section 1.2, and the values stemming from it have influenced how the Lake District cultural landscape and the natural capital therein is valued aesthetically, possibly influencing conservation of this natural capital (Nicholson, 1955, pp.23-24; Hope-Nicolson, 1959, p.23; Urry and Larsen, 1990, p.18; Schama, 1995, pp.450-452; Urry, 1995, p.193; Hunter, 2001; Macfarlane, R., 2003, p.145; Hollis, 2019).

The final section reviews how environmental, historical, cultural, social, and semiotic influences, shape the beliefs and aesthetic values of stakeholders in the contemporary Lake District. These aesthetic values are important because they may influence the future conservation of natural capital and the associated composition of the Lake District cultural landscape.

2.2 Valuing the Natural Environment

2.2.1 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

The natural environment (Fig. 2.2), including the Lake District National Park, can be likened to a stock of 'natural capital' (Pearce, D., Markandya and Barbier, 1989). These natural resources and environmental objects e.g., minerals, water, peatlands, grasslands, woodlands, and plantation forest may have an economic value or provide a valued service to people. This is exemplified in how natural capital yields a flow of services, termed 'ecosystem services', to the economic system (Ehrlich and Mooney, 1983). Ecosystem services are categorised into groups termed bundles, one of which is termed cultural services (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005a, p.40), some of these e.g., aesthetic, and spiritual benefits, are often alleged to be intangible (Grizzetti *et al.*, 2016; Reynaud and Lanza, 2017; Hølleland, Skrede and Holmgård, 2017). The management of natural capital influences the structure and composition of the cultural landscape, but also the delivery of ecosystem services, including the cultural services bundle and its delivery of aesthetic benefits, which is the focus of this review (Fig. 2.2).

Quantitative studies have been carried out into aesthetic benefits delivered by the National Park (Blandford, 2008; Anderson, C. *et al.*, 2017; Donaldson, Gregory and Taylor, 2017; Havinga *et al.*, 2021), but qualitative studies of what individuals value aesthetically are notably absent. In addition, there is also only indirect research regarding the influence of aesthetics on the decision-making of the leadership of conservation organisations and their stakeholders (Shortland, 2021, p.167).

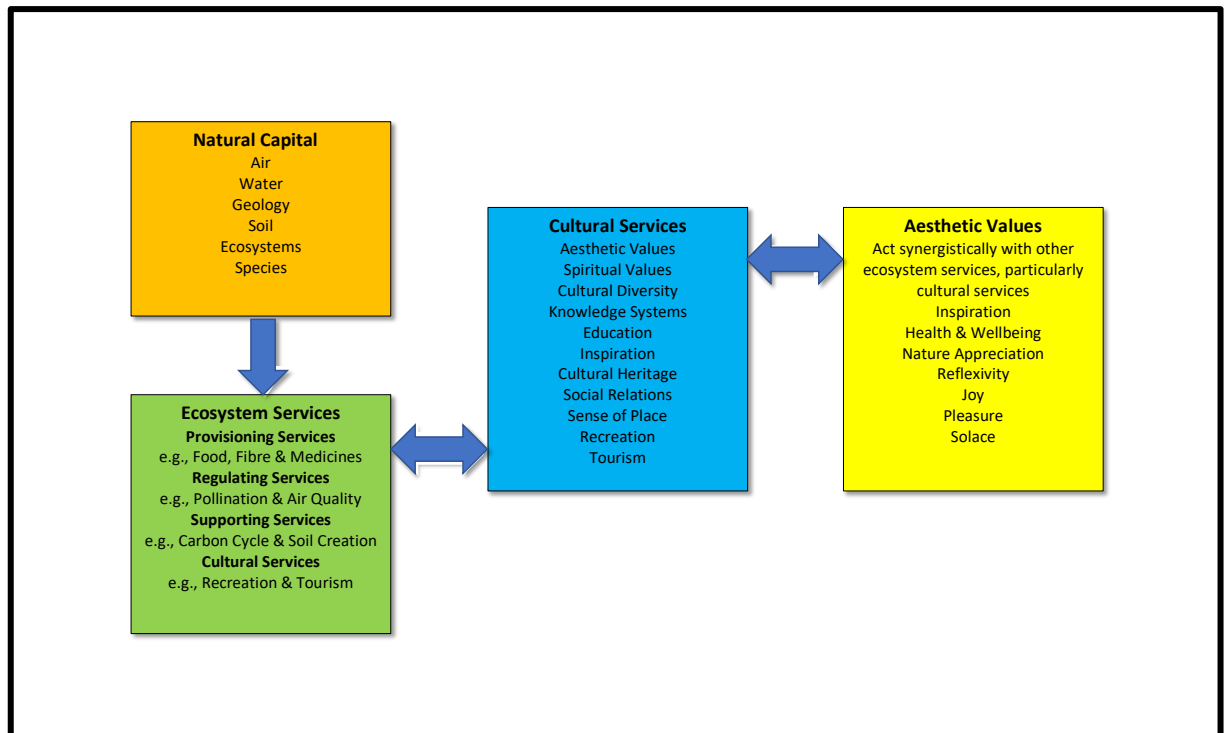


Figure 2.2 Diagram of natural capital yielding ecosystem services

2.2.1.1 Natural Capital

This section explores the literature surrounding the relationship between capital and natural capital (Fig. 2.2). The word ‘capital’ is derived from the Latin word *capita*, originally used for head of livestock but over time it has acquired complexity and multiple meanings. The word developed into *capitale* in mediaeval Latin referring to stock or property, but it was the eighteenth century before the word became used in the broader political economy (Daly, 2020; Harper, D., 2022). The definition of capital most relevant to natural capital, is that of Irving Fisher (1867-1947 CE) in *The Nature of Capital and Income* (Costanza and Daly, 1992; Sloman *et al.*, 2019, p.17). Fisher defined capital as a stock of wealth existing at an instant of time, with income taking the form of a flow of services from this capital stock (Fisher, 1906, pp.52-56; Costanza and Daly, 1992; Daly, 2020).

Concerns over the depletion of what would later be termed ‘natural capital’, can be traced back to Plato (c.427-347 BCE) and Pliny the Elder (c.23-79 CE) (Plato and Jowett, 1892, p.532; Gómez-Baggethun *et al.*, 2010). Economists Adam Smith (1723-1790 CE)

and David Ricardo (1772-1823 CE) had rudimentary concepts of 'natural capital' (Wolloch, 2020), while Thomas Malthus (1766-1834 CE) claimed that human population growth would in essence deplete 'natural capital' (Malthus, 1798; Wiltgen, 1998; Cumo, 2014; Remoff, 2016; Wrigley and Smith, 2019). Malthus proposed population control as one response and debate raged around his beliefs and values for about 30 years, opponents included William Godwin (1756-1836 CE), William Hazlitt (1778-1830 CE) and Coleridge. The most effective opponent, however, was William Cobbett (1763-1835 CE) who saw Malthusianism as an affront to social justice (Cobbett, 1830, p.174; Kegel, 1958; Rosen, 1970; Fulford, 2001). Malthusian concerns over the depletion of 'natural capital' due to geometrical increase in world population continued into the twentieth century, but the benefits of the Green Revolution and educating women and girls in developing nations revealed the inherent flaws of this argument (Ross, 1998; Ross, 2003; Evenson, 2005; Borlaug, 2007; Sumberg, Keeney and Dempsey, 2012; Fan, 2012; Borlaug and Natsios, 2014).

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976 CE) developed the concept of *Bestand* or standing-reserve, which was similar to natural capital, but argued that this way of thinking was detrimental to intrinsic and aesthetic value of nature (Lambeir, 2002). But the economists Alvin Johnson (1874-1971 CE) and Thomas Carver (1865-1961 CE) were the first to use the term in the early twentieth century (Missemer, 2018). It was Ernst Schumacher (1911-1977 CE), however, who developed the concept in detail, arguing that there had been a failure to distinguish between income and irreplaceable natural capital. He claimed humans were estranged from reality, failing to value anything that was not manmade reflecting a "*fetishism attached to the world of commodities*" (Marx, 1867, p.44). The broad socio-cultural approach to economics in his book *Small is Beautiful* inspired the later concept of sustainable development and Agenda 21 (Schumacher, 1973; Longmire, 1988).

Paul Ehrlich and Harold Mooney later introduced the term ecosystem services, the environment being likened to a stock of natural capital yielding a flow of ecosystem services (Ehrlich and Mooney, 1983). This work was built on by David Pearce in the

Blueprint for a Green Economy giving greater prominence to ecosystem services and similarly approximating these services to revenue produced by capital (Pearce, D., Markandya and Barbier, 1989). He argued that an important feature of natural capital was diversity, which contributed to its resilience and its conservation being crucial for the equity of future generations. Critics claimed the report set no precise limits for the application of monetary valuation methods and that cost benefit calculations were anchored in extrinsic values or a human use notion of value. It was also criticised for neglecting the benefits to be gained through interdisciplinary collaboration (Turner, R., 1990).

However, criticism from an economic perspective highlights how the concept of natural capital means accepting how neoclassical economics has conflated capital with land (Mason, G., 2008). In classical economics there was a tripartite division of land, labour, and capital. However, in neoclassical economics, land is just another form of capital, meaning that rents and interest rates are closely linked to it. Consequently, through ownership of land as fixed capital, landowners may be financially rewarded for the services of the land e.g., grant aid (Tucker, 1961; El-Barmelgy *et al.*, 2014). Treating land as capital assumes that the natural environment can be replaced by other forms of capital, and its productivity acknowledged only by the prices to its products (Victor, 1991; Huber, 2017).

Ricardo influenced Karl Marx (1818-1883 CE), who in his original theory of value, insisted that value is ultimately hidden in labour (Tucker, 1961; Bellamy-Foster, 1995; Mason, G., 2008; El-Barmelgy *et al.*, 2014). Placing value on natural capital is, thus, in essence reliant on consumer preference (Huber, 2017). Marxists claim that attaching a monetary value in this way is one of the ills of the capitalist system (Marx, 1867, p.44; Melathopoulos and Stoner, 2015; Bellamy-Foster, 2018; Blunden and Baggins, 2018; Rappel, 2018; Terzakis, 2018). Critics claim that Marx's value theory excludes or downgrades the role of the natural environment in production, natural resources only assuming value through the input of labour (Burkett, 1996; Bellamy-Foster, 2018; Blunden and Baggins, 2018). Although Marx clearly stated that both nature and labour

contribute to the production of wealth, Marxist regimes have notoriously damaged natural capital (Burkett, 2005).

Capital is also often considered as manufactured resources which can be both depleted and replenished, but natural capital cannot necessarily be replenished so easily (Natural Capital Initiative, 2014; Natural Capital Committee, 2015; Natural Capital Initiative, 2016; Foster, 2019). Peatlands cover much of the Lake District and provide services including long term storage of carbon (Boensel and Sonneck, 2011; Juniper, 2015, p.148). The monetised nature of national accounts has meant that peat as natural capital could be removed for commercial gain, contributing to climate change and loss of biodiversity, but the income would be classed as sustainable. Neoclassical economics assumes that such losses could be substituted by other forms of capital, but for practical purposes peatlands are finite resources (Costanza and Daly, 1992; Daly, 2020).

The publication of *Our Common Future* or *The Brundtland Report* introduced the concept of sustainable development and gave impetus to the concepts of natural capital and ecosystem services (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Subsequently the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3-14 June 1992, led to the creation of the Commission on Sustainable Development (Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, 1997). Other outputs included the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and Agenda 21, a programme of sustainable development for the next century (United Nations, 1992; United Nations General Assembly, 1993; United Nations General Assembly, 1994). Agenda 21 was to deliver practical action down to the local community level, motivated and informed by the core value of sustainable development. However, despite commitment by some local authorities to engaging communities, John Gummer (Lord Debden) expressed disappointment at poor support as early as 1995 (*The National Trust Centenary Countryside Conference Proceedings* 1995; Harman, Sharland and Bell, 1996).

Signatories to the *United Nations Convention on Biodiversity* attend the *Conference of the Parties* (COP), but a global biodiversity crisis evidences little practical achievement (Greenfield and Weston, 2024). In response to the *Convention on Biological Diversity*, in 1994 the UK produced its first national biodiversity action plan (Department of Environment, 1994). More recently the UK embraced the *Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework* but despite some successes it has generally been a story of species decline with wild bird numbers in England having fallen by 7% in the five years since 2018, despite government promises to halt species decline by 2030, England having among the most depleted biodiversity in the world (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2024). However, as part of nature recovery, in addition to halting species decline by 2030, the government aims to protect and effectively manage 30% of land and sea for biodiversity. The draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Cumbria, includes the Lake District and is one of 48 strategy areas in England, the aim being that these will create a nationwide nature recovery network. The draft Cumbria LNRS sets out priorities for nature recovery and identifies where actions will have the most significant positive impact (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2000; Convention on Biological Diversity, 2010; Joint Nature Conservation Committee and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2012; Convention on Biological Diversity, 2022; Ares, 2024; Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2024a; Joint Nature Conservation Committee, 2024; Joint Nature Conservation Committee on behalf of the Four Countries' Biodiversity Group, 2024; Westmorland and Furness Council, 2025).

Signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change attend the COP conference (UK Government, 2008; Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, 2010; Lee and Romero, 2023). Although the UK recently regained impetus as a world leader (Ellis *et al.*, 2024, p.15), COP conferences have resulted in no agreement to reduce the world's fossil fuel use and little chance of global temperature rising no more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (Harvey, F. *et al.*, 2024; Ellis *et al.*, 2024).

The conservation of natural capital, enabling the maintenance of ecosystem services, means that both climate change and biodiversity need to be addressed, and where most politicians have displayed little vision, the conservation sector has shown leadership in this joined-up approach (Natural England and RSPB, 2019; Adams, B. and Ashcroft, 2024). National Parks UK advocate such a joined up approach, yet in 2017 only 22% of Lake District SSSIs were in favourable condition, worse than outside the National Park (pp.9-10). It questions the achievements of copious strategies, plans and manuals, but must also be understood in the context of National Park Authorities being stripped of resources since 2010 (Willis, R., 2008; Lake District National Park Authority, 2010; Greig, 2012; Lake District National Park Authority, 2015; Lake District National Park Authority, 2012; Hagon *et al.*, 2013; Natural England and RSPB, 2019; National Parks UK, 2021; Smith, R. and Young, 2023; Shah *et al.*, 2024). International research by the Natural History Museum has revealed that biodiversity intactness in protected areas e.g., National Parks delivering important ecosystem services is declining fastest by 2.12% between 2000 and 2020. Rather than designating additional protected areas or extending existing ones, more would be gained from effectively conserving natural capital that delivers the most critical ecosystem services (Natural History Museum, 2024).

2.2.1.2 Ecosystem Services

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment adopted the term ecosystem services, for the services delivered by natural capital (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005a; Reynolds, 2016a, p.114). These can be grouped into four bundles termed (Fig. 2.2) provisioning services, regulating services, supporting services and cultural services (De Groot, Wilson and Boumans, 2002), which includes aesthetic benefits (Grizzetti *et al.*, 2016; Reynaud and Lanzanova, 2017; Hølleland, Skrede and Holmgaard, 2017). Despite earlier optimism surrounding the conference in Brazil (pp.28-29), the review detailed the relentless economic exploitation of nature through the degradation of natural capital and ecosystem services (Hales, McMichael and Butler, 2005, p.4; Carpenter *et al.*, 2006).

In the Lake District, natural capital in the form of wetlands e.g., Foulshaw Moss Nature Reserve and Roudsea Wood and Mosses National Nature Reserve, deliver diverse ecosystem services, but cover only a fraction of their extent in the eighteenth century (Stockdale, 1872, p.536; Tansley, 1939a, p.686; Pearsall, 1950, p.203; Pearsall and Pennington, 1973, p.192; Lindsay and Immirzi, 1996; Gritt, 2008). The *Tragedy of the Commons* (Hardin, 1968) was said to be exemplified in such degradation of wetlands, being blamed on inadequate incentives for conservation and little political commitment (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005a, p.46; Carpenter *et al.*, 2006). The review ignored, however, how some cultures have over centuries developed relational values with wetlands, which they value aesthetically (Emerson, P. and Goodall, 1886; Thesiger, 1964; Taylor, John, 1994, p.92; Beltrame *et al.*, 2013; James, S., 2015; Waylen, van de Noort and Blackstock, 2016, pp.114-128; Margaryan *et al.*, 2018; Rotherham, 2018b). However, historic records and literature illustrate how wetlands were also perceived negatively (Dickens, 1860, p.34; Conan-Doyle, 1890, p.206; Hill, S., 1983, p.178; Howarth, 1999; Callicott, 2003; Kellert, 2012, pp.192-194; Eklund, 2020). As such, the wetlands bordering the Lake District were barriers to communication (Stockdale, 1872, pp.504-505; Short, F., 1885; Curwen, 1926), and the habitats of mosquitoes carrying malaria (Stockdale, 1872, pp.327-328; Hodgkinson, 2016). In the USA even conservationists objected to the designation of the Florida Everglades National Park (Callicott, 2003). Contrarily, wetlands have been integral to the English rural idyll since at least the nineteenth century, as evidenced by photographers, artists and writers e.g., Peter Emerson (1856-1936 CE), Sir Frank Short (1857-1945 CE) and Sir Peter Scott (1909-1989 CE) (Short, F., 1885; Taylor, John, 1994, pp.91-119).

The UK Government's own assessment (UK National Ecosystem Assessment, 2011, p.182; Reynolds, 2016a, p.115), outlined the continued degradation of natural capital and ecosystem services, but as per section 1.3, regardless of detailing the benefits delivered the decline continued. This was evidenced in *Making Space for Nature*, which identified how habitats were too small, too poorly protected, and inadequately managed (Lawton *et al.*, 2010; Reynolds, 2016a, p.115). A need for corridors,

connections, linkages, and larger sites was identified, summarised as ‘more, better, bigger, joined’. But National Parks such as the Lake District have been stripped of resources since 2010 (p.9) impacting negatively on implementation of the report (Lawton, 2011).

The Natural Environment White Paper, *The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature*, (HM Government, 2011; Reynolds, 2016a, p.116), reflected the neoliberal orientation of the Government and the prioritisation of their *Big Society* initiative (Yusoff, 2011). Financial, manufactured, human, social and natural capital were recognised (Costanza and Daly, 1992; Ekins, Folke and De Groot, 2003) and further reflecting Government priorities led to the establishment of an independent Natural Capital Committee (Natural Capital Initiative, 2015; Natural Capital Committee, 2015; Natural Capital Initiative, 2016).

Natural capital and ecosystem services have become mainstream concepts and the *Ecosystems Knowledge Network* of over 4,500 people and organisations, seeks to advance the stewardship of land, water and nature throughout the UK (Ecosystems Knowledge Network, 2025). Earlier national policy developments included *Developing Ecosystem Accounts for Protected Areas in England and Scotland: Lake District National Park Summary Report* (White, C. et al., 2015), and *Natural Infrastructure Schemes in Practice: How to Create New Markets for Ecosystem Services from Land* (Andrews-Tipper and Francis, 2017). The UK Government *25 Year Environment Plan* which is underpinned by an approach based on natural capital and the delivery of ecosystem services, subsequently integrated in the *Landscapes Review* (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2018, p.20; Glover, 2019, p.40).

Since 2016 there has been increased use of the term public goods, as an equivalent to ecosystem services (Burton, R. et al., 2008; Mansfield, 2014; National Sheep Association, 2017; Mansfield, 2018; Convery et al., 2020; Schofield, 2022, p.38; Bradshaw, 2023). But the literature details how public goods, like ecosystem services has its origins in neoclassical economics, but otherwise the theoretical frameworks of

these two concepts are quite different to each other. The concept of public goods acknowledges that certain benefits of great value to society would not be addressed by the free-market economy and consequently there may need to be interventions in the market to ensure availability. Public goods are for the public good, or in other words, freely available to everyone regardless of background or income (Samuelson, P., 1954; Bromley, 1992, p.3; Dwyer *et al.*, 2015; Kretsch, van Dijk and Schleyer, 2016). Consequently, food production is not a public good as it normally must be paid for (Aglionby *et al.*, 2018; British Farmer & Grower, 2018). It may, however, be an ecosystem service, like consumptive recreation e.g., angling. Neither are public goods necessarily environmental, including road signs and the National Health Service, reflecting the need for clarity in the use of these two terms.

The literature clearly reveals that natural capital and ecosystem services have become mainstream concepts informing Government policy (Bateman, I., 28 May 2024). We will now consider cultural services which include aesthetic value.

2.2.1.3 Cultural Services

Culture is one of the most complicated words in the English language (Williams, 1976, p.87; Carey, J., 2005, pp.144-147), which may explain why both the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and the UK government fail to define it (Holden, 2006, p.11). The *Culture White Paper*, however, states that culture has intrinsic, social, and economic values (Fujiwara, Kudrna and Dolan, 2014a; Fujiwara, Kudrna and Dolan, 2014b; Fujiwara *et al.*, 2015).

The bundle of ecosystem services termed cultural services, was largely created due to the dichotomy. Provisioning, regulating, and supporting ecosystem services can be mediated through markets and are mostly valued instrumentally. Cultural services, in contrast, are largely independent of markets (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005a, p.40), considered to have intrinsic or non-monetary value (Lyas, 1997; Parsons, 2008, p.99). However, there is an epistemological tension regarding cultural services, whether all such services should be included and whether cultural services should

even have a place within ecosystem services (Gould, Adams and Vivanco, 2020). However, it is common knowledge that cultural services such as recreation and tourism bring economic benefits.

Non-monetary valuation of cultural services are widely considered contentious research methods, while the methods of neoclassical economics and the natural sciences are generally inappropriate for capturing 'subjective' and 'intangible' benefits (Daniel *et al.*, 2012). These challenges contribute to why relatively little research has been carried out into cultural services compared with other ecosystem services (Schaich, Bieling and Plieninger, 2010; Tengberg *et al.*, 2012; Chan *et al.*, 2012; Pleasant *et al.*, 2014; Carvalho-Ribeiro *et al.*, 2016; Chan and Satterfield, 2016, p.344; Cooper *et al.*, 2016). Consequently, cultural services research has concentrated on the tangible, easily measurable and monetary aspects of recreation and tourism (Beltrame *et al.*, 2013; Seidl, 2014; Viteri Mejía and Brandt, 2015; Langemeyer *et al.*, 2015; Willis, C., 2015; Zoderer *et al.*, 2016). These quantitative studies often focus on mapping (Norton *et al.*, 2012; Tengberg *et al.*, 2012; Darvill and Lindo, 2015; Peña, Casado-Arzuaga and Onaindia, 2015; Pert *et al.*, 2015; Ungaro *et al.*, 2016; van Zanten *et al.*, 2016; Zoderer *et al.*, 2016; Kopperoinen *et al.*, 2017; Tenerelli, Puffel and Luque, 2017; Schirpke, Meisch and Tappeiner, 2018; Rüdissler, Schirpke and Tappeiner, 2019; Depietri *et al.*, 2021), or the development of indicators (Szűcs, Anders and Bürger-Arndt, 2015; Bryce *et al.*, 2016; Tratalos *et al.*, 2016).

Studies of the more intangible aspects of cultural services have frequently come from psychological or ethnographic perspectives, while interdisciplinary studies are few (Braat and de Groot, 2012; Edwards, D., Collins and Goto, 2016; Fish, Church and Winter, 2016). But the entire concept of ecosystem services has been criticised for being reductive and failing to take account of how aesthetic values and cultural landscapes are socially constructed (Johannesdóttir, 2016, p.197). This critical outlook is not shared by all who study cultural landscapes, academics in Germany, Denmark and Spain have focussed on establishing research links between cultural landscapes, ecosystem services and in particular cultural services. This is important because

aesthetic values play a part in both cultural landscapes and cultural services (Schaich, Bieling and Plieninger, 2010; Casado-Arzuaga *et al.*, 2014). Support for this approach has been provided by the relational values that people have with cultural services, but particularly the argument that cultural services are co-produced and co-created as a result of peoples' interaction with ecosystems (Chan *et al.*, 2011, p.207; Chan, Satterfield and Goldstein, 2012; Chan and Satterfield, 2016, p.348; Fish, Church and Winter, 2016).

The focus on intangibility can obscure how these relationships that people have with ecosystems can also have a material cultural dimension. For example, archaeologists and anthropologists have long emphasised how culture resonates through and adheres to material objects (Tilley, 1994, p.53). However, Fish argues that four key factors are important in cultural services:

- a. Places in which people interact with each other and the natural environment,
- b. Cultural practices expressed in symbolic and interpretative interactions between people and the natural environment,
- c. Cultural benefits related to the wellbeing associated with the above interactions,
- d. Cultural goods, which can sometimes be exchanged via monetary transactions.

Despite this focus on place, there is evidence that a sense of place is not necessarily a prerequisite for the immaterial and intangible aspects of cultural services (Jepson, 2013, p.189). Also, the claims that intangibility contributes to obscuring the practical ways in which humans relate to ecosystems, fails to appreciate how complexity and subjectivity imbue services such as spiritual and aesthetic benefits. The focus on place may be a consequence of the researchers being orientated towards geography rather than biology, which may have been avoided by a stronger interdisciplinary approach and considering biological research about why people value aesthetically natural environments and the associated health benefits (Pretty, Griffin and Sellens, 2003; Pretty, Hine and Peacock, 2006; Pretty *et al.*, 2007; Barton, J. and Pretty, 2010; Akers *et al.*, 2012; Juniper, 2015, pp.201-203; Barton, J. *et al.*, 2016; Pretty and Pencheon, 2016; Rogerson *et al.*, 2016; Wyles *et al.*, 2017).

A clear example of the co-production of cultural services is Lake District woodlands, which enable people to interact with each other and the cultural landscape.

Woodland is predominantly in the south of the National Park, where broadleaved trees were planted and conserved for industry, the remaining ancient woodland being of high conservation value (Millward and Robinson, 1970, pp.82-88; Pearsall and Pennington, 1973, pp.133-137; Thompson, I., 2010, p.9; Vannan and Schofield, 2012, pp.55-56; Walton, 2013). Cultural practices linked to supplying iron works, gunpowder manufacture, bobbin mills and tanneries, were expressed symbolically and interpretively as rich cultural heritage. In addition to more intangible cultural services, including spiritual and aesthetic benefits, this natural capital delivers clearly tangible benefits to the local economy through recreation and tourism, there being synergy between cultural services and other ecosystem services (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005a; Sukhdev, Wittmer, Schröter-Schlaack, Nesshöver, Bishop, ten Brink *et al.*, 2010, p.11; Haines-Young and Potschin, 2022).

As per section 1.2, most studies concerning natural capital have employed epistemologies, methodologies and methods traditionally associated with the natural sciences. Gaps in the literature include the role of natural capital in the delivery of the more intangible cultural services, such as aesthetic benefits and there are few qualitative studies from an interdisciplinary perspective.

2.2.2 Aesthetic Value

2.2.2.1 Introduction

Aesthetic value will now be considered, including how it is delivered as a cultural service by natural capital and how it acts synergistically with other ecosystem services.

2.2.2.2 Artistic Bias?

The word aesthetic is normally used to refer to questions of visual appearance and effect, accepted as a set of principles concerned with the nature and appreciation of beauty (Williams, 1976, pp.31-32; Soanes and Stevenson, 2005). The literature surrounding aesthetics and the natural environment is traditionally derived from

philosophy and art (Carlson, 2009, p.16; Hartmann, 2014, p.159). Consequently, in the past many aestheticians exaggerated the aesthetic value assigned to art, which may have had a negative influence on how some people relate to and value aesthetically the Lake District and similar cultural landscapes (Hartmann, 2014, p.21). However, it can be argued that in a National Park and World Heritage Site, the loss of natural capital and the associated aesthetic benefits is as damaging as the loss of great artworks (Thompson, J., 1995; Lyas, 1997).

Another alleged legacy of this artistic bias is a fixation on the 'aesthetic qualities' of objects, where objects have a perceptual appearance that is pleasing or displeasing for its own sake. This distanced or objective attention is described as 'disinterestedness' and can be traced back to Immanuel Kant (1724-1804 CE) (Kant, 2000; Hiles, 2008; Cooper *et al.*, 2016). Kant's influence on subject and object relationship, where objects have properties, is increasingly dismissed (Brown, T., 1984; Bannon, 2016, pp.53-55; Johannesdóttir, 2016, p.198). But in doing so one risks overlooking the entrenched cultural influence of Kant, for example, Susan Sontag (1933-2004 CE), strongly argued that the Kantian subject and object relationship was built into the experience of viewing photographs (Sontag, 1977, p.21). It can also be argued that Kant has had a negative influence on how natural capital in the Lake District is valued aesthetically, by claiming that of the five senses only the so-called distal senses of sight and hearing are relevant to aesthetics. This undue emphasis on sight and hearing may in addition have contributed to lasting discrimination against the visually impaired (Macpherson, 2008; Macpherson, 2017). Tim Ingold argues that such aesthetic values develop through the relational values that people acquire from engagement with objects intrinsic to the natural environment (Ingold, 2007; Ingold, 2011). In the Lake District this might include natural capital in forms such as waterbodies and woodlands, but also individual wildflowers, lichen, and invertebrates.

2.2.2.3 A New Beauty?

In the 1700s there was a movement to define and categorise the different kinds of beauty (Riding and Llewellyn, 2013), which often focussed on synergistic combinations

of natural capital such as water and woodland. It was the second half of the eighteenth century, however, before upper class aesthetic tourism, based on disinterestedness, began in the Lake District (Urry and Larsen, 1990, pp.2-18; Urry, 1995, p.196; Hanley *et al.*, 2009; Denyer, 2013, p.11; Walton, 2016, p.32; Donaldson, Gregory and Taylor, 2017). It was a movement with great influence on how the natural environment was valued aesthetically and lingers to this day.

The idea of the beautiful, associated with the artificiality of tamed and cultivated gardens, with straight tree-lined avenues and formal hedges dates from the late seventeenth century, exemplified in the Lake District by the internationally important topiary gardens at Levens Hall, dating from around 1694 (Hyde and Pevsner, 1967, p.44; Ingold, 2007, p.155; Willis, K., 2024, p.14). More important in the context of this thesis, was the later notion of the sublime, which in the eighteenth century, was how something produced an overwhelming sense of awe or other high emotion through being vast or grand (Soanes and Stevenson, 2005). Indiscriminate use of the terms sublime and beautiful, motivated Edmund Burke (1729-1797 CE) to write *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* in 1757 (Burke, 1757; Barsham and Hitchcock, 2013, p.61; Riding and Llewellyn, 2013). Burke argued that sublime sights caused terror and terror was a passion that led to delight, when there wasn't a real physical threat (Macfarlane, 2003, p.75; Reynolds, 2016, p.3).

The most significant category was, however, the notion of the picturesque, in the middle ground of a view (Nicholson, 1955, p.38; Lias, 1997; Parsons, 2008, p.3; Haywood, 2012, p.24; Barsham and Hitchcock, 2013, p.61), which infused art with conventions from eighteenth century stage design (Franklin, 2006; Haywood, 2012, p.27). Formally designated 'viewing stations' were established, including Claife Station above Windermere, where artists and tourists could observe picturesque views (Thompson, I., 2010, p.58; Clark, Jan, 2013; Rutherford, 2013, pp.201-218; Lynch, 2015). Rev. William Gilpin (1724-1804 CE) did most to popularize the concept of the

picturesque, even stipulating how many cows there should be in a picturesque painting (Groom, 2017, p.57).

Opposition to picturesque influences gained momentum among artists during the twentieth century, including the photographers Edward Weston (1886-1958 CE), Ansel Adams (1902-1984 CE) and Imogen Cunningham (1883-1976 CE), who as members of f/64 applied intense precision and rigorous detail to subjects such as stones in the desert (Bieger-Thielemann *et al.*, 2001, p.14; Mulligan and Wooters, 2005, pp.494-496; Macfarlane, E., 2016). Their deadpan aesthetic engagement was disparaged, particularly among more politically motivated contemporaries (Dyer, 2005, p.126). But to Norman Nicholson (1914-1987 CE) the Picturesque Movement was simply a lie which denied the intricate realities of the world (Nicholson, 1955, p.46). Despite such criticism, there is evidence that the Picturesque Movement and Kantian distancing continue to influence photographic composition, as highlighted in a meta-analysis of Lake District photographs where the composition of objects was often distanced (Taylor, John, 1994, p.102; Haywood, 2012, p.27; Donaldson and Gregory, 2018).

From the late eighteenth century, the Lake District played an even more important role in the rise of Romanticism, which gave the natural environment a more privileged position in European culture (Rosenthal, 2008; The Lake District World Heritage Project Partnership, 2013, p.18; Lake District National Park Partnership, 2016, pp.183-195). Wild nature in the form of a jumble of random curves, with unclear anthropogenic influences, became more widely valued aesthetically in contrast to the previous anthropocentric formality (pp.37-38) (Ingold, 2007, p.155; Thompson, I., 2010, p.296). Nature was elevated as a cultural force, with transformational benefits and still influences how the Lake District is valued aesthetically (Barsham and Hitchcock, 2013, p.56; Franklin, 2013, p.79). However, it can be argued that the visual interpretation of Romanticism often ignores the influences of the wild weather and other untamed natural processes that inspired key figures such as Coleridge (Turner, J., 1985; Ingold, 2011, pp.129-132; Cladis, 2018; Eddy-Waland, 2022, p.204; Menely, 2023). Coleridge in 1802-1803 emerged with an idea bordering on the theological of multitudinous

forms of self-willed nature (Coleridge, 1991; Mabey, 2005; Macfarlane, R., 2007, pp.207-209; Eddy-Waland, 2022, pp.190-195).

The influence of the Romantic Movement on landscape design is generally overlooked, despite Wordsworth having a keen interest in this subject. He was not opposed to the larch *Larix decidua*, as a tree as is often cited, but to the extensive monocultures of larch that he saw being planted (Jenkins, 1974; Thompson, I., 2010, pp.154-158; Mason, N., 2022; Burton, A., 2024). Tarn Hows is a classic example of how in certain locations, Lake District natural capital was transformed into idealised natural environments with unclear anthropogenic features (Thompson, I., 2010, pp.154-158). The landowner James Garth Marshall (1802-1873 CE) dammed the existing wetland, to create an artificial tarn, considered closer to the aesthetic values of the Romantic Movement and it rapidly became one of the most iconic aesthetic 'hot spots' in the Lake District (Callicott, 2003).

The evidence indicates that certain interpretations of the Picturesque Movement, but particularly the Romantic Movement, continue to influence how the Lake District is valued aesthetically and may also influence the conservation of natural capital.

2.2.2.4 Contemporary Aesthetic Schools of Thought

It has been shown how philosophical schools of thought and selective interpretations of cultural movements from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, continue to influence how people value aesthetically the Lake District. Contemporary aesthetic schools of thought include postmodernism (Parsons, 2008), formalism (Parsons, 2008, p.53; Carlson, 2009, p.3), natural sciences (Carlson, 2000; Parsons, 2008) and pluralism. While being aware of these schools of thought, the focus in this thesis is on phenomenological aesthetics, which is also compatible with relational values (Parsons, 2008; Toadvine, 2010, p.85; Ingold, 2011, pp.30-47; Chan *et al.*, 2016; Jones, N. *et al.*, 2016; Johannesdóttir, 2016, p.188; Small, Munday and Durance, 2017; Mattijssen *et al.*, 2020).

2.2.2.4.1 Phenomenological Aesthetics

While not completely rejecting the natural environment as an aesthetic object (Parsons, 2008, pp.76-83), Arnold Berleant argues that the traditional or Kantian focus on so called 'higher' or 'distal' senses is inappropriate (Berleant, 1991; Berleant, 1993; Berleant, 2010; Toadvine, 2010, p.85; Berleant, 2013; Berleant, 2016). People experience the Lake District through their whole body (Ingold, 2011, p.45), using all five senses, developing relationships which influence their aesthetic values. Weather in the form of sun, wind, and rain have a notable impact, something which as noted has been neglected in philosophy (Berleant, 1991; Berleant, 1993; Parsons, 2008, p.81; Saito, 2010; Ingold, 2011, p.96). Berleant argues that people are part of the natural environment, actively interacting with it in multi-sensory ways, there being no real demarcation between them and what they are experiencing (Berleant, 1992, pp.17-22; Romdenh-Romluc, 2010, p.166). Bryan Bannon agrees with Berleant and Ingold, that experiencing the natural environment should be presented as a set of relations (Bannon, 2016, pp.54-55). Consequently, valuing aesthetically the natural environment should be all-embracing sensory immersion, which is compatible with aesthetics as a set of principles concerned with the nature and appreciation of beauty (Williams, 1976, pp.31-32; Soanes and Stevenson, 2005; Carlson, 2009, p.42).

People value aesthetically the natural environment, including natural capital, in complex ways but there is now greater understanding of the role of aesthetic engagement in the form of relationships and how all five senses and may influence conservation. Phenomenology and aesthetic engagement has been criticised in the past due to the absence of empirical evidence based support. However, recent evidence of how human bodies, brains and minds are intimately linked to the natural environment supports the fundamental claims of phenomenologists (Oliver, 2020).

2.2.2.5 Nature Theories and Aesthetics

2.2.2.5.1 Overview of Nature Theories

As indicated above, for greater insight into the aesthetic benefits of the natural environment, there is a need to look beyond philosophy. Claims about the aesthetic

and associated health benefits of natural environments have a long history (Ward-Thompson, 2011; Nightingale, 2012, p.96). More recently an extensive literature surrounds the affective aesthetic responses said to be associated with four key theories underpinning alleged health benefits of natural environments (Ulrich, 1983; Ulrich, 1984; Kaplan, S., 1987; Orians and Heerwagen, 1992; Kellert and Wilson, 1995; Joye and De Block, 2011). The four theories are Steven Kaplan (1936-2018 CE) and Rachel Kaplan's Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan, R. and Kaplan, 1989), Ulrich's Stress Reduction Theory (Ulrich *et al.*, 1991), Judith Heerwagen and Gordon Orian's Savanna Hypothesis (Orians and Heerwagen, 1992), and Edward O. Wilson (1929-2021 CE) and Stephen Kellert's (1943-2016 CE) Biophilia Hypothesis (Wilson, E., 1984; Kellert and Wilson, 1995).

These theories have been criticised for linking perceived health or affective benefits to human evolution through natural selection (Willis, K., 2024, p.5). In addition, the research participants were often students from the courses on which the researchers taught and not necessarily representative of wider society (Kaplan, R. and Kaplan, 1989, p.90). Notably these theories are vague and consequently they have been sneered at as the imaginings of conservationists, which meet their values and provide something in which to believe (Joye and De Block, 2011). However, the complex reality indicates that there do appear to be health benefits associated with natural environments, but multiple mechanisms are in operation (Joye and Van den Berg, 2011; Willis, K., 2024, pp.81-82).

2.2.2.5.2 Insights from Science

Complex multi-sensory factors do not fit conveniently into the widely lauded theories, while such complexity also makes controlling for the variables in studies extremely difficult. More recent quantitative and qualitative research has revealed a diversity of factors which may have affective and wellbeing influences, for example light and colour may influence the aesthetic preferences of participants (Akers *et al.*, 2012; Juniper, 2015, pp.201-203; Barton, J. *et al.*, 2016, p.30; Pretty and Pencheon, 2016, p.5; Rogerson *et al.*, 2016; Wyles *et al.*, 2017; Wooller *et al.*, 2018; Willis, K., 2024, pp.43-

47). Auditory factors may also have significant influence, bird song inspiring symbolically emotions and the perception of the seasons and wider environment (Mynott, 2009, p.288; Ratcliffe, 2015, pp.87-125; King, R., 2019b, pp.11-15; King, R., 2019a; Willis, K., 2024, pp.120-121). Other research has shown how a vegetated environment, often in combination with water is commonly valued aesthetically, while airborne chemicals named phytoncides, which are released by trees, may be one of the factors contributing to how people value aesthetically forests and woodlands (Yang, 1988; Yang and Kaplan, 1990; Yang and Brown, 1992; Taylor, J. *et al.*, 1995; Luttik, 2000; Yamashita, 2002; Joye and De Block, 2011; Joye and Van den Berg, 2011; Reynaud and Lanzanova, 2017; Joye and Dewitte, 2018; Willis, K., 2024, pp.95-103).

A study of twins has shown that orientation towards such natural environments could be partially heritable, but access to natural environments e.g., public green spaces are important for its expression (Chang *et al.*, 2022). The evidence indicates that a complex combination of light, colour, sound and touch (Willis, K., 2024, pp.144-157), together with natural capital in the form of vegetation and water, may contribute at least in part to how people value aesthetically natural environments.

2.2.3 Semiotics

2.2.3.1 Introduction

Objects encountered and valued aesthetically in the natural environment may be remembered as what Wordsworth termed “*spots of time*” (Wordsworth, W., 1850, p.326; Bishop, 1959). Recalled years later, they may be translated into signs, by which people can relate to the natural world (Kellert, 2012, p.14). Signs can be communicated by writing, such as the journal entry on 15th April 1802 by Dorothy Wordsworth (1771-1855 CE), regarding the wild daffodils *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* along the shore of Ullswater (Wordsworth, D., 1897, p.106). The likely influence of her brother’s poem, *The Inward Eye* (Wordsworth, W., 1909, p.92), traced back to one day in April two hundred and twenty-three years ago, wild daffodils are a sign of spring in the Lake District.

Multiple signs with meaning may aid understanding of how people value aesthetically the Lake District and specifically natural capital (Greider and Garkovich, 1994). For example, signs, entwined with aesthetics, emanate from possible biophilic influences and human values. It has been claimed, however, that signs may also serve to exclude people from the Lake District. The subjectivity and intangibility of signs certainly poses accounting challenges for natural capital and ecosystem services.

2.2.3.2 Theories of Signs

The study of signs can be traced back to St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) (Shank, 2012, p.2) and visual signs play crucial roles in many artworks. However, it was the late-nineteenth century before coherent theories were developed by Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914 CE) in the United States of America (USA) and Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913 CE) in Switzerland (La Grange, 2005, p.244). Saussure's theory is a two-part model, consisting of the signifier or significant (the form which the sign takes) and the signified (the concept it represents). Peirce's theory is in contrast a three-part model, consisting of the representamen (the form that the sign takes), an interpretant (the sense made of the sign) and an object to which the sign refers (Short, M., 2011, p.122). His three categories of signs are symbols, icons and indexicality (La Grange, 2005, p.143; Bull, S., 2010, pp.14-16; Short, M., 2011, p.124; Shank, 2012; Chandler, 2017, pp.45-52; Aiello, 2020, pp.4-5). To Peirce objects could be real, but to Saussure in contrast, a mountain had to be a concept of a mountain.

2.2.3.3 Symbols

A symbol is something that represents something else, it is normally intended to communicate something, in the code of language. They are similar to de Saussure's signified, in that their relationship with the subject may need to be interpreted (La Grange, 2005, p.143; Bull, S., 2010, p.15; Chandler, 2017, pp.45-46; Westley and Folke, 2018; Aiello, 2020, p.5).

Wild animals, such as birds and their sounds often have symbolic associations with the season but can also symbolise more abstract concepts including emotions and

significant events. Historically the robin was perceived as a harbinger of death, while the owl was seen cross-culturally as a symbol of both wisdom and of dark omens (Ratcliffe, 2015, p.92; Gogoi and Das, 2024). A tale from *The Mabinogion*, illustrating symbolism for light and dark, is of a woman created out of flowers, subsequently transformed into an owl for infidelity and banished to the nighttime (Garner, 1967; Anonymous, 2007). However, there are cultures in the twenty first century where some species are perceived as negative symbols, the greater adjutant stork *Leptoptilos dubius* being a symbol of dead livestock to rural people in India (Gogoi and Das, 2024).

Images of wild animals, domestic livestock and plants are often used as symbols to represent geographical regions, for example, Herdwicks look nothing like the Lake District but are used as a symbol to represent it (Mynott, 2009, p.343; Schirpke, Meisch and Tappeiner, 2018; Rüdissler, Schirpke and Tappeiner, 2019). Kellert argued that livestock but particularly sheep, closely evolved with humans and this is reflected in their use as symbols. Multi-layered symbols contribute meaning, identity and value to the Lake District and this is evident through a diversity of products and commercial marketing (Hopkins, 1998; Yarwood and Evans, 1998; Kellert, 2012, pp.110-113; Szász, 2017, pp.32-37; Mitchell, L. and Hamilton, 2018; Parry, 2020; Halfacree and Williams, 2021). Yet little of the income generated through the appropriation of such symbols, is directed to either supporting the farming of traditional breeds of livestock or wildlife conservation (Kronenberg and Bocian, 2022). A clear historical exception to this norm was Beatrix Potter, who wanted to preserve the iconic cultural landscape as illustrated in her books, purchasing and donating extensive areas to the National Trust. Individual people can also become symbols of a geographical region as exemplified by both Wordsworth and Potter, their legacies being evident in a diversity of Lake District marketing materials (Pearce, P., Morrison and Moscardo, 2003; Thomson, 2007; Thompson, I., 2010, pp.264-265).

However, iconic cultural landscapes such as the Lake District have also been criticised as the distilled products of social and economic power. It is claimed that these landscapes can exclude through subtle symbolic meanings associated with such elites

or be selected by them to represent the UK (Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010; Lindström, Palang and Kull, 2011; Lindström, Palang and Kull, 2017).

2.2.3.4 Indexicality

Indexical signs have a direct link, which can be causal, sequential, or spatial to the subject (La Grange, 2005, p.143; Bull, S., 2010, p.15; Atkin, 2013; Chandler, 2017, pp.49-53; Aiello, 2020, p.4). These signs draw attention to something, for example, black clouds representing rain or frost encrusted leaves representing the coming winter (Chandler, 2017, p.50).

Roland Barthes (1915-1980 CE) and Roger Scruton (1944-2020 CE) both highlighted the indexicality of photographs, which are always linked to an object in the real-world (Barthes, 1980, pp.76-77; Scruton, 1981). Such indexicality is evidence that the object exists or once existed.

2.2.3.5 Icons

Icons are signs with no direct link to the things that they represent but are made to look like them. For example, images across Wastwater to Wasdale Head (Ward Lock, 1935, pp.144-145; Taylor, J. *et al.*, 1995, p.6; Gardner, 2007; Steinberg, 2008), are laden with anthropogenic influences, but to many people these images are iconic of a wild Lake District (La Grange, 2005, p.143; Bull, S., 2010, p.16; Short, M., 2011, p.124; Chandler, 2017, pp.47-48; Aiello, 2020, p.4).

However, semiotics can be criticised for subjectivity, reflected in how the genres of icons, and symbols are either confused or used interchangeably in some academic work (Szász, 2017, p.32; Schirpke, Meisch and Tappeiner, 2018). Umberto Eco (1932-2016 CE) argued that signs are not mutually exclusive and all the index and symbol genres can move towards being iconic, through familiarity an iconic signifier being able to acquire dominance over its signified (Eco, 1976, pp.204-205). Regardless of subjectivity, it can be argued that signs relating to Lake District natural capital are realistic styles of representation and reflect an aesthetic code which over time has

become a reflection of reality. This is exemplified by the influence of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements on how the Lake District is valued aesthetically (Rosenthal, 2008, pp.8-9; Barsham and Hitchcock, 2013, p.56; Seaton, 2013, p.97). Such influences can be noted in how following the First World War, the Lake District had become established as an icon of national stability and harmony. Images in numerous guidebooks prepared the ground for a substantial market in iconic photographs, distributed by improvements in mechanical reproduction. As per section 2.2.3.3, the rise of the automobile and the snapshot genre contributed to a socially constructed icon of the Lake District as a rural idyll, or how society imagines it should be (Benjamin, 1935; Christian, 1966, pp.140-142; Patmore, 1970, p.47; Urry and Larsen, 1990, p.163; Burchardt, 2002, pp.179-180; Hirsch, 2012). However, it can be argued that a selective interpretation of the Romantic Movement is being perceived (p.39), nevertheless this selective interpretation may be influencing the conservation of natural capital (Chandler, 2017, pp.66-68).

Greater insight may be achieved through the influence of Barthes on the association of semiotics with analysis of broader cultural practices, his use of the term myth was as a mode of signification, or of language subsuming reality (Barthes, 1957, p.137). While his theory on the layering of visual meaning, underpins much of contemporary visual semiotics (Aiello, 2020, p.6). Through the influence of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements, it can be argued that the contingent and the historical became lost to the vision of an eighteenth and nineteenth century elite, creating the myth of the Lake District (Pringle, 1988, p.143). However, the real problem may be selective appropriation of Romantic Movement literature and art to idealise specific interpretations of the Lake District cultural landscape. For example, research has revealed that the concept of wild as envisaged by Romantic Movement writers was more pervasive than generally realised. Romantic Movement writers had faith not simply in a construct, but also in a cultural landscape with genuinely wild elements, much of which has been lost since the nineteenth century (Nash, 1967, pp.44-66; Falke and Poetzsch, 2021; Eddy-Waland, 2022; Menely, 2023). Consequently, it is claimed that the iconic cultural landscape of the Lake District and the natural capital integral to

it is severely damaged and is in reality a very selective interpretation of what Wordsworth and other key figures in the Romantic Movement valued aesthetically.

2.2.4 Beliefs and Values

As per section 1.4, superficial consideration of the literature surrounding aesthetics and conservation of natural capital may give the impression that it is about addressing practical problems. But detailed consideration reveals more fundamental and less easily resolved conflicts of beliefs and values, such as control of the open commons, human rights in relation to the conservation of biodiversity and the importance of present day agropastoral agriculture in relation to the past traditions and the cultural landscape. These conflicts involve deeply held personal beliefs and values, and consequently aesthetic value should be considered in the context of other values. People from diverse backgrounds find beautiful or value aesthetically the natural capital of the Lake District (Tadaki, Sinner and Chan, 2017). Consequently, professional conservationists in organisational leadership and decision-making roles need to understand the beliefs and aesthetic values of stakeholders. This is important as the beliefs and values of stakeholders may be quite different from their own, influencing how natural capital is valued aesthetically and managed (Mabey, 1980, p.27).

2.2.4.1 Beliefs

The literature indicates that beliefs underpin values and are essentially the tenets or convictions that people hold to be true, which based on trust or faith may be held without proof. For example, long-term quantitative research in the USA revealed the core or most basic belief of citizens to be equality of opportunity, it was believed that in the USA hard work was the key to economic success (Feldman, 1988). However, despite their hard work, in recent decades many working-class Americans have failed to achieve economic success and frustration at such failure may partly explain the rise in right-wing populism.

Beliefs have been criticised for often being irrational and based on emotion, but neuroscience research has revealed the extent to which emotion is important to

rationality. An inability to experience emotion and thus imagine the emotion in others would create a barrier when negotiating with stakeholders holding different beliefs and values (Feldman, 1988; Shealy, 2009; Mercer, 2010; Schwitzgebel, 2024; Marcus, 2024). Core beliefs are claimed to be the key determinants of a person's intentions and actions, indicating the need for knowledge and understanding of stakeholders (Pascual *et al.*, 2017). For example, the Lake Districts' unenclosed commons deliver diverse ecosystem services, including aesthetic benefits, but conservation of this natural capital is critically dependent on the beliefs and values of hill farmers engaged in agropastoral agriculture.

Despite clear definitions, beliefs and values are confused in some research, the two terms being used interchangeably, which poses a challenge for those who wish to compare similar research. This is relevant, because it is important to understand why hill farmers in contrast to most conservationists, believe that the number of sheep grazing the open commons is sustainable. The core beliefs of hill farmers are influenced by factors including family relations, pressure from colleagues regarding perceive best practice in agropastoral agriculture and practices which might entail additional work or costs. The values stemming from these core beliefs influence their detailed approaches to land management (Carr and Tait, 1991; Beedell and Rehman, 1999; Fielding *et al.*, 2005). Generally, research has concluded that conservation organisations should work with those farmers who believe that conservation is important, as they are well positioned to positively influence farming colleagues.

Theories, regarding beliefs and values relating to the natural environment, include the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991); Value-Belief-Norm Theory (Stern *et al.*, 1999), Environmental Identity Model (Stets and Biga, 2003), and Motivation Toward the Environment Scale (Pelletier *et al.*, 1998). As might be anticipated, beliefs underpin aesthetic values, and both need to be considered in relation to how conservationists and their stakeholders value aesthetically the natural capital of the Lake District. Consequently, value will now be considered, including implications for conservation of natural capital.

2.2.4.2 Value

The literature reveals the word value to have many meanings which can be a source of difficulty, indicating the need for brief consideration of this matter (Brown, T., 1984). Value comes from the Latin word *valere*, which means to be strong, to be worthy, the regard that something is held to deserve, the importance, worth, or usefulness of something (Soanes and Stevenson, 2005). Economic measures of value are simply a small sub-set of how value is used in everyday speech, but in a capitalist society, the importance attached to them is understandable.

Most human behaviour is not frivolous, but the beliefs and the values stemming from those beliefs are likely to be subjective (Soanes and Stevenson, 2005). Values are the principles or ideals of behaviour that stem from beliefs, becoming standards by which people live their lives. As in aesthetics, the perspective on value in the natural and physical sciences, is often a subject and object relationship, traceable back to Kant (Kant, 2000). Value, however, has many contexts and meanings, aesthetic value being often entwined with other values (Brown, T., 1984; MacCabe and Yanacek, 2018, p.368). Consequently, there is a plethora of value theories (Albert, 1956), the earlier ones reflecting the influence of Kant by requiring a subject to take an interest in an object (pp.36-37), in connection with a purpose for which the object is valuable (Schneider, 1917; Perry, 1926). Typologies and classifications of value emerged in the mid-twentieth century (Hart, 1971), in essence Linnaean systems (du Bois, 1955; Albert, 1956). To further complicate matters, in the 1960s the divide between philosophy, the social sciences and the natural and physical sciences increased, leading to the development of quite different values (Hart, 1971).

Values are conditioned within given cultural systems, or socially constructed to help make sense of the physical world (Farber, 1964; O'Neill, Holland and Light, 2008, p.1; Schroeder, 2013, p.78). The literature recognises different forms of value, but it's possible to group the most agreed forms under two broad typologies named use values and non-use values, and Instrumental values and intrinsic values.

Use values and non-use values are employed commonly, but not exclusively, in economic literature (de Groot *et al.*, 2010, p.262; Committee on Assessing and Valuing the Services of Aquatic and Related Terrestrial Ecosystems, 2004, p.45). Use values include direct consumptive use values such as the value of timber or fish. However, they also provide direct non-consumptive use values such as those associated with recreation, tourism, and aesthetic value. Indirect use values may relate to the services provided by ecosystems such as air and water purification, erosion control and pollination of crops.

Non-use value is the importance attributed to an aspect of the environment in addition to, or irrespective of its use values, value attributed to the existence of the 'object' or its existence value. Between use and non-use value is the notion of option value, or the value that may be placed on keeping open the option to use ecosystem services in the future, either within the lifetime of the current generation, or for future generations (sometimes termed bequest value).

Instrumental value and intrinsic value are used more commonly, but not exclusively, in ethics and philosophy, rather than economics (Committee on Assessing and Valuing the Services of Aquatic and Related Terrestrial Ecosystems, 2004, p.35). When something is valued instrumentally, it's not valued for itself, but as a means of achieving an end of some sort (Thompson, J., 1995; Parsons, 2008, p.99; Soanes and Stevenson, 2005). Attaching an instrumental value to conservation of natural capital because of the benefits it confers, has been criticised as the same anthropocentric approach, which has contributed to many environmental problems (Lyas, 1997).

However, when something is valued Intrinsically, it is not valued as means to an end, but for the value that it has in itself (Lyas, 1997; Soanes and Stevenson, 2005). If one accepts this argument, natural capital has values intrinsic to it, a sessile oak tree *Quercus petraea* having these intrinsic values, even if there never had been and never were to be any humans on planet Earth (Lyas, 1997; Ghilarov, 2000, p.411; Batavia and Nelson, 2017; Pascual *et al.*, 2017; Small, Munday and Durance, 2017). Alternatively, if

one accepts that values are socially constructed, such an argument is fundamentally flawed.

The construction of Cow Green Reservoir in Upper Teesdale in the 1960s, illustrates the difficulties of reliance on intrinsic value and how the UK conservation movement failed to learn from the experience of Thirlmere (p.4). The Tees Valley and Cleveland Water Board valued the location of the proposed reservoir instrumentally, perceiving it as a potential water supply for the nationally important Teeside chemical industry. Conservationists in contrast valued aesthetically and intrinsically the rare arctic alpine plants e.g., Teesdale violet *Viola rupestris* and Teesdale Sandwort *Minuartia stricta*. Regardless of any instrumental economic value, the aesthetic and intrinsic value of the plants were reason enough not to construct the reservoir (Gregory, 1971, p.171; Mabey, 1980, pp.50-52; Scott, M., 2016, pp.148-153). But the developers had the economic resources and the support of the then Labour government for construction to go ahead. The small plants were not valued aesthetically by the developers, who claimed that they provided nothing for human needs and simply reflected the values of an elite minority. Reliance on intrinsic value has proved difficult to defend and has faced criticism similar to the above since at least the early-nineteen twenties, although it may help to clarify issues of conservation concern. It is generally accepted that rarity does not transform objects into something with intrinsic value (Smith, T., 1922; Beardsley, 1965; Ghilarov, 2000; McDonald, 2004, pp.1-56; Samuelson, L., 2010).

Work of the economist Thomas Brown has provided a robust means of protecting natural capital, as an alternative to reliance on intrinsic value or willingness to pay (Brown, T., 1984; Smith, D. *et al.*, 2016). His alternative still requires a subject to take an interest in a specific object in the natural environment, but he applied preference, meaning the preference of one object over another. Objects can be diverse, including a mountain valley, a wildflower, a person, colours, symbols, icons, emotions, and thoughts (Morris, 1956, pp.10-12). Relevant values are grouped under three broad realms, held values, assigned values and relational values, which can be applied in both a philosophical and economic context in addition to interacting with each other.

Brown has been criticised for paying inadequate attention to the role of feelings, as phenomenological psychology suggests that feelings are involved in almost every aspect of valuation by humans (Schroeder, 1982, p.78).

Held values are broad, generic principles and concepts, stemming from core beliefs, emerging over time and relatively stable (Brown, T., 1984; Segerson, 2003; Seymour, E. *et al.*, 2010; Schroeder, 2013, p.78; Jones, N. *et al.*, 2016). Farmers have historically valued the important role that they played in defeating the Nazi threat during the Second World War by feeding the nation. Lake District hill farmers are also likely to value their role in the development and maintenance of an agropastoral cultural landscape, with clear anthropogenic influences. However, conservationists are more likely to value their role in conserving a cultural landscape, which may include unclear anthropogenic influences.

Assigned values are influenced by held values and are linked to the relationship of preference between a person and an object but are not a characteristic of the object itself. Due to the person's held values, different objects are of different importance or worth, relative to other objects. To a hill farmer, for example, perceived tidiness and productivity, may mean that they value aesthetically a grass ley. For conservationists in contrast, structure, complexity, and biodiversity, may mean that they value aesthetically a traditional hay meadow. Assigned values will often relate to identifiable locations within the natural environment, many hill farmers having a strong sense of place for the cultural landscape they live and work within. Attaching monetary measures to such sense of place is difficult (James, S., 2016a), but willingness to pay can be an indication of assigned value (Brown, T., 1984; Segerson, 2003; Seymour, E. *et al.*, 2010; Iniesta-Arandia *et al.*, 2014; Jones, N. *et al.*, 2016; Masiero *et al.*, 2019).

Relational values are as discussed highly compatible with phenomenology and phenomenological aesthetics (p.40). Relational values may emerge through people using all five senses, as their bodies interact with the natural environment and

consequently the weather may play an important role (Ingold, 2011, pp.129-132). Relational values include eudaemonic values, which are values associated with leading a meaningful life and doing what is believed to be the right thing. There are diverse relationships with the Lake District, including social and moral responsibility associated with eudaemonic values, which may emerge through volunteers conserving natural capital or outdoor activity leaders introducing people to the National Park (Brown, T., 1984; Schroeder, 2013, p.79; Chan *et al.*, 2016; Hirons, Comberty and Dunford, 2016; Jones, N. *et al.*, 2016; Pascual *et al.*, 2017; Small, Munday and Durand, 2017; Mattijssen *et al.*, 2020).

2.2.4.2.1 Pricing the Natural Environment

Different forms of value have played roles in valuing the natural environment and economic choices are influenced by diverse factors. Economic measures of value are a sub-set of assigned value and how value is used in everyday speech, while price is simply an exchange ratio in which one of the assets exchanged is money (Boulding, 1956; Holmes, T. *et al.*, 2016, p.321; Smith, D. *et al.*, 2016). However, reflecting the importance attached to money in a capitalist society, Willingness to Pay is one economic method which has been used in the past as an alternative to intrinsic and relational values when valuing natural capital (Harrison, G., 1992; Baron and Spranca, 1997; Gossling, 1999; Satterfield *et al.*, 2013; Bertram and Rehdanz, 2015; Richardson *et al.*, 2015). Clearly monetary measures of value play a key role in decisions regarding natural capital in the Lake District, but this literature review has revealed that such measures may not always be appropriate (Segerson, 2003, p.7; Fanny, Nicolas and Sander, 2015).

However, to neoclassical economists attaching a price to natural capital, such as a traditional hay meadow, will demonstrate the worth of any economic benefit it provides. It is claimed that this approach makes the benefits understandable to a wide audience, building a case for conservation (National Research Council, 2004; Crowe, 2015; Juniper, 2015, p.252). But it has also been criticised as another example of

instrumental value, utilitarian, human centred and underpinned by a supportive neoliberal political elite (Ghilarov, 2000).

Such pricing has also been criticised on grounds of social justice, it being claimed that it changes the rationale for conservation, with natural capital becoming an investment opportunity for corporate carbon reduction targets (Matulis, 2014). More specifically it has been claimed that such tax payer funded carbon reduction targets may lead to the Lake District and similar areas becoming the source of new income streams for wealthy rentier capitalists (p.26) (Mason, G., 2008; Monbiot, 2014; Rappel, 2018; Bellamy-Foster, 2018; Terzakis, 2018). This would mirror the focus of successive governments on monetarism, deregulation, and market-based reforms (Jones, S., 2012), which ignores the role of distributive justice in economics (Farley, 2012).

Occasionally instrumental and utilitarian value falls victim to public scrutiny as evidence in 2010 by the proposed sale of the public forestry estate in England. Despite the proven recreational benefits of the forests which are managed by Forest Enterprise an agency of Forestry Commission, the Government stated its intention to dispose of them. It was rapidly accused of aiming to increase the profitability of commercial forests while reducing the costs of woodlands of high biodiversity and recreational value. In 2011 a public consultation exercise commenced, but with no option of continuing the existing management arrangements, which motivated vociferous public protests at sites such as Grizedale Forest in the Lake District. The Government cancelled the consultation in response and appointed an Independent Panel on Forestry. The literature reveals how the Government valued the forests instrumentally as a utilitarian resource but in this instance had completely underestimated the sophisticated assigned and relational values of people for their forests (Irvine *et al.*, 2016; Maund *et al.*, 2020).

However, intangible aesthetic benefits, including those associated with forests, pose major difficulties for pricing and have consequently been neglected by researchers. Nevertheless, a qualitative study concerning the spiritual experiences of hillwalkers in

the Lake District, revealed that such experiences were closely linked to what participants valued aesthetically (Jepson, 2013). There was consensus that the National Park was a captivating and very special, valued aesthetically as somewhere that inspired great passion and admiration (Sharpley and Jepson, 2011; Jepson, 2013; Jepson and Sharpley, 2015).

2.2.5 Summary

A wide literature has been reviewed including beliefs and values, which is important because there is evidence that diverse factors may influence aesthetic values and in turn the conservation of natural capital and its ability to deliver ecosystem services. There has been a focus on the literature surrounding the bundle of ecosystem services termed cultural services, but particularly aesthetic benefits, including aesthetic engagement in terms of the diverse relationships that people have with natural capital integral to the Lake District cultural landscape. A review of how signs imbue this cultural landscape, demonstrates how they also contribute to shaping the beliefs of stakeholders and the values that stem from those beliefs. The literature revealed how measuring the economic benefits of aesthetic services delivered by natural capital presents epistemological and methodological difficulties and that insight has often been effectively facilitated by qualitative studies (Small, Munday and Durance, 2017).

2.3 Lake District

2.3.1 Staycations for the Rich?

In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, members of the upper classes e.g., Horace Walpole (1717-1797 CE) accompanied by Thomas Gray (1716-1771 CE) (Schama, 1995, pp.447-450), followed later by the upper middle classes e.g., Wordsworth (Macfarlane, R., 2003, p.220), crossed or visited the Alps, some valuing aesthetically the encounter. Restrictions on travel to continental Europe, due to the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, contributed to the Lake District becoming a place where several influential thinkers promoted a change in approach to how the natural environment is valued aesthetically, also inspiring a rise in the number of wealthy visitors with an enthusiasm for its exploration (Hope-Nicolson, 1959, p.23; Reynolds, 2016a, p.5).

The literature surrounding this sudden enthusiasm for visiting the Lake District and particularly the influence of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements, largely supports claims that before the mid-eighteenth century people were antagonistic about lands of wild and mountainous character. There is an extensive literature supporting these claims, but it is surprisingly selective and not always an accurate interpretation of historic sources.

The Romans invaded England and Wales in 43 CE and encountered a flourishing and sophisticated late Iron Age civilization, but one which was essentially illiterate (Brown, I., 2009, pp.158-159). The Romans were too preoccupied subduing the natives to record whether these people valued wild and mountainous lands aesthetically and consequently one needs to look further afield to Mediterranean and Mesopotamian cultures. Most of the literature from the ancient world has been lost over millennia, but the Epic of Gilgamesh, The Iliad, Old Testament, and other surviving documents are generally ambivalent about the aesthetics of wild and mountainous areas (Anonymous, 1920; Homer, 1987; Bernbaum, 2006; Ward-Thompson, 2011; Timothy, 2013; Sanders, 2016; Barton, W., 2017, pp.48-51).

However, the classicists Jason König and Dawn Hollis argue that there is evidence that people from the ancient world valued aesthetically wild and mountainous lands, but that the written evidence is nuanced (König, 2016; König, 2018). They have also identified surviving texts from the Roman world and early Christian era clearly evidencing how people valued lands of wild and mountainous character aesthetically (König, 2016; Hollis, 2017; König, 2018; Hollis, 2019; Hollis, 2020; Hollis, 2021; König, 2021; Whalin, 2021). The original sources, such as the poet Quintus Horatius Flaccus, or Horace, (65-8 BCE) are accessible. Horace made numerous references to such aesthetic beauty (Barton, W., 2017, p.16), while also believing in the health benefits of the natural environment (Hazelton-Haight, 1910). How Horace valued aesthetically lands of wild and mountainous character is evidenced in several of his odes:

*along the shady slopes of Helicon or
by the Pindus, or on icy Haemus,
whence forests rashly followed singer
Orpheus, who through the
music that his mother taught him
checked the rapid course of rivers and swift-rushing
winds and charmed the oaks to go with him, when
hearing his sweet strings?*

Book 1 1.12

Helicon is a mountain in Boeotia in central Greece, while the Pindus and the Haemus are mountain ranges in Greece (Horace, 2008, p.19). Yet Roderick Frazier Nash claims that Horace and his contemporaries found such environments “*forbidding and repulsive*” (Nash, 1967, p.10). The literature is based on a wealth of unsubstantiated arguments, supporting claims that before the mid-eighteenth century people did not value aesthetically lands of wild and mountainous character (Urry, 1995, p.193; Schama, 1995, pp.411-423; Macfarlane, R., 2003, pp.14-15; Thompson, I., 2010, pp.19-21; Lake District National Park Partnership, 2016, p.181; Walton, 2016, p.31).

Original sources reveal how theologians in the early Christian church, e.g., Basil the Great (c.329-379 CE), St. Ambrose (c.339-379 CE) and St. Chrysostom (c.347-407 CE) valued aesthetically lands of wild and mountainous character (John of Ephesus, 1924, pp.229-247; Attfield, 1983; Livingstone, 1994; Adler, 2006; Barton, W., 2017; Chrysavgis, 2019, p.162; König, 2021; Whalin, 2021). However, there is a paucity of evidence from the Christian era until the late Mediaeval era, which has been attributed to the teachings of St. Augustine of Hippo and St. Eucherius of Lyons (c.380-c.449 CE). The doctrine of *Contemptus mundi* is particularly relevant, defined as contempt for the world and moral disdain for physical existence in anticipation of an afterlife (St. Augustine, 401; Eucherius of Lyons, 1654; Kellogg, 1951; Brown, P., 1967; Bruun, 2006, p.299; Shaw, 2008; Merriam-Webster, 2019). Nevertheless, the works of St. Augustine are open to interpretation and there is evidence that he could appreciate the beauty of the natural world. It should also be noted that written records were created and curated by ordained priests and monks, inferring that the wider population may not have shared these aesthetic values (Sorrell, 1988, p.12; Burchardt, 2002, p.5; McCurry, 2011).

Sara Ritchey argues that during the late Mediaeval era, assigning aesthetic value to the natural environment became perceived as interpreting God's presence (Ritchey, 2014; Harris, 2015). A key influence was rediscovered knowledge by scholars working in Al-Andalus and other Arab lands, contributing to a change in the perception of the material world (Al-Khalili, 2010). The greatest conduits of this change of perception were probably St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153 CE) and St. Francis of Assisi (1181 CE-1226 CE), contributing to the intellectual foundations of the Renaissance (White, L., 1967; Robinson, M., 2002, p.178; Wolf, 2005, p.32; Warner, 2011; Viviers, 2014; Hewlett-Koelb, 2021, pp.123-126).

Yet the literature indicates how the church largely continued to curate both knowledge and accounts of how people valued aesthetically the natural environment. Indeed there was no substantive change until the Enlightenment of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for even when Charles Darwin (1809-1882 CE) entered Christ's

College, Cambridge in 1827, it was to study for the priesthood. The legacy of control by the church is that literary and iconographic evidence of what lay people in the UK valued aesthetically is quite limited, largely indicating that it was clearly anthropogenic cultural landscapes (Gainsborough, 1750; Pevsner, 1955; Prince, 1988, pp.102-105; Mitchell, W., 1994, p.15; Carey, A., 2017, p.81). There is the record of the folk tradition and a few diaries and journals (p.66), but the clearest indications of lay people valuing aesthetically lands of wild and mountainous character, are those of wealthy people dating from the seventeenth century (Fiennes, 1888).

Written historical evidence indicates that the key deterrents to visiting the Lake District were not that people found its mountainous character repulsive. The key deterrents were physical barriers e.g., atrocious roads (Camden *et al.*, 1722, p.977; Defoe, 1726, p.259; Waugh, 1860, pp.4-5; Nicholson, 1955, pp.76-86), civil unrest (Stockdale, 1872, pp.274-284; Prebble, 1961), and disease e.g., malaria (Stockdale, 1872, pp.327-328; James, S. P., 1929; Dobson, 1989; Chin and Welsby, 2004; Hodgkinson, 2016). Sergio Del Molino provides evidence in support of this argument by explaining that Romantic Movement inspired tourism arrived much later in Spain than in the UK, due to war and civil unrest. It was the second half of the nineteenth century, a delay of approximately one century, before the wealthy Spanish felt safe to travel as tourists in their often mountainous country (Del Molino, 2016, pp.134-138).

Despite entrenched claims in the literature, there is evidence that people valued aesthetically wild and mountainous lands before the mid-eighteenth century. This complements recent research, confirming that there appear to be no innate reasons why people should not do so.

2.3.2 “A Sort of National Property”

The literature outlines how the railways facilitated safe access for the middle and working-class people to the Lake District (Waugh, 1860, p.3), despite opposition from vested interests, including then Poet Laureate, Wordsworth to the Kendal to Windermere branch line (Hoskins, 1955, pp.262-263; Wordsworth, W., 1974, pp.341-343).

Wordsworth argued that seeking to gaze upon “*picturesque natural scenery*”, was an acquired taste and of “*quite of recent origin*”. Like Nash (p.58), he ignored evidence and inaccurately claimed that the mountaineering botanist John Ray (1627-1705 CE) and Bishop Thomas Burnet (c.1635-1715 CE) had not valued aesthetically lands of wild and mountainous character.

Ray certainly valued mountains aesthetically (Ray, 1692, p.200), he was a deist and ordained priest (Berry, 2011). Deism developed among some intellectuals during the seventeenth century (Seaton, 2013, p.96), it used natural philosophy to reveal details of God’s work (Nash, 1967, pp.46-47; *In Our Time - Deism* 2020). Prolific in the natural sciences (Raven and Walters, 1956, pp.9-13), his most important theological work was *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation*, in which he repeatedly states how he valued aesthetically lands of wild and mountainous character (Ray, 1692, pp.200-203):

“*That the Mountains are pleasant objects to behold appears, in the very images of them, their Draughts and landskips are so much esteemed* (Ray, 1692, p.203)”.

Ray goes on to detail 20 perceived benefits, (Schama, 1995, p.451), which might be interpreted as rudimentary concepts of natural capital and ecosystem services.

Those arguing that mountains were not valued aesthetically, because they were believed to be the remains of the great flood and consequently sinful, frequently cite Burnet. In his book the *Sacred Theory of the Earth*, he argued that mountains were the

detritus of a formerly perfect world (Burnet, 1684, pp.145-148; Hope-Nicolson, 1959, pp.233-242; Macfarlane, R., 2003, p.27). Burnet viewed the Alps in 1671, but had a binary response, gaining aesthetic pleasure gazing upon them, but negative about their creation and symbolism (Schama, 1995, pp.451-452; Barton, W., 2017, pp.147-149; Hollis, 2021, pp.55-70). Burnet was rigorously challenged by contemporaries, the Bible stating that the flood waters first covered the high hills and then the mountains, the Ark eventually coming to rest on the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 7:19; Genesis 7:20; Genesis 8:4; Barton, W., 2017 p.56), but his argument of a ruined earth inspired John Ruskin (1819-1900 CE) among others (Macfarlane, R., 2019, pp.87-88; Zalasiewicz, 2019, p.90). Nevertheless, the historical evidence continues to be ignored, as Hollis discovered when she was invited to talk about her research to the Alpine Club, to be received with anger and dismissed (Hollis, 2017).

The branch line would facilitate access to the Lake District by the middle and working classes, who Wordsworth claimed did not have the good taste to value it aesthetically (Helsing, 1994, p.107; Morgan, 2019, pp.66-67). His core beliefs, together with his aesthetic values linked to the Picturesque and Romantic Movements underpinned Wordsworth's opposition. Yet Wordsworth's description of the Lake District as "*a sort of national property*", continues to be wilfully quoted out of context. Wordsworth did not wish his rural idyll to be disturbed by the middle and working classes, he wanted wealthy people to construct second homes more in keeping with his aesthetic values (Wordsworth, W., 1853, p.158). However, by the time of his letters to the Morning Post in 1844, the intelligentsia believed that valuing aesthetically lands of wild and mountainous character was of recent origin (Dent *et al.*, 1892; Hollis, 2019).

2.3.3 Legacy of the Elite

Literature chronicles the development of contemporary mountaineering, which was greatly influenced by the Picturesque and Romantic Movements. It largely confirms the belief that valuing aesthetically lands of wild and mountainous character is quite recent and even that the founders of this sport were the first to value aesthetically mountains (Macfarlane, R., 2003, pp.14-18). This engenders a sense of elitism and

challenges to such core beliefs are perceived by some mountaineers as undermining the pillars of their sport, as noted by Hollis when invited to speak to the Alpine Club (Hollis, 2017).

Despite facing barriers of entrenched elitism in mountaineering, climbing and sailing, the literature details how some working and lower middle class people aesthetically engaged with the Lake District from the nineteenth century onwards (Ward Lock, 1935, p.26; Christian, 1966, pp.140-141; Fairbrother, 1972, p.146; Millward and Robinson, 1970, p.291; Pearsall and Pennington, 1973, pp.281-282; Bunce, M., 1994, p.129; Burchardt, 2002, pp.121-130; Thompson, I., 2010, pp.279-291; Huggins and Gregson, 2013, pp.186-187; Westaway, 2013; Yarwood, 2023). However, the contemporary Lake District has the highest visitor spend of any National Park in the UK, together with the greatest concentration of Michelin starred restaurants and quality hotels outside London. For several years, it was marketed as the *UK Adventure Capital*, but there is little evidence of engagement with underrepresented groups e.g., people with disabilities (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2010; National Parks, 2023). Fortunately the Calvert Trust and similar organisations enable people with disabilities to enjoy aesthetic engagement with the Lake District, but despite the creation of accessible trails, the literature shows that failure to provide reasonable adjustments remains a significant issue (Macpherson, 2008; Burns, Paterson and Watson, 2009; Burns, Watson and Paterson, 2013; House, Samways and Williams, 2015; Macpherson, 2017; Chikuta, du Plessis and Saymaan, 2019; Breen *et al.*, 2023).

A small number of people from black minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds have lived in the countryside throughout the Modern era (Bressey, 2009). But despite people from BAME backgrounds comprising 18% of the English population, LDNPA statistics published in 2021 revealed that only about 3% visitors to the Lake District were from BAME backgrounds (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2021a). But Satish Kumar argues that there is no fundamental reason why people from BAME backgrounds should not enjoy engaging aesthetically with the natural environment. Under representation may partly be due to post Second World War immigrants working very

long hours for little financial gain in cities and not having the opportunity to engage with the natural environment. There may also have been an element of wanting to present an urbanised, anglicised, modern version of themselves, and leaving behind any association with rurality, rural poverty and in some instances forced agricultural work (Parker, 2019).

The literature about underrepresented groups dates back to the 1980s and highlights deterrents including feeling obliged to adopt symbolic behaviour and clothing (pp.45-46) (Shirley, 2017a, pp.97-99; Hill, A., 2024). However, despite Jay Rayner producing a race crime map in 2001, covert racism remains a problem throughout rural England, a significant barrier faced by visitors from BAME backgrounds to the Lake District. In addition, a vociferous minority racially abuse those people from BAME backgrounds who encourage others to visit and value aesthetically places such as the Lake District. Cumbria is one of the least ethnically diverse counties in England, but concerns regarding the issues highlighted above have either been dismissed or met with anger by some privileged white people, responses which have been interpreted by recent studies as classic racism (Rayner, 2001; Thompson, I., 2010, pp.304-305; Pitcher, 2016; Burchardt, 2017, p.72; Parker, 2019; Butterfield, 2020; Mohdin and Campbell, 2020; Sethi, 2021; Guthrie, 2023; Mota, 2023; Palmer *et al.*, 2025; Yip *et al.*, 2025).

People from BAME backgrounds, low-income families and people with limited mobility, often enjoy congregating in visitor 'honey pots' e.g., Bowness-on-Windermere. The literature details how some outdoor activity enthusiasts still vociferously condemn these diverse hoards as engaged in pursuits deemed inferior (Fig. 2.3) (Urry and Larsen, 1990, pp.100-101; Urry, 1990; Kay and Whyte, 2000; Todd, 2013, p.70; Jepson, 2013, p.165; Gere, 2019a, pp.4-5; Morgan, 2019, p.66) This sense of elitism may in part be traced to the influence of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements (p.62), while symbols associated with the Lake District as an icon of the rural idyll may be influencing the conservation and physical management of natural capital today (Barthes, 1957, pp.133-140; Pringle, 1988, p.143) .



Figure 2.3 Photomontage of Bowness waterfront

The literature reveals that there are many stakeholders in the Lake District, and symbols developed from their perspectives, have over time provided meaning, definition, and form (Bull, S., 2010, pp.32-34; Short, M., 2011, pp.124-127; Westley and Folke, 2018). For example, industry was a significant influence on the cultural landscape by exploiting, and modifying natural capital in the form of minerals, woodland, and water, such sublime industry being of great interest to late eighteenth century Lake District visitors. Yet, today the juxtaposing of industry with the commonly shared perception of the rural idyll is generally perceived as incompatible with the legacy of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements. However, this also applies to industrial ruins and particularly more recent industrial ruins (Kisiel, 2022),

which similar to the synergistic relationship that existed between industry (p.35) and the broadleaved woodland economy is undervalued in comparison with agropastoral agriculture (Hoskins, 1955, pp.216-218; Millward and Robinson, 1970, pp.224-240; Pearsall and Pennington, 1973, pp.264-267; Millward and Robinson, 1980, pp.155-157; Urry, 1995, p.194; Uglow, 2002, pp.196-197; Hunt and Everson, 2004; Winchester, 2013, p.63; Donaldson and Gregory, 2018; Bennett, J., 2019).

2.3.4 Agropastoral Agriculture

A diverse literature surrounds the influence of agropastoral agriculture on natural capital, through practices such as sheep grazing the peatlands of the open commons, which in turn influence how the Lake District is valued aesthetically. The legacy of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements infers that people involved in agropastoral agriculture did not value aesthetically the Lake District (Arblaster *et al.*, 2008, p.359; Swanwick, 2008, p.339; Franklin, 2013, p.78; Seaton, 2013, p.111; Hollis, 2017). A dearth of historic literature to refute this claim may be due to literacy, but one notable exception was Tom Rumney (1764-1835 CE) who kept a matter-of-fact diary, outlining his leisure activities which included walking for pleasure, boating on Ullswater, picnics and attending the feasts that followed “*boon days*” (Rumney, 1936; Whyte, 2007b).

Literature details how in contrast to the rural idyll, a “rural anti-idyll” can arise, associated with negative beliefs about rural areas and marginalised people becoming symbols, promulgating fictional tropes (Yarwood, 2005; Somerville, Smith and McElwee, 2015; Del Molino, 2016, pp.95-100; Burchardt, 2017, pp.71-72; Bryn, Styles and Foster, 2018; Smith, K. and Byrne, 2018; Hall, T., 2020). One influence of such beliefs was the 1933 documentary *Tierra Sin Pan* directed by Luis Buñuel (1900-1983 CE), which presented the impoverished inhabitants of Las Hurdes in Spain as monstrous. However, negative beliefs about people from wild and mountainous regions have been recorded in cultures since ancient times, possibly influencing how such regions were valued aesthetically (John of Ephesus, 1924, pp.229-247; Mendelson, 2000; Del Molino, 2016, pp.102-126; König, 2021).

Despite such alleged influences, there is a romanticised rural idyll of agropastoral agriculture in the Lake District (Walling, 2014; Rebanks, 2015; Carey, A., 2017, p.80; McCormick, 2018, pp.81-184; Parry, 2020; Rebanks, 2020; Halfacree and Williams, 2021). Iconic representation of sheep grazed and treeless Lake District hills permeates consumer consciousness and is how many people believe that it should appear visually (Bennett, J., 2019). But historically the Lake District was largely tree covered, some authorities saying the trees were perceived as a threat and cleared (Nash, 1967, pp.17-19; Macfarlane, R., 2007, pp.90-91). But, Angus Winchester argues that it was not until the European land hunger, between 900 and 1300 CE that many of the trees were felled. Yet around this time, trees became increasingly valued from both spiritual and aesthetic perspectives (Ritchey, 2014; Harris, 2015; Winchester, 2019, p.32).

Herdwicks have become a symbol of the Lake District's iconic cultural landscape of agropastoral agriculture (p.45), represented in a diversity of media and making a notable contribution to the rural idyll (Walling, 2014, pp.157-175; Szász, 2017, pp.32-37). Herdwicks have a reputation for hardiness (Scott, C., 1886, pp.13-14; Malden, 1899, p.7), many people sharing the belief of hill farmers that hefted flocks are essential to maintaining the cultural landscape (Arblaster *et al.*, 2008; Harvey, D. *et al.*, 2013; The Lake District World Heritage Project Partnership, 2013; Walling, 2014, p.xv; Rebanks, 2015, pp.11-12; Denyer, 2013, pp.7-11; Lake District National Park Partnership, 2016; Huntsinger and Sayre, 2017; Bunce, R., Wood and Smart, 2018a; Bunce, R., Wood and Smart, 2018b; Edwards, M., 2018; McCormick, 2018; Shortland, 2021, p.208; Bateman, A., 2022, pp.66-75; Chapman, 2024). Although the Herdwicks are integral to imagery and merchandising of the Lake District (Fig. 2.4), the literature details how the ancestors of the so-called hardy Herdwick were domesticated in Mesopotamia and are high maintenance livestock, part of the illusion of the Lake District rural idyll (Burchardt, 2002; Olwig, 2013; Groom, 2017, p.58; Shirley, 2017b, p.112; Szász, 2017, pp.34-35).



Figure 2.4 Photomontage of Sheep and the rural idyll

The literature details how hill farmers are a minority community, sometimes living in relative poverty, compounded by demographic, social and economic challenges, which means that some have become socially excluded (Arblaster *et al.*, 2008, p.360; Burton, R. *et al.*, 2008, p.315; Condliffe, 2008, p.87; Hubacek *et al.*, 2008, pp.294-297; Huntsinger and Sayre, 2017, p.285). A secondary narrative analysis of oral history interviews of former coppicing and woodland management workers in Northwest England, supports the claim by Colin Lyas that such people may require special effort to focus on aesthetic qualities. This work was often hard, repetitive, in difficult conditions and there was the risk of injury, meaning that the workers did not necessarily value their experiences aesthetically (Lyas, 1997, p.20; Bingley, 2013). The

work of Abraham Maslow (1908-1970 CE) is often quoted in support of such claims, Maslow identified five basic types of human need in pyramid formation, which he claimed acted as drivers of behaviour. He argued that circumstances would force people to focus on satisfying their immediate needs, before they could focus on achieving needs higher up the pyramid (Maslow, 1943; Neher, 1991; Robertson, 2009, p.120; McLeod, 2018). Consequently, workers engaged in mundane outdoor manual work, would be unlikely to value aesthetically the surrounding natural environment. But Maslow's argument has faced rigorous criticism, including his chosen method and how the upper levels of his pyramid were unclear. James Rebanks and many other hill farmers contradict Maslow's argument by valuing aesthetically the Lake District cultural landscape, Rebanks enthusiastically writing about agropastoral agriculture. He argues that although the literature about the future of agropastoral agriculture is often negative, hill farmers are generally more positive (Farmers Guardian, 2014; Rebanks, 2015, pp.284-287; National Sheep Association, 2016; National Sheep Association, 2017; Edwards, M., 2018; Rebanks, 2020, pp.274-277; Bateman, A., 2022, pp.32-41).

Further evidence of how poverty and ill health do not necessarily prevent creativity and sophisticated aesthetic values, can be seen in Cumbrians Percy Kelly (1918-1993 CE), Sheila Fell (1931-1979 CE) and Norman Nicholson (Nicholson, 1963; Wadsworth, 2019). Similarly, hill farmers are engaged in hard but varied work within the cultural landscape, with which they may develop relationships of constitutive benefit. What they may value aesthetically will stem from their beliefs, but will also be influenced by relationships with the cultural landscape (Mabey, 1980, p.27; Mansfield, 2011; Olwig, 2013; James, S., 2016a; Olwig, 2016; Conrad, 2017, p.39). Academic, grey and popular literature confirms how hill farmers believe both that they are farming sustainably and that the climate and terrain of the Lake District is ideal for the Herdwick and similar breeds (p.67) (Walling, 2014, p.xv; McCormick, 2018). Sheep are integral to their lives and life-long socialization influences their values (Price, L. and Evans, 2009; James, S., 2016b; Wilson, J. and Tonner, 2020). A key factor influencing the beliefs and values of hill farmers was the drive for increased food production in the second half of the twentieth century, which convinced them that their work was of national importance

(Shoard, 1980, pp.11-14; Burchardt, 2002; Edwards, M., 2018, p.10; Bateman, A., 2022).

The role of socialisation in developing hill farmers' aesthetic preferences is closely tied to how they understand and farm their land, most being said to value aesthetically natural environments with visually clear anthropogenic influences (von Bonsdorff, 2005; Burton, R., 2012; Stotten, 2016). Other stakeholders also hold these values, perceiving Herdwicks as keeping the Lake District tidy by maintaining a close-cropped grass sward (Bonn, Rebane and Reid, 2008, p.448; Swanwick, 2008, p.353; Chapin III, 2017, pp.26-29; Szász, 2017, pp.32-33; Mansfield, 2018; McCormick, 2018, p.69).

The parliamentary enclosure movement gained momentum in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but regulations and hefted flocks of Herdwicks allowing communal shepherding of the most extensive unenclosed commons in Europe, contributed to the Lake District avoiding the worst excesses of both the enclosure movement and overgrazing (Hoskins, 1955, pp.190-195; Lucas, 1988, pp.89-91; Mitchell, W., 1994, p.17; Spek, 2017, p.158; Edwards, M., 2018, pp.8-9; Winchester, 2018). In contrast, recent literature details how hill farmers object to regulations, claiming that reduced sheep numbers will make hefting unviable and lead to domination of the iconic cultural landscape by bracken, scrub, and trees, destroying what they claim most people value aesthetically. But avoidance of overgrazing is a long-established means of protecting natural capital and there is evidence that well-regulated commons prevented overgrazing (Scott, C., 1886, pp.121-123).

Bracken grows on relatively deep soils, which historically supported woodland and literature indicates that under-grazing may be contributing to the expansion of this plant, threatening grazing, biodiversity, and aesthetic value (Milligan, Rose and Marrs, 2016; Scott, Michael, 2016, pp.163-164). But in addition to under-grazing, climate change and the demise of bracken cutting are also key factors (Mansfield, 2017; Mansfield, 2018; Rotherham, 2018a). Historically bracken was a valuable commodity and money paid to harvest it from the commons, an activity which has been

reintroduced, to create a new ecosystem service in the form of peat free compost (Stockdale, 1872, pp.197-200).

Some literature claims that hill farmers object to reducing sheep numbers in exchange for publicly funded subsidies, complaints including "*creeping nationalisation of land management*" (McCormick, 2018, p.67). Unsurprisingly, there is also opposition to hill farmers receiving such public money (p.27), it being alleged that these subsidies are a form of rentier capitalism (Mason, G., 2008). However, studies have highlighted how agropastoral agriculture could contribute more to the conservation of natural capital and delivery of ecosystem services, including aesthetic value (Mansfield, 2014).

Literature indicates that hill farmers might not perceive overgrazing in the way that conservationists do (Bunce, R., Wood and Smart, 2018b). This may be a consequence of the gradual shift of the baseline, with each generation accepting the diversity of species that was present at the start of their careers, due to such inappropriate reference points and failing to appreciate that the resource is deteriorating (Monbiot, 2013a, p.69). Early studies largely related to fisheries (Pauly, 1995; Ulman and Pauly, 2016), but the *Estación Biológica de Doñana* has used archives, historic literature, paintings, military maps and cores of lake sediment to reveal a more accurate interpretation of historic Spanish tree-cover and that wolves *Canis lupus* and brown bears *Ursus arctos* were widespread, these later studies are among the few to address the feasibility of restoring such earlier baselines (Clavero, 2014; Popejoy *et al.*, 2018; Soga and Gaston, 2018; Jones, L. *et al.*, 2020; Clavero *et al.*, 2023; Álvarez, 2025).

There is no reason why hill farmers should not value aesthetically the Lake District, and like many residents and visitors their aesthetic values seem to be biased towards clearly visible anthropogenic influences and little tree cover. Greater clarity surrounding these matters may be helpful in the conservation of natural capital.

2.3.5 Conservation Organisations

It is assumed that conservationists value aesthetically the Lake District, but their aesthetic values may influence the conservation of natural capital.

An extensive literature outlines the roles of the words 'natural', 'natural beauty', and nature in the designation of the Lake District and other National Parks (UK Government and Dower, 1945; UK Government, 1947; UK Government, 1949; Reynolds, 2016a, pp.66-94). But nature is one of the most complex words in the English language and little thought appears to have gone into its use in the legislation (Williams, 1976, pp.219-224; Selman and Swanwick, 2010; Spray, 2017). The dualism of nature and culture has been a dominant element in western thought since René Descartes (1596-1650 CE), which has influenced the academic backgrounds of conservationists and debates over nature, wilderness and cultural landscapes (Descartes, 1954; Haila, 1999; Linnell *et al.*, 2015; Falke and Poetzsch, 2021, p.3; Fletcher *et al.*, 2021; Shortland, 2021, p.158). For example, the Countryside Commission formed in 1968, had very different approaches to the conservation of the natural environment than the then Nature Conservancy and the legacy still lingers (UK Government, 1968; Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, 2019, p.12).

It is argued that a Thoreau inspired wilderness aesthetic, motivated by National Parks in the USA, informed the designation of the Lake District National Park (Sheail, 1976, pp.71-72; Green, 1981, pp.41-46; Brotherton, 1982; Butler, 2018). But the social construction of the Lake District owes much to the pervasiveness of the Romantic Movement in North America, which was greatly influenced by Wordsworth and Coleridge (Emerson, R., 1836; Thoreau, 1854; Nash, 1967, pp.47-54; Bunce, M., 1994, pp.26-28; Cronon, 1996). Consequently, National Parks in the USA can be claimed to be as much a social construction as the Lake District, their visual perception as wilderness often reflecting the forced removal of indigenous people. William Cronon described such wilderness as a cultural creation, built on a dualism between society and nature, while reinforced by the exclusory rhetoric of the US Wilderness Act of 1964 (Cronon, 1996; Rolston, 1997, p.47; Keller and Turek, 1999, p.20; Merchant,

2002, p.146; Binder, 2022). In contrast, Wallace Stegner (1909-1993 CE) and Sir Frank Fraser-Darling (1903-1979 CE) argued that even if most people never experienced true wilderness, they would still value its existence. However, there is no internationally agreed definition of wilderness and to confuse matters further not all languages have a comparable word, the closest Spanish translation, *desierto*, does not infer the same separation (Stegner, 1960; Fraser-Darling, 1969; Rolston, 1997, p.49; Macfarlane, R., 2007; Del Molino, 2016, p.230; Watson, J. and Venter, 2021).

Most of the contemporary literature defines wilderness as being free from industrial-scale activity but this natural capital also provides essential ecosystem services e.g., carbon sequestration and reserves of genetic diversity. Despite these benefits, so-called wilderness areas face anthropogenic threats, yet Luke Koenig argues that there are those who would prefer such anthropogenic deterioration, to the essential intervention and wise stewardship that is now often required (Watson, J. *et al.*, 2016; Di Marco *et al.*, 2019; Asamoah *et al.*, 2022; Koenig, 2024).

Despite the influences described above, UNESCO awarded the Lake District World Heritage Site status in 2017 based on the concept of a cultural landscape, classed as Category five by the IUCN (Dudley, 2008, pp.20-22; The Lake District World Heritage Project Partnership, 2013; Lake District National Park Partnership, 2015; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2017). Agropastoral agriculture was the crucial factor in the successful bid but there are conservationists who object to its prominence in the World Heritage Site, citing evidence that overgrazing damages natural capital (Anderson, P. and Yalden, 1981; Anderson, P. and Radford, 1994).

Some perceive rewilding as more sustainable land use but the concept of rewilding has faced extensive criticism in the European Alps, Wales and the Lake District, instigated by emotive criticism of agropastoral agriculture and a highly selective presentation of rewilding (Monbiot, 2013a; Mansfield, 2014; Zoderer and Tasser, 2021; Jones, F., 2022). Although rewilding as a concept can be traced back to the 1990s, such ill

feeling was not helped by the absence of any widely agreed definition or guiding principles until 2021. In essence rewilding restores natural ecosystems, including complete or near complete food webs at all trophic levels, but public engagement and diversity of approach are critically important (Soulé and Noss, 1998; Carver, 2016; Carver *et al.*, 2021; Convery and Carver, 2022; Hawkins *et al.*, 2022, pp.3-7). A claim similar to those surrounding intervention in wilderness areas, is that restoration of naturalness by rewilding can transform nature into an artifact, but the creation of such relatively undisturbed areas for nature does not necessarily diminish their intrinsic value (Ridder, 2007). Engagement and support are essential, but in the Lake District a crude caricature is still often presented, where rewilding is perceived as a threat to the cultural landscape and hill farmers' way of life.

A widely publicised rewilding project located in the west of the Lake District is *Wild Ennerdale*, which has been criticised by diverse stakeholders, despite the active involvement of local farmers (Schofield, 2022). For example, uncontrolled geomorphological processes are not valued aesthetically by some stakeholders, generating concern about perceived “mess” (Convery and Dutson, 2008; Convery and Dutson, 2012, p.243; Prior and Brady, 2017; Glentworth, Gilchrist and Avery, 2024). Concerns have also been expressed about both the welfare of and the failure to recognise the autonomy of the livestock utilised by *Wild Ennerdale*. But it has more in common with the interventionist Knepp Wilding than Oostvaardersplassen and the international concern voiced over its starving livestock (Tree, 2018; Kopnina, Leadbeater and Cryer, 2019; Dempsey, 2021; Leadbeater, Kopnina and Cryer, 2022; Allen, 2023; Cary *et al.*, 2025). More relevant in terms of aesthetic value is the allegation that a social construction of nature is being promoted in direct opposition to the agreed priorities of the LDNPP (Shortland, 2021, p.168; Thomas, 2022).

Brenda Zoderer and colleagues argue that the rewilding of agropastoral cultural landscapes often encounters such opposition, for what some conservationists may perceive as rewilding may be perceived by some stakeholders as inflicting multi-faceted damage to their cultural landscape. Aesthetic values may contribute to such

conflicts but constructive engagement with colleagues and the local community is crucial in mediation, and these are fundamental skills for professional conservationists (Zoderer and Tasser, 2021; Weber Hertel and Luther, 2023).

Wild Ennerdale is a social construction, not unlike the iconic Lake District agropastoral cultural landscape, which can be thought of as an hybrid of nature and culture. But regardless of potential high biodiversity value, some rewilding enthusiasts would prefer to see no clear visual evidence of human activity (Phillips, 1998; Linnell *et al.*, 2015; Tanulku, 2019; Koenig, 2024).

2.3.6 Summary

The literature has revealed how for conservationists and other stakeholders in the Lake District, their beliefs and the values that stem from those beliefs, including their aesthetic values, are influenced by biotic, historic, semiotic, social, and cultural factors. Beliefs and values are imbued with subjectivity, contributing to a highly subjective rural idyll, maybe perceived quite differently between stakeholders in the Lake District (p.5). Recent insights indicate potential differences between the aesthetic values of professional conservationists and the stakeholders of their organisations, but that aesthetic values may also vary between conservation organisations (pp.73-74). Other research suggests possible similarities between how some Lake District hill farmers, residents and visitors value aesthetically natural capital (p.70). Variations in how natural capital is valued aesthetically may have implications for both the statutory duties of the LDNPA (p.7) and the OUV of the National Park (p.8), which could influence conservation of natural capital and its ability to deliver ecosystem services to address the climate change emergency and biodiversity crisis (pp.28-29). There is a notable absence of studies regarding the above and thus insights may be gained from research regarding what professional conservationists in leadership positions and the stakeholders of their organisations value aesthetically, including how these aesthetic values may influence the conservation of Lake District natural capital. As aesthetic value is imbued with subjectivity, epistemology, methodology and methods associated with qualitative research, may be appropriate for this complex area.

Chapter Three

3. Methodology

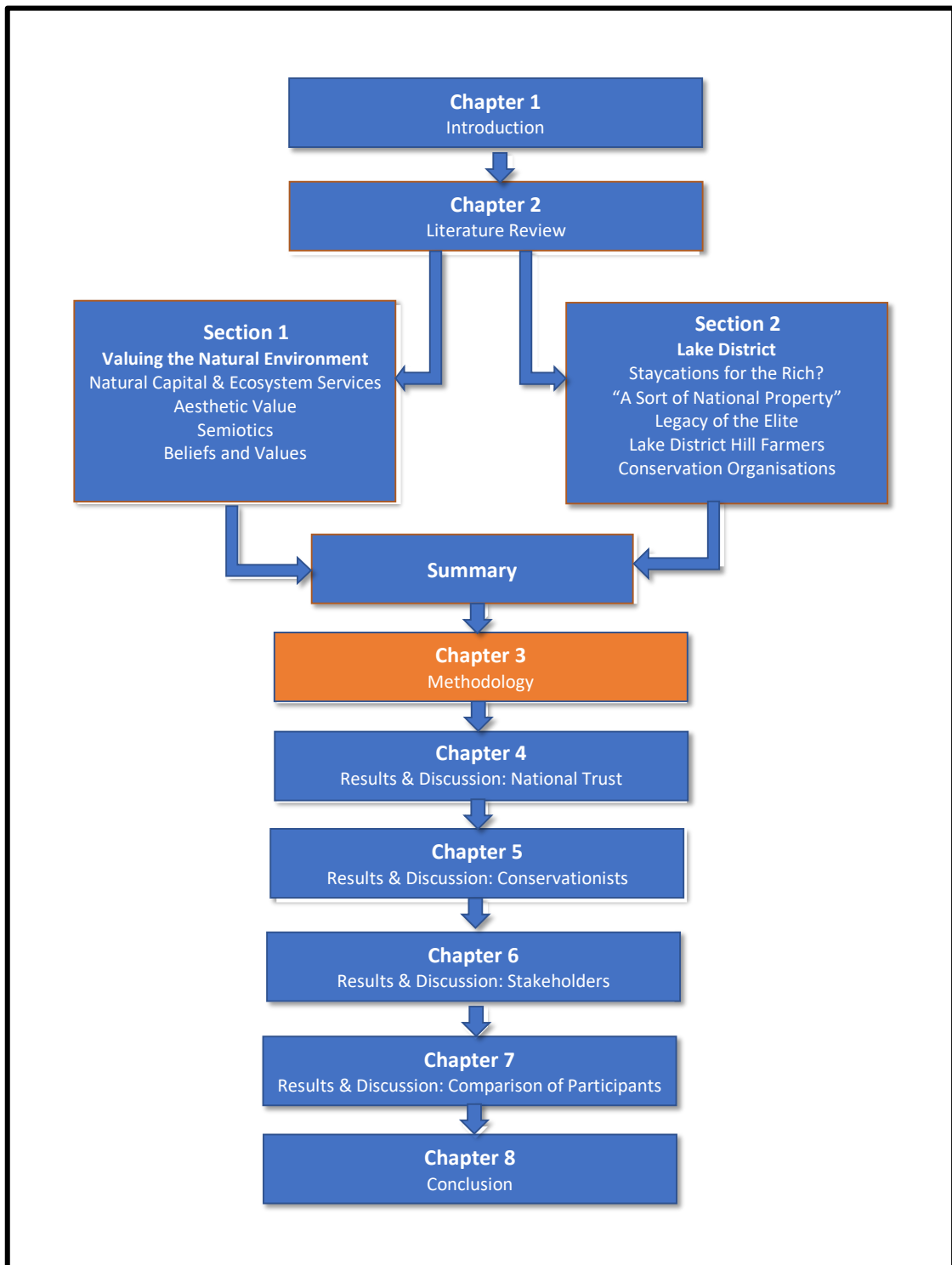


Figure 3.1 Chapter three in relation to the other thesis chapters

3.1 Introduction

As per section 2.2.1.3, peoples' aesthetic values are imbued with subjectivity and intangible. Thus, the influence of subjectivity needs to be considered when determining any contrasts in aesthetic valuation of the Lake District's natural capital, between the leadership of conservation organisations and their stakeholders, as such divergence may have practical implications for conservation.

In seeking to answer the research question, the subjectivity of aesthetic values played a key role in the selection of a qualitative methodology (Fig. 3.1). Subjectivity also influenced selection of the overall constructionism philosophical perspective (Grix, 2002, p.178), the phenomenological aesthetics ontology, phenomenological epistemology of the phenomenological analysis methodology and the associated methods (Fig. 3.2).

The chapter first justifies the qualitative approach, research philosophy, ontology, and epistemology. The methodology, use of photographs, SWOT analysis and diamond nine ranking are explained; before it concludes by outlining the methods, limitations, and the impact of COVID-19 on research.

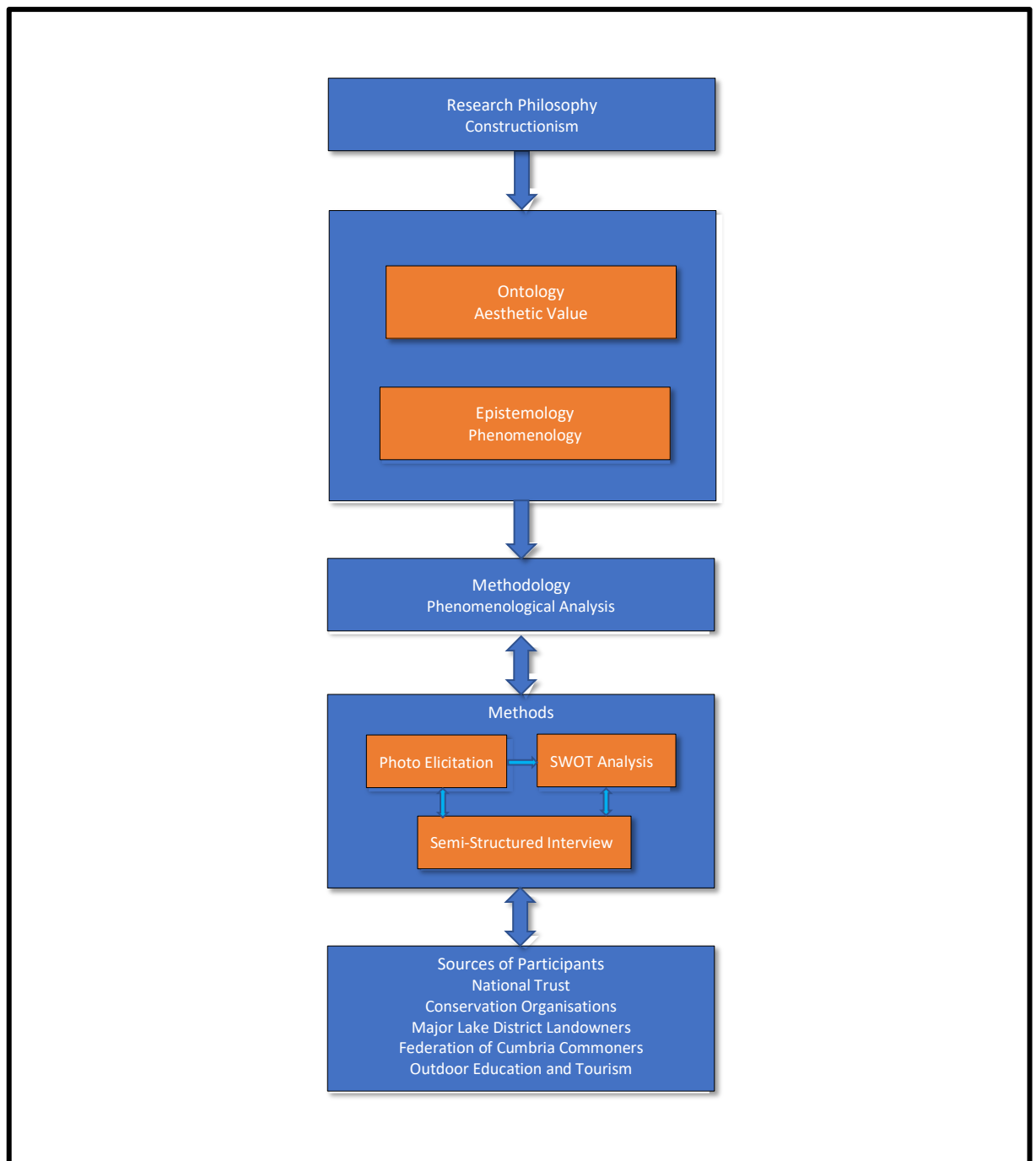


Figure 3.2 Philosophical approach to research

3.2 Why a Qualitative Approach?

The ontology of aesthetic values people assign to natural capital are complex, socially constructed, intangible and imbued with subjectivity (Hiles, 2008, p.579). Qualitative as opposed to quantitative approaches, can facilitate a greater intensity, scope of inquiry and ontological understanding. This enables the collection of rich data on the

aesthetic value participants assign to natural capital, together with influences including activities, events, processes, and issues of concern within their social context. Such approaches also allow the researcher to be more closely engaged with participants than in most quantitative approaches (Moon *et al.*, 2016).

However, researchers with backgrounds in the natural sciences, should be aware that the use of language within the social sciences can appear incomprehensible. There are also ideological barriers, including differing philosophies, ontologies, and epistemologies. While claims alleging poor clarity and consistency of the social science lexicon, may contribute to adverse ideologically prejudiced peer review from some academic journals (Grix, 2002, p.176; Sandbrook *et al.*, 2013; Bennett, N. *et al.*, 2017; Martin, 2019). Although acknowledging such barriers, qualitative approaches have a valuable role in facilitating understand of how the aesthetic values of professional conservationists in leadership roles within their organisations and their stakeholders may influence conservation of natural capital, integral to the Lake District cultural landscape.

3.3 Research Philosophy

Social reality is within the realm of the social sciences and is influenced by complex forms of human action and interaction (Grix, 2002). This is demonstrated in how the social and cultural backgrounds of people may influence how they perceive Lake District natural capital and the wider cultural landscape, including water resources, peatlands, and woodlands (Noonan, 2008, p.578; Moon *et al.*, 2019). Thus, as per section 2.2.3.5, the Lake District may be considered as a socially constructed rural idyll of how society imagines that it should be, physically reflecting self-definitions of influential groups and grounded in culture (Greider and Garkovich, 1994; Hiles, 2008, p.52). As a research philosophy, constructionism provides insight into how the relationships between people and their subjectivity, informs this Lake District rural idyll (Fig. 3.2), including how natural capital may be perceived differently by different people (Cloke, 1993, p.p.53-67; Stotten, 2016). As per section 2.2.4, the key challenges facing the conservation of natural capital are often relationships between people and

conflicts over fundamental values (Mabey, 1980, p.27). For example, selective interpretations of the legacies of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements, mean that the Lake District is largely promoted through its visual appearance, aligning with the beliefs and values of certain stakeholders (Mascia *et al.*, 2003; Blackman, 2014; Brook, 2018; Gere, 2019b; Gere, 2019a). Greater understanding of social construction in relation to the aesthetic values of stakeholders, including hill farmers (Schofield, 2022, p.p.35-37), may help facilitate their more effective engagement and conservation of natural capital.

Finally, constructionism should not be confused with constructivism (Grix, 2002, p.177), which has two meanings. In the social sciences constructivism is a theory about how people learn, claiming that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through direct experience and then reflecting on those experiences. Constructivism is also an austere school of art founded in 1915 by Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953 CE) and Alexander Rodchenko (1891-1956 CE).

3.4 Ontology

Ontology asks what is out there, that people should know about, in the form of deep questions about critical understanding of the nature of existence or objects being researched and it is tightly entwined with epistemology. Reflecting the prominence of aesthetic value in the research question and how this is imbued with subjectivity (Fig. 3.2), the ontological approach is phenomenological aesthetics of the natural environment (Grix, 2002, p.175; Noonan, 2008, p.581; Blackman, 2014; Hammond, 2017). The concept of intentionality and descriptions of the intuitively given experiential lifeworld based on the works of the German philosopher and mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938 CE) provides a framework for understanding how people interact with natural capital in multi-sensory ways (Neuber, 2010, p.34; Toadvine, 2010, p.85). As per section 2.2.2.4.1, the literature review revealed how Berleant was the first person to devise a phenomenological theory of ecological or environmental aesthetics. Strongly influenced by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961 CE), around the understanding that human perception is multi-sensory,

Berleant argues that people are not passive observers, but continuously interact with the natural environment actively and in multi-sensory ways (Berleant, 1992, pp.17-21; Tilley, 1994, pp.7-34; Neuber, 2010, p.34; Toadvine, 2010, p.85; Berleant, 2013; Carlson, 2020; Pink, 2020).

3.5 Epistemology

As per section 3.5, epistemology is closely entwined with ontology and is also a wide field in philosophy (Fig. 3.2). In essence it covers the limits, rationality, and justification of knowledge (Grix, 2002, p.177; Stone, 2008, p.265; Blackman, 2014), including understanding the creation of knowledge, which is highly relevant to the design and conduct of research (Moon *et al.*, 2019).

There is no widely accepted definition of phenomenology, but it originated as a philosophical movement in the early years of the twentieth century (Cerbone, 2006, p.5; Adams, C. and van Manen, 2008, p.614; Overgaard and Zahavi, 2009, p.614; Telford, 2020, p.47). Husserl is generally recognised as the founder of the movement, but similar philosophies had been advanced in the past (Moustakas, 1994, pp.25-30; Overgaard and Zahavi, 2009, p.1; Telford, 2020, p.48). Husserl believed that the dominant reductive scientific epistemologies of his time were ineffective in producing valid and objective results (Lavery, 2003). The exclusion of consciousness from such epistemologies was of particular concern to Husserl because he argued that consciousness was the very source of knowledge and value. However, Martin Heidegger, José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955 CE), Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980 CE) also made significant contributions to the development of phenomenology as a concept during the twentieth century. There remains disagreement over what phenomenology is, but there is agreement that language is central to the philosophy (Cerbone, 2006, pp.110-117; Adams, C. and van Manen, 2008, p.616; Overgaard and Zahavi, 2009, p.3; Romdenh-Romluc, 2010; Telford, 2020, pp.50-52; Holmes, O., 2022).

Phenomenology is now used throughout the social sciences and one important reason why it was selected as the research epistemology, is that language is central to phenomenology. It also holds the position that individual people are important, and that the world is both socially constructed by such people and subjective (Lavery, 2003). It has a valuable role to play in studies relating to the natural environment, including conflicts over natural capital and aesthetics, as historically conservationists have experienced difficulty in assessing subjectivity (Pernecky, 2006; Oberkircher *et al.*, 2011; Bieling and Plieninger, 2013; Hvarregaard, Alrøe and Noe, 2014; López-Santiago *et al.*, 2014; Johannesdóttir, 2016, p.190; Margaryan *et al.*, 2018; Noe, Clarkson and Stolte, 2021). The role of subjectivity within phenomenology is an even more important reason why it is an appropriate research epistemology, because subjectivity influences how people value aesthetically natural capital. It also recognises that subjectivity contributes to shaping the reality of social life and is necessary for the full understanding of the nature of human knowledge (Moran, 2000, p.21; Overgaard and Zahavi, 2009, p.21). While lived experience can help provide further insight into the common meaning of how participants value aesthetically natural capital. It can be used to describe the common meaning of what participants value aesthetically and associated lived experiences, the focus being on what participants have in common when aesthetically engaged with natural capital, seeking to reduce individual experiences to a description of its very nature or universal essence. Such lived experience is the main epistemological basis for many earlier qualitative methodologies but is of particular importance in phenomenology (Adams, C. and van Manen, 2008, pp.614-616; Creswell and Poth, 2018, p.75).

Phenomenology is not without criticism, one of the earliest being the claim that Husserl and Heidegger simply relied on intellectual intuition, it being little more than meaningless pseudo-metaphysics (Moustakas, 1994, p.25; Moran, 2000, p.21). However, it is more commonly challenged in how it aims to show that words, concepts and theories shape and structure the experiences of people that live through them. It relies on participants recalling past experiences, some of which including the senses of touch, taste, and smell, may be difficult to describe verbally later (Adams, C. and van

Manen,2008, p.617). Marxists challenged the focus on the individual, as opposed to the community, describing it as the high point of bourgeoisie individualism (Moran, 2000, p.21). A more general criticism is that focus on the individual, creates a tendency to lose sight of how the community functions as a self-perpetuating system, but this and related criticisms overlook the importance of individual people within communities (Crossley, 1996, p.98). Phenomenology has even been criticised as simply celebrating the ordinary and the mediocre, yet regardless of such criticism it has been embraced by reputable academic disciplines including nursing science and education. It is also notable that scientific evidence is providing support for both phenomenology and aesthetic engagement (p.42). In summary, the importance of subjectivity, social construction and language in phenomenology makes it an appropriate epistemology for how people value aesthetically natural capital (Overgaard and Zahavi,2009, p.19).

3.6 Methodology

Some methodologies employed in aesthetics can lead to distancing and objectification, but phenomenological methodologies reject the Kantian subject and object relationship, as per section 2.2.2.2, helping to achieve a clearer sociological and behavioural perspective (Fig. 3.2). The high level of engagement and interpretation of participants' perspectives and experiences is appropriate for the subjectivity associated with how people value aesthetically the natural capital integral to the Lake District cultural landscape (Adams, C. and van Manen,2008, p.616; Toadvine, 2010; Bannon, 2016, p.55; Johannesdóttir, 2016, p.188). In a pure phenomenological context values stem from a combination of beliefs, feelings, desires and insights, thus methodologies should not overlook how feelings and desires are conditioned within cultural systems (Farber, 1964). Importantly, the literature review also revealed how aesthetic values are imbued with subjectivity and that they transcend the so-called distal senses of sight and hearing. Phenomenological analysis was, therefore, chosen as the methodology, as it facilitates how people come to understand their most significant life experiences and is complementary to the philosophical perspective, ontology, and epistemology. It enables exploration of the overall situation and

analysis of the lived experiences of the participants, including as per section 2.2.3 the role of semiotics and metaphors, with which the Lake District is richly endowed (Moran, 2000, p.151; Oberkircher *et al.*, 2011; Moon *et al.*, 2016).

Phenomenological analysis has made four major contributions to methodologies. Firstly, it allows the voices of individual participants to be heard, so the descriptions of iconic or symbolic objects that participants value aesthetically, are based on their realities as described (Moran, 2000, p.151). Secondly, it allows complex phenomenon to emerge in a way that is meaningful to individual participants, usually by open ended semi-structured face to face interviews. Thirdly, insight is sought into the depths of the lived world of participants, protecting the subjective views of these experiences. Finally, participants must have experience of the topic under investigation, as regardless of their role in an organisation or wider society, they are considered experts. This can help facilitate a strong rapport, based on empathy and trust.

Phenomenological analysis is an effective methodology for the relatively small geographical area of the Lake District and the small pool of participants in the form of professional conservationists in leadership roles. The methodology incorporates methods allowing from as few as one to more than 50 participants (Anderson, E. and Spencer, 2002). Interpretative phenomenological analysis was also considered, but it is a methodology suitable for smaller numbers of participants, around 15 participants being considered appropriate for doctorate level (Wilson-Smith, 2017).

Phenomenological analysis has been criticised as being open to bias, which is normally unrecognised, consequently, it needs to be controlled (Sutherland *et al.*, 2018; Moon *et al.*, 2019). Subjectivity may be perceived as a weakness, but this can be addressed through reflexivity, accepting that it is an integral part of the research process (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

3.7 The Role of Interviews in Phenomenological Analysis

Phenomenological analysis places the experience of the participant at the core of the interview dialogue by exploring how they assign meaning to their experience when interacting with their environment. Consequently, semi-structured in-depth interviews are the most widely used interviews, when collecting data within phenomenological analysis (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). However, reliance on these alone may not provide insight into the multi-sensory ways in which people value aesthetically natural capital (Adams, W. *et al.*, 2002). One means by which these interviews can be enhanced, is by incorporating photography to form insightful methods including photo elicitation. As per section 3.4, visual images can facilitate insight into the what Husserl termed the lifeworld of participants, enabling the recall of emotional and sensory experiences, which may be impossible for some participants by relying simply on semi-structured in-depth interviews.

3.8 Photography in Qualitative Research

Photographs can be valuable research interview tools, but prior to selecting a method the benefits and potential difficulties of methods that incorporate photographs were considered.

3.8.1 Historical, Cultural, and Social Context of Photographs

As per section 2.2.3.4, Barthes and Scruton both claimed that the ontology of photographs is indexicality, always being linked to an object that exists or once existed (Barthes, 1980, pp.76-77; Scruton, 1981). This is what Barthes termed the real thing or *referent*, the object that had in the past been placed in front of the camera, without which there would be no photograph (Barthes, 1980, p.p.76-77). Similar claims have also been made by John Berger (1926-2017 CE), Susan Sontag, and Colin Lyas (Berger, 1972, p.10; Sontag, 1977, pp.128-136; Lyas, 1997), and such indexicality applies to both digital and 'analogue' photographs. Objects existing in four dimensions, are recorded as two-dimensional photographs, not the sole product of the artists subjective mind, but spatial and temporal anomalies (Benjamin, 1935, p.3; Berger, 1972, p.9; Clarke, 1997, p.24; Chan-Fai, 2010, p.260; Berger, 2013, p.20).

Photographs are, however, dependent on the subjective gaze of the photographer (Benjamin, 1935, p.2; Chan-Fai, 2010, p.262). Subjective visions of the world infuse photography (Berger, 1972, p.10), blurring notions of truth and reality (Benjamin, 1935, pp.2-4; Short, M., 2011, p.124; Bridle, 2019). When interpreting a photograph, there is meaning and significance attached to any object in the image, but a subjective decision has been made over what to exclude and composition (Chan-Fai, 2010, p.262; Berger, 2013, p.18). Research by Carol Crawshaw and John Urry (1946-2016 CE) towards the end of the era dominated by analogue photography, revealed that among the items excluded by professional photographers based in the Lake District were images of dead trees, barbed wire, derelict buildings, crowds, traffic jams, plastic bags and anyone wearing Bermuda shorts (Crawshaw and Urry, 1997). Conscious and sub-conscious exclusion by photographers, together with historical, cultural and social factors has contributed to the Lake District rural idyll.

3.8.2 Semiotic Qualities of Photographs

As per section 2.2.3, photographs may be rich in indexicality, icons and symbols, signs which can facilitate the communication of contents, only approximately represented by words (Bull, S., 2010, pp.14-16; Short, M., 2011, pp.122-128). Signs in the context of culture, can help achieve greater understanding of the content of photographs, representing subjects of importance to the participant. Signs can, for example, facilitate exploration of the socially constructed nature of aesthetic values (Ferrarotti, 1993; Clarke, 1997, pp.19-31; Bull, S., 2010, p.34; Lapenta, 2011; Short, M., 2011, p.124). The objects within photographs can, therefore, act as signifiers, carrying multiple symbolic meanings, arising from the values by which people define themselves. Certain images of the Lake District were iconic by the late nineteenth century (p.47), promoted further through twentieth century mass media (Greider and Garkovich, 1994; La Grange, 2005, p.244; Westley and Folke, 2018).

When viewing a photographic image, it is likely that its cultural meaning will first be understood (Bull, S., 2010, p.35). This is what Barthes termed the *studium* or a passive

interest in the image, later actively read and fully comprehended, which he termed the *punctum* (Barthes, 1980, pp.26-28; Clarke, 1997, p.32; Short, M., 2011, p.122).

In contrast to Barthes and ignoring how photographs may elicit memories, Sontag claimed that the Kantian subject and object relationship was built into the experience of viewing photographs (p.37). Consequently, photography by its very nature could only capture the superficiality of an object, any aesthetic qualities would be superficial (La Grange, 2005, p.126). In support of this argument the photographs of Diane Arbus (1923-1971 CE), Jem Southam and Andreas Gursky might be interpreted as detached or indifferent (Clarke, 1997, pp.28-30; Bright, 2011, pp.66-67; Cotton, 2014, p.102). However, as discussed, photographs are subjective creations and the war photographs of Don McCullin and the deadpan portraits of Celine van Balen express deep humanity (Clarke, 1997, pp.162-163; Bright, 2011, p.65; Cotton, 2014, pp.80-81). The origins of aesthetics in the appreciation of art may have influenced Sontag's argument, together with the importance that is normally attached to the 'distal' senses of sight and hearing (Stewart *et al.*, 1984; Stamps, 1990; Parsons, 2008, p.76; Pink, 2020).

Photographs are phenomena in the phenomenological sense and *Five Notes for a Phenomenology of the Photographic Image* by Hubert Damisch (1928-2017 CE) (Damisch, 1978), and *Camera Lucida* by Barthes (Barthes, 1980, pp.20-21; Chan-Fai, 2010, p.263) indicate their potential value within phenomenological analysis. While it is important to be aware of subjectivity, including decisions over what has been excluded and composition of photographs, the ubiquitous smartphone is an excellent device for participants to record and articulate how they value aesthetically natural capital (Chan-Fai, 2010, pp.262-263; Berger, 2013, p.18).

3.8.3 Photo Elicitation

Photo elicitation is the most common method to employ photographs within phenomenological analysis and the visual qualities of photographs make it suitable for exploring how people value aesthetically natural capital. The first use of the term photo elicitation was by John Collier (1913-1992 CE) in 1957 (Collier, 1957; Harper,

Douglas, 2002). The most basic form of photo elicitation involves inserting a photograph into a research interview, but more frequently involves several photographs incorporated within the context of a semi-structured in-depth interview. An advantage of photo elicitation over such interviews is that the images within the photographs are at least partly understood by both parties, which can help facilitate two-way discussion of difficult or emotive issues, including how participants value aesthetically the natural environment. This may include insights to the personal spaces where identities are constructed, perhaps illuminating subjects of importance to the participant but unclear to the researcher (Kunimoto, 2004; Meo and Dabeningno, 2010; Hogan, 2012, p.57; Balmer, Griffiths and Dunn, 2015; Bates *et al.*, 2017).

The inclusion of Images evokes deeper elements of human consciousness than by semi-structured in-depth interviews alone, more of the brain being used and different kinds of information evoked (Harper, Douglas, 2002). For example, as per section 3.5, in phenomenological analysis participants may have difficulty recalling senses such as touch, taste, and smell, but the visual properties of photographs may help prompt and articulate the sensory and emotional recall of such multi-sensory aesthetic engagement (Berger, 1972, p.33; Adams, C. and van Manen, 2008, p.617; Balmer, Griffiths and Dunn, 2015; Creswell and Poth, 2018, p.79; Pink, 2020; Telford, 2020, p.53). Photographs can facilitate deep and meaningful conversations with participants from diverse backgrounds, enabling discussion of difficult issues. Linked to such issues, they can help to address confirmation bias on the part of the researcher, challenging culturally embedded concepts that might express a certain world view and implicit assumptions (Olliffe and Bottorff, 2007; Chalfen, 2011, p.186; Bates *et al.*, 2017). Metaphors and stories can play important roles e.g., eliciting stories about why a certain form of natural capital is valued aesthetically (Van Auken, Frisvoll and Stewart, 2010; Zanotti, Glover and Sepez, 2010, p.121; Rodriguez, 2013, p.39; Balomenou and Garrod, 2019).

Photo elicitation normally involves using photographs within semi-structured in-depth interviews, allowing in-depth discussion, as the context of photographs is often important to their interpretation (Van Auken, Frisvoll and Stewart, 2010; Short, M., 2011, pp.28-37). For example, 'signs of absence' usually relate to the context of photographs, which might be evidenced in an absence of clear anthropogenic influences or specific types of natural capital, which could have implications for conservation (Beilin, 2005). Photo elicitation is more time consuming and resource intensive than relying purely on semi-structured in-depth interviews (Chalfen, 2011, p.187; Kong *et al.*, 2015). There needs to be consideration of how participant-produced photographs might be coded, analysed, and disseminated as study findings (Olliffe *et al.*, 2008).

While it is claimed that photographs may act as a memory cue, eliciting richer data as the participant is re-immersed in their past experiences (Bates *et al.*, 2017), quantitative evidence challenges these claims. Research with 27 participants by Linda Henkel indicated that taking photographs of objects or locations can impair memory of the experience. However, such memory impairment does not occur if participants zoom into a small area of the object or location. More recent research found that participants identified artists of old and new paintings more accurately when they first studied the paintings without photographing them (Henkel, 2014; Ünal, Kelly and Benjamin, 2025). However, there appears to be an absence of broadly comparable research with participants who have existing experience of specific objects or locations.

Numerous variations on photo elicitation were considered before deciding on the method in this thesis, for example, photovoice (Castleden, Garvin and Huu-ay-aht First Nation, 2008; Lapenta, 2011, p.207; Berbés-Blázquez, 2012), visitor-employed photography (Taylor, J. *et al.*, 1995; MacKay and Couldwell, 2004), photo-projective method (PPM) (Yamashita, 2002), participant-generated photographs (Dilworth, 2007; Balomenou and Garrod, 2019) and volunteer-employed photography (Garrod, 2008; Balomenou and Garrod, 2014).

The simplest alternative to the method chosen for this thesis, simply involved studying the content of photographs taken by participants, which was dismissed as it neglects the importance of context in the interpretation of photographs (Markwell, 1997). More commonly, participants were asked to photograph objects relevant to the research question, then in the subsequent interview they were asked to explain why they valued the objects in their photographs (Sherren, Fischer and Price, 2010; Sherren and Verstraten, 2013).

The method needed to facilitate insight into how participants valued aesthetically natural capital and the influence of past and present land management practices on the conservation of natural capital. Consequently, in deciding on an appropriate method, particular attention was paid to those in which participants are asked to prioritise a specific number of photographs, showing objects, they value in the natural environment or considered important ecosystem services (Castleden, Garvin and Huu-ay-aht First Nation, 2008; Berbés-Blázquez, 2012). These methods include ones where participants might be asked to categorise the objects in their photographs positively or negatively (Taylor, J. *et al.*, 1995; Scott, M. J. and Canter, 1997; MacKay and Couldwell, 2004).

Other methods which were considered included the ranking of objects and Personal Construct Theory which provides support for such photo elicitation methods (Kelly, G., 1955; Kelly, G., 2017). Personal Construct Theory claims that people make sense of the world by constructing theories based on individual experiences, representing deeply held values (Fransella and Dalton, 2000, pp.60-61; Neimeyer, Anderson and Stockton, 2001; Winter, D. and Reed, 2016, p.38). These constructs can be categorized and ordered in a process called 'laddering', which has been applied to the ranking of objects within photographs (Harrison, J. and Sarre, 1975; Beilin, 2005).

Personal Construct Theory provides some support for the combination of photo elicitation and diamond nine ranking by researchers from Newcastle University, in

what they claim is a new method (Clark, J., 2010; Woolner *et al.*, 2010; Clark, J., 2012; Clark, J. *et al.*, 2013) It has been used in assisting with recognising creativity in the music classroom (Kokotsaki and Newton, 2015), planning for sustainability in the chemical engineering curriculum (Glassey and Haile, 2012) and assisting with setting priorities for kidney cancer research (Jones, Jennifer *et al.*, 2017).

A selection of nine photographs of objects relevant to the research question are provided by the researcher or participant, which in view of the importance of context in the interpretation of photographs (Short, M., 2011, pp.28-37), gives great flexibility. Participants are asked to organise the nine photographs of the objects into a diamond shape, in the sequence 1, 2, 3, 2 and 1, with the most preferred object at the top and the least preferred object at the bottom. The participants position the photographs, in the shape of a diamond, onto sheets of paper and are encouraged to write comments directly onto the sheets of paper, about where and why they have ranked their nine objects on the diamond. This method appears to be more accessible conceptually and visibly for participants than a simple Likert or numerical scale. Researchers in Finland have successfully replicated use of the method in schools (Niemi, Kumpulainen and Lipponen, 2015; Niemi, Kumpulainen and Lipponen, 2018; Niemi, 2019; Haapaniemi *et al.*, 2021). Although this method was developed for use in schools, as evidenced above, it has potential for use with adults (Woolner *et al.*, 2010; Clark, J., 2012).

3.9 SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) is a well-established method, which can be combined with others, including photo elicitation (Van Auken, Frisvoll and Stewart, 2010, p.385). It has been used in other studies regarding the natural environment, such as governance of the Baltic Sea region (Jetoo and Lahtinen, 2021), enhancing city resilience to climate change through ecosystem services (Berte and Panagopoulos, 2014) and the strategic planning and management of protected areas (Orr, 2011; Battisti, Franco and Luiselli, 2013; Scolozzi *et al.*, 2014; Comino and Ferretti, 2016). It has also been used to review the ecosystem services framework

(Bull, J. *et al.*, 2016) and as part of reviewing payments for ecosystem services (Viszlai, Barredo Cano and San-Miguel-Ayanz, 2016; Santbergen, 2019).

The method is attributed to the work of George Albert Smith Jr (1905-1969 CE) and Kenneth Andrews (1916-2005 CE) from Harvard University in the 1950s and Albert Humphrey (1926-2005 CE) from Stanford University in the 1960s and 1970s (Leigh, 2006, p.1091; Madsen, 2016). The first article on SWOT analysis was published by Howard Stevenson, also of Harvard University, in Sloan Management Review (Stevenson, 1976), but it came to prominence after work by Heinz Weihrich (Weihrich, 1982). Critics claim that this semi-formal development led to vague philosophical and theoretical foundations resulting in a flawed method (Clardy, 2013; Vlados, 2019). Consequently, there is no uniform conceptual framework, methodology or well-established techniques for identifying strengths and weaknesses, which allegedly renders the process as overly simplified (Leigh, 2006).

However, this absence of uniformity can also be interpreted as a strength and why SWOT analysis is used for strategic planning in private, public, and voluntary sector organisations (Thompson, J. L., 1997, pp.232-235; Clardy, 2013; Madsen, 2016). But it is important to clearly explain each of the four categories to participants and to focus on no more than five strategic issues in each category:

Strengths

Internal competencies, valuable resources, or attributes that organizations can use to exploit external opportunities.

Weaknesses

Internal absence of competencies, resources, or attributes that organizations need to operate effectively.

Opportunities

External possibilities that organizations can seek and exploit to benefit.

Threats

External factors that may reduce an organization's performance (Thompson, J. L., 1997, pp.232-235; Leigh, 2006, p.1096).

3.10 Methods

Photo elicitation and SWOT analysis, compatible with phenomenological analysis, were selected as the two main methods for this study, to take place in three phases. Prior to any research, however, a trial of the methods was carried out with six participants in Rothay Park, Ambleside. The first phase of research involved nine leaders and decision makers from the National Trust, the second phase involved five leaders and decision makers from other conservation organisations, while the third phase involved eight stakeholders from hill farming, tourism, and outdoor education.

3.10.1 Photo Elicitation and Diamond Nine Ranking

The method combining photo elicitation with diamond nine ranking, was adapted for use with adults in diverse venues (Fig 3.2.). Participants were asked to provide nine photographs of objects that they valued aesthetically in the cultural landscape of the Lake District. Either a camera or a smartphone was acceptable, and a participant information sheet contained advice on basic photographic skills. The nine photographic images needed to be saved by the participants as JPEG files and emailed to the researcher or transferred by Dropbox. A size of 500KB per JPEG file was adequate, so no significant problems were encountered with file transfer. The JPEG files were professionally printed, most being of a ratio approximating to 4:3, with some approximating to 1:1 and 16:9.

A diamond nine ranking grid was designed and produced, with nine 4:3 and nine 3:4 overlapping rectangles in a diamond shape, using the following alpha numeric sequence: A1; B1, B2; C1, C2, C3; D1, D2; E1. A1 size art paper was used for the diamond nine ranking sheet, which was designed to be easily transportable and useable in diverse locations (Fig.3.2).



Figure 3.3 Ranking objects in photographs

For data protection reasons, the interviews were to be recorded on tape cassette, then transcribed manually in MS Word for Mac. This approach was followed with the National Trust participants, but as electronic interference made transcription unduly slow, future interviews were recorded on an iPad mini using external microphone and Voice Record 7, version 3.5.5.

The participants were presented with their printed photographs immediately prior to the interview. The photograph of the object that the participant valued most aesthetically was placed at the top of the grid at A1, while the photograph of the object that the participant valued least aesthetically was placed at the bottom of the grid at E1 (Fig. 3.3). The appropriate letter and number were written on the back of each photograph at the end of the interview. Discussion with the participants about each of the objects in their photographs, were intended to give insight into how they valued aesthetically natural capital. The interview sought to gain insight into how their aesthetic values might influence the conservation of such natural capital. If responses

were brief, or appeared ambiguous, they would be asked to explain in a little more depth.

Following the interview, the JPEG files of the ranked photographs were used within Microsoft PowerPoint, to create an A4 digital copy of the participant's diamond nine ranking. A PowerPoint copy of the participant's diamond nine ranking and a Microsoft Word transcript of their interview were emailed to them, so that both documents could be checked for accuracy (Fig. 3.4).

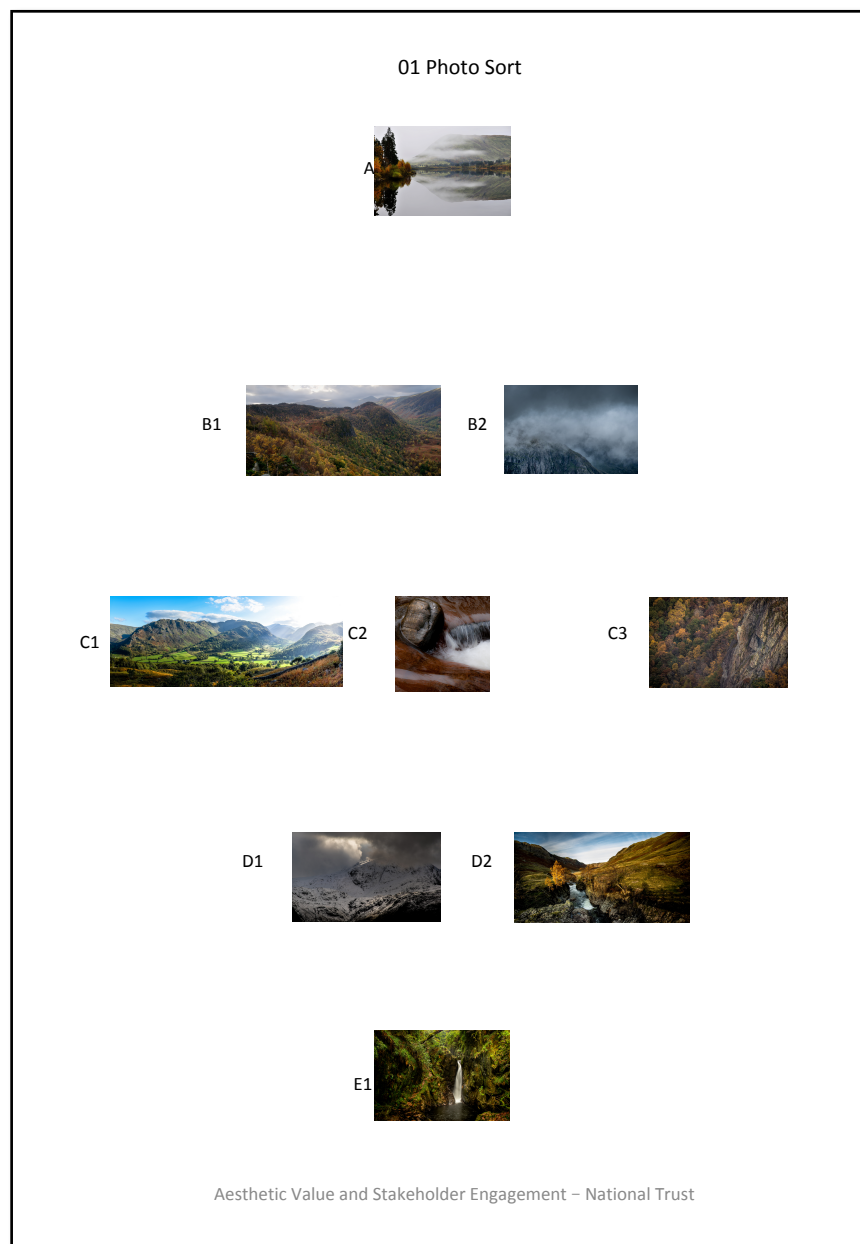


Figure 3.4 Object ranking from the study

Andra Milcu used a somewhat similar photo-based Q Method in rural Transylvania (Milcu *et al.*, 2014, pp.412-414). However, this is the first time that this method has been applied to assess how people value aesthetically the natural environment.

3.10.2 SWOT Analysis

The four questions in the SWOT analysis method about the objects in the Diamond Nine exercise that the participants valued aesthetically are set out below. The method was explained in detail, ensuring that participants fully understood each of the four categories (Thompson, J. L., 1997, p.223):

In what ways are the objects/features that you value aesthetically in this research exercise, a benefit or strength, inherent (internal) to the Lake District?

What do you see as the biggest weaknesses (largely internal and not to be confused with threats) in the Lake District, which might impact badly on what you value aesthetically about its countryside (objects/features)?

What opportunities (external factors) do you think there are to help protect and conserve what you value aesthetically about the countryside (objects/features) in the Lake District?

What do you see as the biggest threats (largely external and not to be confused with weaknesses) to what you value aesthetically about the countryside (objects/features) in the Lake District?

The SWOT analysis method enabled participants to identify what they felt were the key strategic issues influencing the objects that they valued aesthetically in the Lake District. Participants were encouraged to explain, how they felt these strategic issues acted as drivers for change, impacting either positively or negatively on the wider conservation of natural capital. The responses were aggregated, into a concise SWOT table.

3.10.3 Influence

At the start of the interview, after enquiring if the participants had any questions and inviting them to say a little about themselves, participants were asked:

"How do the decisions you make impact on or influence other people?"

This question was to provide an indication of the influence of the participant within the organisation and in relation to stakeholders. In the case of an organisations such as the National Trust, this could be considered in parallel with organisational structure.

At the end of the interview participants were asked:

"How do the decisions you make impact on or influence objects/features that you value aesthetically in this research exercise?"

This was to gain further clarity on the extent to which they influence the objects which they value aesthetically.

3.10.4 Coding the Interview Transcripts and Photographs

For the study trial and the first phase of the research, the interview transcripts were coded manually using values coding (Saldaña, 2009, pp.131-136). The photographs were also coded manually using a combination of structural, descriptive and magnitude coding, which in theory should create a flexible inventory of contents (Saldaña, 2009, pp.57-61). However, manually coding both transcripts and photographs, contributed to inconsistency and data being overlooked.

The decision was, therefore, made to use software to code the interview transcripts and photographs. The transcripts from all the interviews and associated photographs, were downloaded into NVivo 12 for Mac, to be coded and retrieved as required (Punch, 1998; Saldaña, 2009; Newing *et al.*, 2010). Software programmes such as NVivo have in recent years become increasingly important tools within qualitative research. NVivo, for example, can assist with the storage, retrieval, coding, and manipulation of not only text-based data, but audio, video, and photographic images.

Such programmes can provide rigour, by facilitating more systematic and transparent analysis, but as shall be discussed shortly, limitations remain.

All the transcripts were read several times, before their data was categorised into nodes and subcategories created for aggregation of appropriate codes, in this instance *vivo* or descriptive codes (Punch, 1998, p.113; Saldaña, 2009, pp.105-110). *Vivo* and descriptive coding focus on identifying and tagging what is in the data (Punch, 1998, p.176). To clearly identify the ranking of objects, text was coded to the appropriate ranking on the diamond nine diagram. The SWOT analysis table was coded similarly. Analytic memos were written in parallel, when there was felt to be a need for more detail about either a code or developing theme (Saldaña, 2009, pp.44-56). Suggested approaches for the coding of the photographs were complex and did not display any significant understanding of photography (Saldaña, 2009, pp.57-61). A simple approach was, therefore, applied to the coding of photographs. Once again, at the most fundamental level, photographs were coded to the appropriate ranking on the diamond nine diagram. Essential signs, plus clearly identifiable objects, including water features, woodland, plants, and animals were also coded. Initially too many codes and hierarchies were created, but the number was reduced, as it is important to code only essential data in answering the research question (Saldaña, 2009, pp.79-80).

The aggregated codes and hierarchies were studied in detail, searching for the emergence of possible patterns and themes. However, software still requires the manipulation and interpretation of data, it was felt that NVivo was too restrictive and this was hindering interpretation. Concerns about over reliance on such software programmes include the loss of rich data, leading to fragmentation of the narrative flow and segmented data being considered out of context (Saldaña, 2009, p.28). NVivo proved to be a useful tool for storing, coding and organising the data, but deciphering relationships between the data and gaining a wider insight was difficult. From the perspective of a phenomenological analysis methodology, it was reductive, a barrier to interpretation, rather than a useful research tool. The integrity of the rich

data that had been collected was in danger of being lost, not being understood in the appropriate context.

Analysis was, therefore, carried out manually by writing the aggregated codes on 'sticky notes'. The 'sticky notes' were distributed on a table and arranged into appropriate clusters, in order to detect any associations or linkages in the data (Saldaña, 2009, p.30). The clusters were grouped to form aesthetic orientations, which were not exclusive, but indicated a dominant orientation by a participant. This process was carried out with all participants and the results are set-out in chapters four, five and six.

The temptation to convert qualitative findings to quantitative is a significant concern in qualitative research. It is alleged that too much significance may be attached to the statistics and that the results may be applied inappropriately. Some qualitative researchers, however, claim that simple statistics can provide additional insights (Maxwell, 2010), the crucial factors being experience, creativity and awareness of relevant theories.

3.11 Limitations of the Study

Prior to analysis in qualitative research, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are used to ensure trustworthiness of research. To ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research, it must be demonstrated that the methodology is rigorous and that rigour was applied in achieving the findings. Accordingly, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are used to ensure trustworthiness of research (Guba, 1981; Cutcliffe and McKenna, 1999; Patton, 1999; Shenton, 2004; Anney, 2014; Moon *et al.*, 2016; Korstjens and Moser, 2018; Ahmed, 2024).

3.11.1 Credibility

Credibility relates to confidence in the data, in this instance whether the participants' perceptions of how what they valued aesthetically, corresponds with their portrayal by

the researcher. A challenge for phenomenology is that it is impossible to know or share another person's sensory experiences, which presents subsequent practical difficulties in representing and communicating them (Pink, 2020). In addition, it has been stressed how subjectivity permeates aesthetic values, which may be in direct opposition to those of the researcher. Consequently, there was a self- assessment of subjectivity in seeking to avoid researcher bias and interference with the social complexity of the setting (Moon *et al.*, 2019).

Credibility was enhanced by representing as accurately as possible the participants' thoughts, feelings, and perceptions, which was achieved by photo elicitation and diamond nine ranking in the context of semi-structured in-depth interviews. In addition, all participants were sent copies of their PowerPoint and Word files for approval, prior to any analysis of the results. The six participants in the study trial and the nine participants in the National Trust study were also sent reports on the draft findings, which they were invited to respond to.

3.11.2 Transferability

A detailed and comprehensive explanation of the research has been provided, which will allow other to evaluate how applicable the research is to their situations and facilitate transferability of the findings. While it may be argued that the Lake District is unique among National Parks in the UK, like other upland National Parks e.g., Eryri and the Yorkshire Dales it faces challenges of alleged overgrazing and visitor pressure. Therefore, due to the inherent diversity of UK National Parks, while not all these findings may be transferable to other geographical locations, some findings will certainly be applicable to shared challenges.

3.11.3 Dependability

In order to ensure reliability, the research process was rigorously documented, including research proposal, risk assessment, the methods employed for gathering data and the procedures for analysis e.g., coding. Testing and implementation of the methods was carefully documented, to demonstrate both stability and consistency.

3.11.4 Confirmability

Effort has been taken to avoid personal values and inclinations towards particular theoretical positions overtly influencing the conduct of the research and findings. Expert input was obtained from all three members of the PhD supervisory team, to authenticate interpretations of the findings and to mitigate confirmation bias on the part of the researcher. The research has been documented and the methods accurately detailed, which should also facilitate confirmability, enabling others to follow the broad course of the study and replicate it to a certain extent.

3.12 Triangulation

The subjective nature of qualitative research is a limitation, which has been addressed by employing reflexivity and triangulation. Triangulation seeks to overcome potential weaknesses in qualitative research, ensuring that they are verifiable from more than one source, for example, method triangulation uses multiple methods of data collection about the same phenomenon. Ideally an additional method should be applied with distinct sets of participants and the resulting different types of data combined in analysis (Punch, 1998, p.310; Patton, 1999; Flick, 2004, pp.178-183; Newing *et al.*, 2010, p.115).

The focus was very much on method triangulation, as the Lake District is a relatively concise geographical area and there was only a small pool of professional conservationists in appropriate roles from which to recruit. However, triangulation was not overlooked, as is a common failing in qualitative research relating to ecology and conservation (Carter *et al.*, 2014; Moon *et al.*, 2016). The two methods of diamond nine ranking and SWOT analysis, together with preliminary and follow-up semi-structured questions, were in this research applied to the same participants.

3.13 Ethics

Ethics always rests on the consideration of values and there are a range of ethical perspectives, including duties, consequences, and virtues. As living subjects were directly involved in this study, approval was sought in advance of any fieldwork, from

the University of Cumbria Research Ethics Committee. Documentation approved by the committee included research proposal, risk assessment, participants information sheet and participant consent form. University guidelines were followed at all times (Punch, 1998, pp.36-39; Hiles, 2008, p.55).

Researchers have a duty to explain to interested participants the potential uses to which the findings arising from the study may be put. Consequently, in advance of their involvement, participants received a brief, but comprehensive outline of the study (Rowe, 2011, p.715; Wies, Clark and Prosser, 2011, p.693). Participants were rightly treated with respect (Punch, 1998, p.38), which included the ability to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation and an open complaints procedure. Participants retained a copy of their signed consent form, including full contact details of the researcher and were asked to confirm that they had:

- Read and understood the study information sheet.
- Provided with enough information and been able to ask questions.
- Understood that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, and without giving any reason.
- Willing for copies of any photographs they made within the context of this study to be used as part of the study.
- Confirm that their photographs could also be used in wider dissemination of the study findings.
- Willing for their interview to be recorded and used as part of the study.
- Give permission for the researcher to analyse and quote their confidential responses
- Sign the consent form if they wished to take part in the study.

Confidentiality, and respect for privacy are essential and information that has been given in confidence must not be disclosed (Punch, 1998, pp.47-48; Watson, C., 2010, p.234). The terms anonymity and confidentiality should not be confused, anonymity is when the identity of individual participants is unknown to the researcher, while confidentiality is when the researcher knows the identity of the participants, but takes

measures to protect that identity (Punch, 1998, pp.47-48). The confidentiality issues surrounding visual data are challenging, for example, best practice in photo elicitation is for the parameters of photographs to be broad and the implications surrounding this were addressed prior to seeking approval from the Research Ethics Committee (Wies, Clark and Prosser, 2011, p.695; Chalfen, 2020). Accordingly, all written, photographic, and audio records were stored either on a password protected computer or in a locked filing cabinet. Only the researcher and academic staff involved in this study were allowed access to the records, which will be destroyed after this study.

The small number of people employed in leadership positions in conservation organisations in the Lake District, can be problematic for confidentiality, but it was stressed to participants that complete confidentiality could not be ensured. Although it is normal practice not to reveal the names of the participants, in this study the gender and ages of participants have not been revealed either, as this would be tantamount to naming them. The participants have been allocated numbers to protect confidentiality, but regardless of precautions, it may be possible to identify some of them through the comments they have made or through the content of their photographs.

3.14 Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Study

The impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on carrying out fieldwork and the recruitment of participants was unforeseen. Following good practice, in March 2020 the University of Cumbria insisted that research fieldwork should cease, it soon becoming apparent that this would be a long term situation. In view of the threat to life caused by the pandemic and following discussions with academic staff, the methods were changed significantly so that interviews with participants be carried out remotely. These methods were highly visual, so they would have to be implemented remotely via on-line platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom. Prior to COVID-19, in qualitative methods, researchers normally met with participants face to face. On-line delivery can create difficulty for the establishment of rapport with participants, it being difficult to decipher body language, or other visual clues that can be important

factors in qualitative research (Newman, Guta and Black, 2021; Santana *et al.*, 2021). At that time internet connectivity was poor throughout much of the Lake District, which created an additional barrier to the use of online platforms.

The method was, however, adapted for on-line delivery and care taken to ensure validity and transferability (Newman, Guta and Black, 2021). Zoom, was selected as it is technically accessible and it was felt that at least some participants would be familiar with this platform. Research into the use of Zoom in interview situations, was helpful in adapting the methods for on-line delivery (Archibald *et al.*, 2019; Gray *et al.*, 2020; Marhefka, Lockhart and Turner, 2020).

Poor internet connectivity created problems for interviewing, viewing and ranking photographs. As photo elicitation is strongly visual, copies of the participants' nine photographs in JPEG file format, were imported into a PowerPoint presentation and saved as nine individual slides. The diamond nine template was created within a tenth PowerPoint slide. Copies of the nine JPEG files were imported into this tenth PowerPoint slide, where the diamond nine template was located and saved as nine thumb nail size images. It was then possible for the researcher, at the request of the participant, to move the thumb nail size images to the desired locations on the diamond nine template during the interview.

Moving the participants' photographs into the desired location for them, was confusing for some participants. On-line delivery by Zoom, was a further barrier to involvement of hill farmers and two who had agreed to take part dropped out. The remote areas they lived in had very poor on-line connectivity, but they also may not have had the inclination to engage with online platforms (Newman, Guta and Black, 2021; Santana *et al.*, 2021).

Other researchers in North West England experienced increased difficulty in the recruitment of participants. A on-line meeting with such qualitative researchers revealed that some had addressed barriers to attracting participants, by greatly

expanding the geographical focus of their studies. However, the focus of this study on the relatively small geographical area of the Lake District prevented this option.

Some researchers found that social media was effective and efficient for the collection of quantitative nationwide data, but not viable for most qualitative studies (Ali *et al.*, 2020; Cintron and Diamond-Smith, 2020). However, Facebook groups provided useful recruitment pools in some instances. Even in urban areas people were less inclined to participate in health related studies during the COVID-19 pandemic than they had been previously, but better internet connectivity in urban areas meant that the opportunity to participate remotely was an incentive (Mirza *et al.*, 2021).

The participant consent form may also have been a deterrent. Prior to the pandemic, the researcher would normally sit down with participants and complete the form with them. Receiving the consent form via email, may have been daunting to some who expressed interest, but whose initial interest never resulted in an interview. When it was decided to halt recruitment, 22 participants had taken part in the photo elicitation interviews, but the aim had been to recruit at least 30.

3.15 Summary

Phenomenology is well placed within the overall constructionism philosophical perspective and appropriate for exploring the subjectivity of aesthetic values (Grix, 2002, p.178), embedded in the ontology (Fig. 3.2), epistemology, methodology and methods (Laverty, 2003; Cerbone, 2006, p.3; Adams, C. and van Manen, 2008, p.614; Overgaard and Zahavi, 2009, p.4; Bannon, 2016, p.54; Johannesdóttir, 2016, p.187). Lived experience is the epistemological foundation of phenomenology, particularly valuable for insights into how participants value aesthetically natural capital (Farber, 1964; Laverty, 2003; Adams, C. and van Manen, 2008, pp.614-616; Bannon, 2014, p.13). Photo elicitation, combined with diamond nine ranking and SWOT analysis, can provide windows into such subjective and diverse experiences.

Chapter Four

4. Results and Discussion: National Trust

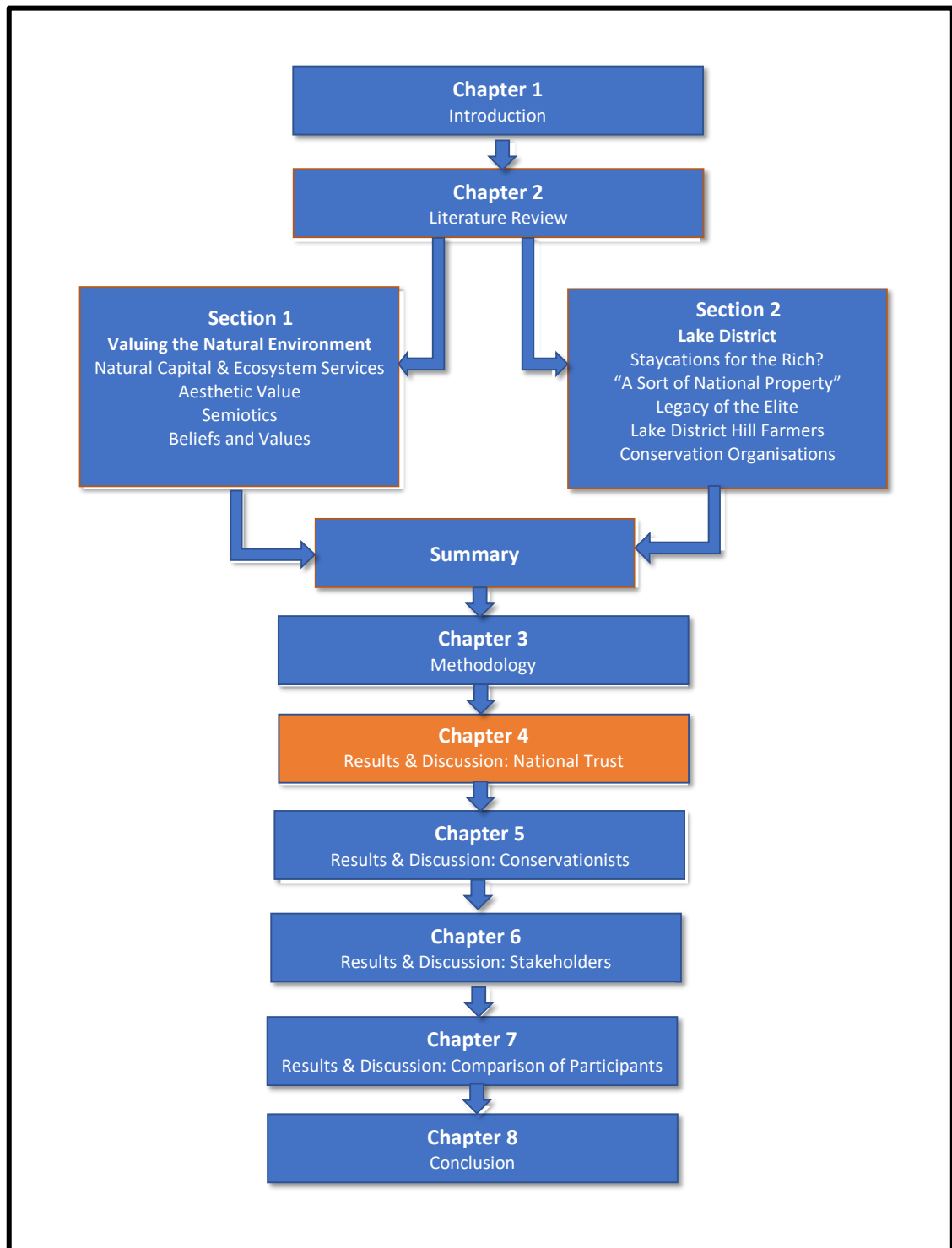


Figure 4.1 Chapter four in relation to the other thesis chapters

4.1 Introduction

Chapter four seeks to identify and critically consider how the aesthetic values of professional conservationists in leadership roles within the National Trust's Lake District Hub (Fig. 4.1), may influence the conservation of natural capital in the Lake District National Park (Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, 2015; Natural Capital Initiative, 2015; Natural Capital Initiative, 2016; White, C. *et al.*, 2015; Andrews-Tipper and Francis, 2017). The role of the National Trust regarding the management and conservation of natural capital is reflected upon. The results concerning the objects valued aesthetically are then revealed through a combination of photo elicitation and diamond nine ranking (Clark, J., 2010; Lapenta, 2011; Clark, J. *et al.*, 2013; Stockall, 2013; Bates *et al.*, 2017; Niemi, Kumpulainen and Lipponen, 2018). SWOT analysis is then used to triangulate how the aesthetic values of the participants may influence the conservation of natural capital (p.96). Further clarity is achieved by identifying the influence of the participants on both people and the objects they valued aesthetically in the form of natural capital.

All participants influenced natural capital, including in turn its delivery of ecosystem services, the cultural services bundle including aesthetic benefits as per section 2.2.1. The principal emergent themes were then introduced and explored in the discussion section, especially the relationship between aesthetic values and the conservation of natural capital. The importance of individual people in phenomenology has been emphasised (pp.81-82) and the phenomenological analysis methodology ensured that the participants' voices and photographs were used in the development of the central themes (Moustakas, 1994; Berleant, 2013; Bannon, 2014, p.13; Bannon, 2016, pp.59-60; Pink, 2020). This methodology facilitates insight into their understanding of the issues and debates surrounding those objects valued aesthetically relevant to the conservation of natural capital (Fig. 4.1).

4.2 Research Question Revisited

In contributing to answering the research question, this chapter seeks to identify possible influences on the aesthetic values of the leadership of the National Trust's Lake District hub, but also whether their aesthetic values, influence their preferences for the management and conservation of the National Park's natural capital.

Complex personal beliefs and values, in addition to the desire for economic profitability, are likely to have influenced past management decisions regarding the natural capital integral to the Lake District cultural landscape (Olwig, 2013; Olwig, 2016; Brook, 2018; Edwards, M., 2018, p.8). The same probably applies today, combined with a greater understanding of economic sustainability, for conservationists in leadership roles within the National Trust's Lake District Hub (Fielding *et al.*, 2005; Burton, R., 2012; Sherren and Verstraten, 2013; Davies *et al.*, 2016, p.18; Ovaska and Soini, 2016; Stotten, 2016). However, biophilic factors, culture and socialization may also influence how professional conservationists value aesthetically natural capital. Their aesthetic values may in turn influence their approach to the physical management of water features, geomorphological processes and the presence, composition, and form of vegetation. The National Trust Lake District Hub should be aware of factors influencing the aesthetic values of professional conservationists in leadership roles, including how their aesthetic values may influence the conservation of natural capital and the delivery of national and regional strategies. Therefore, this first stage of answering the research question aims to identify:

1. Possible influences on the aesthetic values of the leadership of the National Trust.
2. Whether their aesthetic values, influence their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital.

4.3 The National Trust

As per section 1.2, the Lake District is the second largest National Park in the UK and inspired the foundation of the National Trust in 1895, built on the idea that people need historic, beautiful, and natural environments (Millward and Robinson, 1970, p.257; Pearsall and Pennington, 1973, p.294; Reynolds, 2016a, pp.78-79). It is Europe's largest conservation charity, with a membership of four million and the UK's largest private landowner, with 250,000 hectares of countryside (National Trust, 2015, pp.28-29). Unlike most other conservation organisations, the maintenance of this extensive national property portfolio, including the role of landlord for farming and other tenants, means that the National Trust has to have a strong commercial focus in order to be financially sustainable, influencing the conservation of natural capital.

A chapter has been allocated to the National Trust because around 20% of the National Trust's land ownership is in the Lake District, where it manages over 50,000 hectares, or around 21% of the National Park, including 90 tenanted hill farms (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2021b, p.75). Consequently, it is probably the organisation with greatest influence on the conservation of natural capital in the Lake District. There are historic accusations of the National Trust damaging natural capital in order to maximise farming income, while some Lake District residents oppose the organisation's extensive land ownership (Chatters and Minter, 1986; Lowe, 1995, pp.96-97). The high profile of the organisation attracts the interest of groups with a political *cause célèbre*, seeking to influence leadership decisions. The corporate aim of widening access from underrepresented visitors, including young people, people with disabilities and people from BAME backgrounds has attracted vitriol from the far-right. Such political influence may impact directly on the ability of natural capital to deliver ecosystem services, including that part of the cultural services bundle termed aesthetic benefits (Murphy, 1987, p.1; Cannadine, 1995, pp.12-15; Cooke, 2016; The Guardian, 2016; Parveen, 2016; Robinson-Tate, 2017; Olusoga, 2021; Martynoga, 2022). The National Trust can and does influence how natural capital appears, through programmes of environmental interpretation and education, which can in turn influence the aesthetic value people assign to natural capital (Tilden, 1957).

Certainly, since the Second World War National Trust policy had been orientated towards landscape conservation, as opposed to nature conservation, focussing on conserving the character of the existing cultural landscape (National Trust, 2015, p.14). The priority had been for the organisation and their farming tenants to be financially sustainable through the production of food. However, taking direction from *Making Space for Nature* (Lawton *et al.*, 2010), in 2017 the *Land Outdoors and Nature* strategy set out national plans to reverse the decline in wildlife on National Trust land. A national target was set to create or restore 25,000 hectares of habitat, representing 10% of land ownership by 2025 (National Trust, 2017, p.10). Despite the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on financial sustainability of the National Trust, this is one of the few targets to be transferred to the new strategy (Kehoe, 2017; National Trust, 2017; National Trust, 2022).

The National Trust Lake District Hub agreed to take part in this research (National Trust, 2015, p.13) and invited appropriate staff in leadership roles to take part, resulting in nine participants. The professional expertise of participants included, curatorship, archaeology and heritage, land use policy, hill farming, land agency and countryside management. Even if they did not have line management responsibilities, all participants had leadership roles regarding natural capital and the delivery of ecosystem services, due to the National Trust's matrix management approach (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1990). One of the participants was seconded full-time to lead on implementation of the *Land Outdoors and Nature* strategy in the Lake District Hub.

4.4 Method in Practice

The Business Support Co-ordinator for the National Trust Lake District Hub provided participants with the research information sheet and consent forms prior to the interviews. An introductory conversation and relaxed approach to each interview, facilitated easy disclosure of information. Firstly, the researcher introduced themselves, summarising their professional background and the thesis. Secondly, as an introduction to the interview process, the participants were asked an open-ended question about their leadership role. Thirdly, moving into a more searching questions, the participants were asked to explain how the decisions they made influenced people. Fourthly, the participants were presented with photographic prints of the objects that they valued aesthetically, facilitating in-depth discussion and emotive revelations.

All the participants understood the combination of diamond nine ranking and photo elicitation. These interviews provided rich information of how participants valued aesthetically objects, which were mostly clear examples of natural capital integral to the Lake District cultural landscape e.g., water bodies or woodland.

All participants had experience of the SWOT analysis method used for triangulation, but some of them confused strengths with opportunities and weaknesses with threats (p.96). All nine participants responded with meaningful and clear answers to the concluding question, regarding how their decisions had the potential to influence the objects that they valued aesthetically. The information was analysed and broken down into its most significant elements, by manual coding and later by NVivo for Mac, to provide structure and direction for the first stage in seeking to answer the research question.

4.5 Results

4.5.1 Overview of Results

Barthes argued that all photographs are polysemous, having more than one potential meaning, something which could be attributed to the photographs provided by these participants (Barthes, 1977a, pp.38-39; Bull, S., 2010, p.37). Often ranked A1 or B1 and B2, over half the participants emphasised strong personal connections with many of the objects they assigned aesthetic value to (Brown, T., 1984), e.g.:

“It reflects that sort of how interesting the Lake District is in terms of how it changes so quickly and just the amazingness of being able to row on a lake like that, not many people can (Fig. 4.28). It’s quite special”. (A1, Participant 7)

The other participants were more distanced, emphasising how they valued objects aesthetically in the context of their employment, e.g.:

“When I look at this photograph (Fig. 4.15), I can’t help but be drawn to things I’ve been thinking about quite recently in my professional life...”. (A1, Participant 8)

The diamond nine ranking and associated interviews indicated that the core beliefs of these participants, include archaeology and history, hill farming and rural industries, commitment to nature conservation and sport and recreation. These formed the foundations of four aesthetic orientations which were derived from the data, groups of held values towards which individual participants were inclined, termed New Romantics, New Statesmen, New Naturalists and New Alpinists.

4.5.2 Semiotics

As per section 2.2.3.1, the natural capital integral to the Lake District cultural landscape carries signs with meaning, contributing to its celebration as an icon of the English rural idyll (Urry and Larsen, 1990, p.173; Crawshaw and Urry, 1997; Burchardt, 2002, pp.89-101; Burchardt, 2017, p.66; Shirley, 2017b, p.110). Signs may influence how participants assign aesthetic value to objects and their approach to physically

conserving natural capital (Atkin, 2013). Most participants were aware of symbols and icons (Table 4.1), even if they confused the two genres of sign.

Table 4.1 Objects ranked A to E by participants identified as icons or symbols

Ranking	Total Number of Photographs	Icons		Symbols	
A1	9	7	78%	2	22%
B1 & B2	18	15	83%	3	17%
C1, C2 & C3	27	18	67%	9	33%
D1 & D2	18	15	83%	3	17%
E1	9	4	44%	5	56%
TOTAL	81	58	72%	23	28%

4.5.2.1 Icons

Of the 81 images of objects valued aesthetically in the diamond nine ranking (Table 4.1), 58 of them evidenced being icons (pp.46-47). Icons were the most frequent genre, seven of the objects ranked A1 being clearly iconic (Figs. 4.2, 4.3), but as per section 2.2.3.5, there is subjectivity over whether signs are icons or symbols (Szász, 2017, p.32; Schirpke, Meisch and Tappeiner, 2018). To these participants icons were normally landscape photographs and layered with the implicit rules or codes, which govern how those who make or use photographs interpret their meanings. The compositional style was that of traditional landscapes, as associated with the Picturesque Movement (Snyder, 1994, pp.175-179; Clarke, 1997, pp.55-73; Bright, 2011, pp.47-51; Chandler, 2017, p.149; Aiello, 2020, p.6). An absence of visually clear anthropogenic features (Fig. 4.4), together with the influence of the Romantic Movement, was reflected in how some participants ranked A1 or B1 and B2, images of what they perceived as a wild and mountainous Lake District:

“...that’s very powerful to me and it has a particularly strong Lake District association, because of the Romantic Movement and the Picturesque and (Fig. 4.2) and being drawn into that”. (A1, Participant 1)

“...it lends the Lakes a kind of Alpine grandeur by implying a tree line, it’s not there (Fig. 4.3). And I also like it because it’s highly ornamental, it’s designed landscape...”. (B1, Participant 3)

“That’s Blencathra, obviously, or Saddle Back as they kind of call it (Fig. 4.4). I wanted to have a picture within my nine of, y’ know, a snowy mountain on, on a clear day, because y’ know, I think, I think lots of people can relate to that and see the sort of magnificent mountains”. (B2, Participant 4)



Figure 4.2 Influence of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements (A1, Participant 1)



Figure 4.3 Tarn Hows: imposed on the cultural landscape (B1, Participant 3)



Figure 4.4 Blencathra in winter (B2, Participant 4)

Participant 8 had ranked an iconic photograph of Wasdale at E1, they claimed to feel a little guilty about ranking it E1, describing it as very successful *“as a dramatic awesome, sublime landscape”* (p.46). Their uncertain decision indicates how iconic cultural landscapes, such as Wasdale, are widely perceived ‘hot spots’ for aesthetic recreation and spiritual experiences (Schirpke, Meisch and Tappeiner, 2018):

“I think one of the reasons I chose this, is that it was voted England’s favourite view, best view, err, through a public vote (Gardner, 2007), so there’s clearly a lot of popular sympathy for this view, it’s, it deserves to be called an iconic view, because it clearly is the icon of the National Park Authority and it seems to represent for many people the Lake District ”. (E1, Participant 8)

4.5.2.2 Symbols

It has been revealed how the participants' landscape photographs were generally iconic. Of the objects ranked A1, only the two ranked 6 and 9 evidenced being symbols (p.44), both being close-up images of rocks in mountain streams (Fig. 4.13 and Fig. 4.14). Of the remaining photographs of objects valued aesthetically, 21 of them showed evidence of being symbols, with nine ranked in the Cs and five ranked E1, this ranking having more symbols than icons (Table 4.1). Breeds of livestock such as the Herdwick, were said to be symbols of the Lake District, the associated codes of composition indicating that the held aesthetic values of these participants may be closely tied to this cultural landscape (Brown, T., 1984). In terms of assigned aesthetic value, however, livestock were not valued very highly, the five clear images of livestock not ranked higher than C.

As per section 2.2.3.1, these participants valued aesthetically objects of diverse scale e.g., lichen (Fig. 4.5), moss, a single birch leaf (Fig. 4.8), Herdwicks (Fig. 4.10), ash pollards, a sheep fold, and a traditional stone barn (Fig. 4.18). The same participant might value aesthetically objects of very different size, small objects often triggering deeply embedded memories, although in the case of these participants the smallest objects were always plants or lichens (Short, M., 2011, p.122; Stepchenkova and Zhan, 2013):

"The variety of lichens is quite remarkable, particularly, err, ironically in the, in the woodlands, but they are everywhere throughout the Lake District (Fig. 4.5). But they are one of the many plants that perhaps some people just don't notice, they just walk past...". (C1, Participant 6)



Figure 4.5 Lichen on drystone wall (C1, Participant 6)

Further illustrating the subjectivity of symbols and icons, in some photographs it was difficult to disentangle symbolic and iconic properties e.g., a picnic lunch, with Coniston Water in the distance (Fig. 4.6), or a view through the reinstated green glass of Claife Station, over Windermere (Fig. 4.24).



Figure 4.6 Picnic Lunch and Coniston Water in distance (B2, Participant 5)

4.5.2.3 Indexicality

The ontology of photographs includes indexicality (p.45), but of the 81 images of objects valued aesthetically, six included indexicality as an additional sign. Indexicality always related to weather conditions, for participant 1, this was how the changing weather might transform an iconic mountain summit into something of greater beauty (Fig. 4.7). While, for participant 7 (Fig. 4.8), the symbolism of a fallen birch leaf was increased by a rime of frost, a code which foretold of the coming winter (Bull, S., 2010, p.15; Short, M., 2011, p.124). Indexicality increased the ranking of objects and indicated that these participants valued aesthetic engagement with the Lake District's natural capital in changeable weather conditions.



Figure 4.7 Indexicality as changeable weather on a summit (B2, Participant 1)



Figure 4.8 Indexicality as rime of frost around a birch leaf (B1, Participant 7)

4.5.3 Aesthetic Engagement

Few of the participants made direct reference to any of their five senses other than sight. However, there was evidence of the Lake District's natural capital delivering aesthetic benefits, which acted synergistically with other ecosystem services, leading to aesthetic engagement. As indicated by indexicality (p.46), this was notable among participants who took part in rowing, hill walking and climbing, changeable weather (p.118), ephemeral and transformational conditions being integral to aesthetic engagement (Fig. 4.9) (Berleant, 1992, pp.17-22; Bannon, 2016, pp.54-55):

"...you can go to the same place on three or four different days and have a totally different experience, just kind of based on the different times of day and the light that's there". (B1, Participant 2)



Figure 4.9 Tarn at High Wray in evening light (B1, Participant 2)

Although it was not so notable among those who valued objects aesthetically as part of their work with the National Trust, getting away from everyday life contributed to how over half the participants valued aesthetically the objects in their photographs. Additionally, there were clear connections with childhood memories, time spent with friends and family and great days out:

“...that sense of just getting away from it all and being able to really sort of err, really lose yourself in it”. (B2, Participant 5)

Barthes claimed that as soon as people see a form, they want it to resemble something else and as far as getting away was concerned, these participants appeared “doomed to analogy” (Barthes, 1977b, p.44; Chandler, 2017, p.125). Subjective analogies were illustrated in how participants associated places in the Lake District with distant and even imaginary locations. Notably, Tarn Hows was associated with Bavaria (Fig. 4.3), brightly dyed Herdwicks rushing through a village were associated with India (Fig. 4.10), and a snow-covered conifer plantation was associated with Narnia (Lewis, 1950, p.41):

“It’s that bit of the Central Fells that is almost like a Scottish Glen...”. (C2, Participant 5)

“I’m looking at sort of Bavaria at home if you like”. (B1, Participant 3)

“...this flow, this ribbon of colour, it was like somewhere in India, where suddenly you see these bursts of colour”. (C1, Participant 7)

“I love the green, the greenness of that dark green of the trees and on a day like this when it’s snowing, when it’s snowed, it feels like you’re in Narnia, so it’s kind of being somewhere else...”. (D1, Participant 2)



Figure 4.10 Dyed Herdwicks associated with India (C1, Participant 7)

All these places that the participants associated with the Lake District held positive memories, their leisure time including activities such as climbing, Alpine running and travelling. Perhaps the only thing missing from the wintery image of the conifer plantation was an umbrella wielding faun *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* being a widely read children's literature since the 1950s.

However, in photographs associated with getting away, images of people were scarce and there were certainly no fauns. It was a cultural landscape of visually unclear anthropogenic influences, containing few if any drystone walls, roads, and farmhouses (Fig.4.12). Weather conditions could contribute to diverse aesthetic engagement with natural capital, including a sense of mystery and changing the sensory experience of rocky mountain summits (Fig. 4.7), woodlands, forestry plantations and water (Fig.4.12). The quality of light associated with changing weather conditions could also

create transformational and ephemeral qualities (p.118), which most of the participants described as contributing to a sense of either being in another world or how the familiar might become unfamiliar (Fig 4.2). From a phenomenological perspective, the sense of a larger whole and connectedness, might contribute to the possibility of the world continuing beyond the immediate perception of participants:

“...a certain light, it can have this extraordinary transformational effect and it’s one of the things that I really value in the landscape (Fig. 4.7), and it could be absolutely anywhere...”. (B2, Participant 1)

“...you can be totally shrouded in cloud at kind of ground level, but then you walk, and you get up above the cloud and then it’s, again it’s almost like that escapism, it’s like being in a totally different world.” (D1, Participant 2)

“I love, I love the sort of endless scree slopes and spoil heaps, I love the whirling illusion... It almost looks like Force Crag Mine is endless, its extent is limitless...”. (D2, Participant 8)

Place theory is largely outside the scope of this thesis, but some participants used images ranked A1 to help described an apparent sense of place for the Lake District:

“Similarly, as a lad early on and as an Alpine mountain runner, I’ve, as a local guy, I’ve been a runner since I was a kid, I’ve trained hell of a lot up this route, so I could do that with my eyes shut (Fig. 4.11). So, I’ve got a long association...”. (A1, Participant 3)

As per section 2.2.1.3, a sense of place is not necessarily required to value the Lake District aesthetically (Jepson, 2013, p.189), but participant 8 who was previously unfamiliar with it, illustrated how a sense of place might develop:

“I quickly realised that I had got the best job in British xxxxxxxxxx and that I, if I played my cards right, could spend a long time here working with these beautiful, beautiful places”. (B2, Participant 8)

Valuing aesthetically the Lake District is, however, associated with process as much as content, its history and ecology being factors in the aesthetic values of some

participants. However, the influence of the Romantic Movement regarding naturalistic design of parkland and wildness because of ruination was also apparent in how participant 3 assigned aesthetic value to the relict parkland above Rydal:

“In terms of its character, it’s relict parkland, it’s designed landscape that’s overgrown and ruined, set within a kind of, more distant mountain setting, and I suppose it’s character as a ruin appeals to me”. (A1, Participant 3)



Figure 4.11 Relict parkland at Rydal (A1, Participant 3)

4.5.4 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

As per section 4.3, the National Trust is responsible for extensive natural capital which delivers bundles of ecosystem services, including cultural services, which contains aesthetic benefits (pp.34-35). Consequently, all participants made decisions relating to conservation of natural capital and the delivery of ecosystem services (p.110), but no participant mentioned the term natural capital and only two referred directly to ecosystem services. There were indications that aesthetic value acted synergistically with diverse ecosystem services, participant 5 valuing aesthetically Coniston Water, which was ranked C3 and enhanced by the opportunities for canoeing, boating and spiritual refreshment provided by the lake (Cimon-Morin, Darveau and Poulin, 2013;

Mouchet *et al.*, 2014; Hirons, Comberti and Dunford, 2016; Kenter, 2016; Bieling and Plieninger, 2017; Chapin III, 2017). In contrast, participant 1 valued aesthetically and ranked B1 the muted autumn colours of relic temperate rainforest, explaining the biodiversity and amenity benefits if the woodland was allowed to re-colonise the valley. Natural capital valued aesthetically by the participants is outlined in the following sections.

4.5.4.1 Water

Water features including open waters, wetlands, and floodplains are synonymous with the Lake District. It has the highest rainfall of any National Park in England, yet water covers only around 3% of its area (White, C. *et al.*, 2015, p.4). However, water as natural capital delivers diverse ecosystem services, including aesthetic benefits, highly valued by quite possibly all these participants (Table 4.2). The synergy of aesthetic benefits was illustrated through aesthetic engagement by participants taking part in recreational activities such as swimming, canoeing, or rowing (Fig. 4.28). Water was present in all the photographs ranked A1 and 50% of the photographs ranked B1 and B2 (Table 4.1).

In five of the 40 photographs which included water, no reference was made to its presence during the associated interview, indicating that its inclusion may have been incidental.

Table 4.2 Presence of water in photographs ranked A to E by participants

Ranking	Total Number of Photographs	Photographs Including Water		References to Water in Associated Transcript	
A1	9	9	100%	7	78%
B1 & B2	18	9	50%	8	44%
C1, C2 & C3	27	14	52%	12	44%
D1 & D2	18	4	22%	4	22%
E1	9	4	44%	4	44%
TOTAL	81	40	49%	35	43%

The presence of water was often associated with aesthetic engagement, which together with the absence of clearly anthropogenic features, contributed to getting away from everyday life e.g., River Eamont:

“...at different times of the year, you could be anywhere in the world, y’ know”

(Fig. 4.12). (B1, Participant 4)



Figure 4.12 River Eamont (B1, Participant 4)

For participant 1, a mountain stream iconic of these Lake District water features, elicited memories of aesthetic engagement. Viewing the photograph of the stream flowing with clean water brought back memories of the role that the other four senses play in aesthetic engagement:

“The reason I chose it was the beauty of a mountain river, you know, the sights, much more than a visual thing, the sights, the sound of tumbling water, the taste, touch, and smell of really clear water...”. (D2, Participant 1)

Of the nine photographs ranked A1, there were two similar symbolic closeup images by participants 6 and 9 of water worn rocks in upland streams and they both highly

valued aesthetic engagement with clean water as natural capital. In the case of Participant 9, they also valued aesthetically an image of rocks worn smooth on a mountain path, but this was ranked lower at E1 due to the absence of water.



Figure 4.13 Water worn rocks in upland stream (A1, Participant 6)



Figure 4.14 Water worn rocks in upland stream (A1, Participant 9)

Participants 2 and 8, in contrast, provided from the same viewpoint more distanced traditional landscape photographs, in the form of iconic images of Grasmere Tarn and the surrounding landscape, ranked as A1 (Fig. 4.15). Studying photographs of Grasmere Tarn over time reveals that many were created from this exact point, featuring in early guidebooks and now posted on Instagram (Urry and Larsen, 1990, p.174; Crawshaw and Urry, 1997; Ackerman, 2003; Steinberg, 2008; Havinga *et al.*, 2024). The tarn and Grasmere Island were valued aesthetically, and the synergy of the cultural landscape made it iconic of Lake District valleys. These two participants also referred to the cultural significance of Grasmere Island:

“I recognise this, this view of Grasmere Tarn and Grasmere Island as containing many of the essential landscape, err, attributes that form the palette of every Lake District valley”. (A1, Participant 8)



Figure 4.15 Grasmere Tarn and Grasmere Island (A1, Participant 8)

Subtle changes in polarization and reflections contributed to how water was valued aesthetically by some participants:

“I think every now and again in the Lake District, you suddenly come upon a staggeringly beautiful view that you weren’t necessarily expecting to see. In this case reflected also in the lake, which was still on that day, so it was almost like a double image, and you just gasp and think how? What have I done to deserve this, you know, to live in a place like this?”. (C3, Participant 7)

Of the cultural services delivered by water, aesthetic benefits were highly valued by these participants. However, as per section 2.2.1.2, no participant said that they valued aesthetically the Lake District’s bogs and wetlands or its 42 km of coastline and estuaries (Lake District National Park, 2023).

4.5.4.2 Trees, Woodland, and Forestry Plantations

Natural capital as trees, woodland, and forestry plantations, cover only around 13% of the Lake District, compared with around 40% across Europe (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2013, p.50; Lake District National Park Partnership, 2018, p.28). This is higher than water at only 3%, but lower than mountains and moorlands at around 46% and farmland at around 34% (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2013, p.50). As per section 2.2.1.3, much of this tree cover is in the south of the National Park, delivering a diversity of ecosystem services, including tangible and intangible cultural services (Luttik, 2000; Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005b; Hanley and Colombo, 2008; Sukhdev, Wittmer, Schröter-Schlaack, Nesshöver, Bishop, Brink *et al.*, 2010, p.11; Dandy and Van Der Wal, 2011; Bingley, 2012; Haines-Young and Potschin, 2022; Katsuda *et al.*, 2022). Most if not all the participants valued trees, and woodland aesthetically, evidenced through the ranking of objects and aesthetic engagement in tree covered environments.

Despite being largely in the south of the National Park and covering a relatively small area, this natural capital delivers not only aesthetic benefits, but a diversity of synergistic ecosystem services. Accordingly, this natural capital was associated with two thirds of the objects ranked A1 and over two thirds of the objects ranked B1 and B2. From a phenomenological perspective, it was notable that aesthetic engagement in woodlands might act synergistically with spiritual experiences:

"I have a lifelong love of woods... ...we connect with something quite spiritual".

(B2, Participant 7)

"I love the range of colours, the range of textures, I love the water and the flowing water, the wind in the trees...". (C2, Participant 9)

Participant 2 appeared almost apologetic, for valuing aesthetically commercial coniferous plantations:

"I like forestry plantations, because it feels, I mean they're not natural, in a, in a, particularly not like when you've got Sitka spruce and Norway spruce, err, but

they make you feel a little bit like you could be somewhere like Scandinavia”.

(D1, Participant 2)

Ash pollards are natural capital and traditional features of the cultural landscape, clearly valued aesthetically and for their multifunctionality by participants 6, 8 and 9. Participant 9 felt that ash pollards were reminiscent of both the Japanese art of bonsai and the abstract expressionist paintings of Jackson Pollock (1912-1956 CE) (Taylor, R. *et al.*, 2011). These participants stressed how ash pollards were valuable ecosystems (Fig. 4.16):

“Many landscapes like Little Langdale, Great Langdale, you know, you’ve got ash pollards all the way along the lanes and through the fields. You know, many of them two hundred, three hundred years old, little micro-ecosystems”.

(Participant 8)



Figure 4.16 Ash Pollard (C2, Participant 6)

Most participants wanted more trees in the Lake District, but some linked a desire for reduced grazing by sheep to increased tree cover on the mountains. Reduced grazing would allow montane woodland to spread beyond cliffs inaccessible to sheep and facilitate regeneration of temperate rainforest (Fig.4.17), re-establishing habitats which they valued aesthetically:

“It’s both the joy of the visual beauty of that woodland, but it’s also the err, the kind of, wish for the urge of what that would look like, you know, if it was allowed to thrive”. (B1, Participant 1)

“I’d like to perhaps see a bit, yeah, some softening of edges and more trees and more rivers meandering”. (Participant 2)

“...some of the vegetation that is clinging on in areas where, err, sheep have been less able to get to (Fig. 4.17) ... And it’s beautiful in terms of the suite of, err, flora and fauna associated with those habitats, and it needs to spread”. (B2, Participant 6)



Figure 4.17 Montane vegetation refuge, Langstrath Valley (B2, Participant 6)

4.5.4.3 Mountains and Moorlands

Natural capital in the form of mountains, moorland, heathland and unenclosed grassland are the most extensive natural capital, covering around 46% of the National Park. Evidencing the multifunctionality of mountains and moorlands, extensive peatlands are vitally important in the storage of carbon (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2013, p.50; Campaign for National Parks, 2024, p.50). Active recreation within this natural capital, often involving aesthetic engagement, appeared to be important for the wellbeing of the participants. The term hill walking was scarcely used, but the interviews and associated photographs indicated that it was the most popular activity. Three of the participants explained that they were keen Alpinists, who also took part in rock climbing and “mountaineering” in the Lake District:

“So, I just think it’s a really amazing place, it’s also one of the favourite family walks and the mix between thinking you’re out in a natural environment and then as you drop over the top (Fig. 4.6), you come down through all the copper mines and all of the mine remnants and industry...”. (B2, Participant 5)

A similar number mentioned that they were runners, participant 3 emphasising that they ran in the Lake District but was also an Alpine runner. Aesthetic engagement appeared to be integral to creative and expressive recreational activities, which included photography, fine art, and poetry.

The expansion of montane vegetation and temperate rainforest was said to be restricted by the concentration of unenclosed common land, covering around 28% of the National Park and nearly 50% of the National Trust’s land (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2013, p.14). Some participants highlighted how reducing the number of grazing sheep on the commons, is widely considered essential for the restoration of this natural capital (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2016, p.542):

“Obviously, the commons are the one area that remains outside of our control or influence really to a large extent”. (Participant 7)

Most participants, however, appeared supportive of what they generally termed “traditional hill farming”. Some voiced concern about threats to this form of agropastoral agriculture, said to be destroying both its viability and the aesthetically pleasing cultural landscape it had shaped (Condliffe, 2008, p.87; Hubacek *et al.*, 2008, p.297; Price, L. and Evans, 2009; Walling, 2014, pp.286-289; Edwards, M., 2018; Mansfield, 2018; McCormick, 2018, pp.60-74). To illustrate this point participant 8 used the metaphor of the now extinct flightless dodo *Raphus cucullatus*:

“We’ve got two hundred fell farms, two hundred dodos left, and each time one goes to the wall, that’s one less dodo. And we should be, we should be thinking of them as endangered species”. (Participant 8)

There was worry, however, over what some termed “late twentieth century hill farming”. A form of agropastoral agriculture said to be based on minimum shepherding and excessive numbers of sheep, described as a threat to the aesthetic benefits and ecological sustainability of the open commons. Although participant 8 was strongly supportive of “traditional hill farming” they cited the Langdale Valley as overgrazed and offering little for ecology and ecosystem services. Around half the participants clearly said that overgrazing was damaging the aesthetic benefits provided by agropastoral agriculture, claiming that the LDNPP had failed to criticise this “late twentieth century” approach:

“I think there’s a very, very strong move within the World Heritage Site that it’s all about preserving farming and the farmed landscape in a late twentieth century version”. (Participant 9)

4.5.4.4 Farmland

Natural capital as farmland, mainly enclosed, covers over one third or around 34% of the National Park, but was included in under a quarter of the photographs. It was not valued aesthetically as highly as either water or woodland which cover a much smaller area at around 3% and 13% respectively (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2013, p.50).

Farmland was normally valued aesthetically as part of its contribution to the wider cultural landscape, with visually clear anthropogenic influences, including drystone walls, hedges, farmhouses, and traditional barns:

“An old Lakeland farm nestled in the landscape, you know, the cultural, vernacular features which have been carved out and won from local stone and natural materials. ... iconic features of what makes people think of the Lake District”. (C1, Participant 1)

“This landscape was created by farmers and miners and residents, so at one time this beauty was created by people, through a combination of art and craft and economic need”. (Participant 9)

Traditional barns (Fig. 4.18), drystone walls, ash pollards and hedges are diverse natural capital, modified through producing and caring activities. Some of the participants indicated how they valued the high level of skill associated with these activities, highlighting how exploitation of natural capital had contributed to a distinctive cultural landscape:



Figure 4.18 Traditional stone barn (C3, Participant 9)

"I really like a stone wall. And as well, they've got, you've got all these lichens growing on them and quite often you get all of the ferns and insects."

(B2, Participant 2)

"I love the fact that this is a barn that's been made out of the rock from, y' know, it's like being carved out of the materials of the place (Fig. 4.18). The slates will be local slates...". (C3, Participant 9)

Relational values and co-production are often focussed on specific geographical spaces, which in the Lake District includes the Ullswater valley:

"I think Ullswater is perhaps, has got a good case for being the most beautiful of all the Lake District valleys. Again, I think it's all down to that percentage balance of those distinctive landscape attributes that make up the Lake District". (B2, Participant 8)

4.5.4.5 Geology and Industry

The natural capital of the Lake District includes geology and geomorphology, but despite only a small area of the Lake District cultural landscape being covered by quarrying and mining, it has had a dramatic historic influence. Although not the only ones to value aesthetically vernacular architecture and industrial archaeology, participants 2, 5 and 8 clearly demonstrated relational values and aesthetic engagement with this modified natural capital:

"The copper mines at Coniston. You kind of have to discover it for yourself and you can like get into it and be amongst it, err, yeah, the fact that it's all kind of just left there. Yeah, yeah, it's really lovely". (C3, Participant 2)

"The copper mines and all of the mine remnants and industry, and that's I think a really interesting balance, this sort of err, the natural environment, farmed environment and industrial environment". (B2, Participant 5)

4.6 Aesthetic Orientations

Core beliefs and the held values that stemmed from them formed the foundations of the aesthetic orientations of the participants. However, analysis, and categorising abstract information regarding human behaviour and affective emotions is challenging. The deconstructed orientations outlined in the following four subsections, should be considered in the context that these matters are complex and interweaved. To assist with interpretation, photomontages have been created for each of these aesthetic orientations, including one for the overall National Trust Lake District Hub. (Fig. 4.32).

4.6.1 New Statesmen

Words often used by participants of the New Statesmen aesthetic orientation included ones associated with hill farming e.g., farm, farmers, stonewalls, Herdwick and cattle (Fig. 4.19). Other often used words, however, included ones associated with more general land management and conservation e.g., landscape, rivers, water, lake, woodland and natural. Words and phrases such as hefting, Rare Breeds Survival Trust, gene pool and “I’m cow daft”, might be important in the context of an interview, but appear only once. The context in which these words were used is important, as they reflected a positive discourse around how participants valued aesthetically what they termed “traditional hill farming” and how they believed that this agropastoral agriculture contributed to the aesthetic value of the cultural landscape:

“Yeah, little tough things (Galloway cattle), yeah. They would be the mainstay, they’d be the mainstay of most upland and hill farms within Cumbria and across Northumberland, then you’d cross to a white shorthorn to get a blue grey calf”.
(Participant 4)

Agropastoral agriculture may have been a core belief among some of these participants, but it should be stressed that their aesthetic values were diverse, being aware of the need to protect and conserve natural capital. However, as per section 4.5.4.5, some also valued aesthetically industrial archaeological remains associated with geological natural capital (Fig. 4.20).



Figure 4.19 Word Cloud of the 25 words and terms used most frequently by participants of the New Statesmen aesthetic orientation.

Synergy within the iconic cultural landscape shaped by agropastoral agriculture, appeared to increase aesthetic value for these participants:

“You’ve got lots of different things, again like that kind of A1 photo, it’s all the different things kind of working together, so you have water and sunlight glinting off the water and stone walls and the flag stone fences and the old archaeology, water and forestry and clouds.” (Participant 2)

Participants in this orientation sought a more sustainable future for agropastoral agriculture, which included participant 2 liaising with tenant hill farmers to reduce damage to natural capital e.g., blanket bog. Similarly, participant 7 had identified

premium markets for mutton, making smaller flocks viable and consequently reducing damage to natural capital e.g., montane woodland:

“Well, our shepherd is actually selling his mutton, instead of draughting it, he’s actually selling it to somebody who, who puts it at Borough Market in London and trendy people go and buy mutton kebabs and things”. (Participant 7)



Figure 4.20 Influences contributing to New Statesmen aesthetic orientation

Images of livestock were symbols of the Lake District, participant 4 having ranked a photograph of grassland grazed by Herdwicks and Galloway cattle C2, it being the cultural landscape maintained by grazing livestock which they valued aesthetically (Fig. 4.21):



Figure 4.21 Herdwicks and Galloway cattle (C2, Participant 4)

Despite being supportive of “traditional hill farming” these participants were concerned that despite the reduction in sheep numbers, “late twentieth century hill farming” was still damaging natural capital. They were working with National Trust farming tenants to achieve more effective conservation, but frustrated about perceived weak political leadership and disputes between hill farming and conservation within the LDNPP:

“Where you’ve got these polarised arguments that you’re never going to come to kind of sensible solutions, so yeah that could have a big impact on something like the Herdwick breed”. (Participant 2)

4.6.2 New Romantics

The word used most often by participants of the New Romantics aesthetic orientation was landscape, but farming, value and ruin were also used often (Fig. 4.22). Aesthetic, beauty, design, history, and significance were used occasionally. Words and phrases used rarely, but important in the context of the interviews, included landscape character assessment, Neolithic, Picturesque Movement, Romantic Movement, and polite architecture. There were also references to key people involved in the foundation of the National Trust, such as Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley (1851-1920 CE). The participants used language associated with a combination of art, architecture, landscape architecture, archaeology, and history.



Figure 4.22 Word Cloud of the 25 words and terms used most frequently by participants of the New Romantics aesthetic orientation.



Figure 4.23 Influences contributing to New Romantics aesthetic orientation

Archaeology, landscape history, the Picturesque and Romantic Movements, and fine art contributed to the New Romantics aesthetic orientation (Fig. 4.23). The influences of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements were valued aesthetically by participants 1 and 9, but particularly participants 3 and 8 (Fig. 4.15). A combination of academic and professional expertise, contributed to a personal and professional work ethic, which inspired their leadership roles in the National Trust. Knowledge is an important cultural service, and their in-depth professional knowledge was demonstrated regarding the ruin of Claife Station above Windermere (Fig. 4.24) and Tarn Hows, near Hawkshead (Fig. 4.3). These participants had played leading roles in efforts to

successfully conserve these internationally important sites, which they had both photographed as objects valued aesthetically.

Claife Station is a symbol of the Picturesque Movement, while also being an unlikely symbol of the Napoleonic wars, a patriotic response to the demand from wealthy tourists unable to visit mainland Europe (p.57). It is best practice to make safe, conserve and interpret ruins in their ruined condition and this included reinstating coloured glass in some windows (Fig 4.24.), to evoke the aesthetic experience of earlier tourists (Clark, Jan, 2013; Rutherford, 2013, pp.201-218; Lynch, 2015). It was ranked D2 by participant 3 and C2 by participant 8, the latter having photographed Windermere through one of these windows:

“It’s amazing, yeah, it seems an almost unreal experience today to tint views and it’s all part of that picturesque, err, idea of, err, I suppose responding to European ideals and values of great landscape art”. (C2, Participant 8)



Figure 4.24 Reinstated tinted glass of Claife Station (C2, Participant 8)

Tarn Hows was ranked B1 by participant 3 and C1 by participant 8 (Fig. 4.3), these participants explaining the influence of the Romantic Movement on this classic example of a nineteenth century naturalistic landscape design and their roles in the detailed planning and implementation of conservation work to restore and interpret the original vision for Tarn Hows (p.39).

Participants 3 and 8 valued aesthetically the cultural landscape of agropastoral agriculture or what was termed “traditional hill farming”. But participant 8 clearly shared the concerns of colleagues regarding the impact of overgrazing by sheep on aesthetic value. However, participant 3 voiced concerns over descriptions of the Lake District as “sheepwrecked”, arguing that this was not the case, and a good part of its aesthetic value was due to elements of ruination (p.62). Participant 8 felt that the journalist George Monbiot who had used the term “sheepwrecked”, did not understand the Lake District and was using its international profile to maximise publicity for his *cause célèbre* of rewilding (Monbiot, 2013b). Not helped by the absence at that time of any widely agreed definition (Carver *et al.*, 2021), these two participants felt that rewilding would damage the Lake District cultural landscape that they valued aesthetically:

“It’s not a wreck, it’s a ruin. Ruins are, can be culturally central, you know Pompeii is a ruin, it’s had massive cultural impact around the world, but you wouldn’t plough it and then plant trees on it and maybe introduce mega-fauna”. (Participant 3)

“...followers of Monbiot, who think that if we go back to some sort of Holocene, Post-Holocene landscape, err, and clear people out of it, it would be all the better. And, you know, they want pumas and wolves and lynx”. (Participant 8)

Other participants expressed fascination with the Picturesque and Romantic Movements, but not to the same intensity as participants 3 and 8. Participant 4, for example, was from a farming background:

“But then having, yeah, having known a bit more about it and sort of found out a bit more, well you value it more to be honest.” (C3, Participant 4)

The diamond nine ranking and associated interviews repeatedly highlighted how the legacy of the Picturesque Movement influenced photographic composition and distancing of iconic objects valued aesthetically.

4.6.3 New Alpinists

The word used most often by participants of the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation was landscape, but mountains, beauty, nature, and change were also used often (Fig. 4.25). Farming, important, hills, climbing, and walking were used occasionally. Rarely used words and phrases, but significant in the context of the interviews, included Alpinist, Alps, boat, canoe, conservation, fells, and snow. Participants of the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation used language associated with mountaineering, rock climbing and hill walking. However, they also used language associated with conservation and hill farming, which reflected how they valued aesthetically the cultural landscape.



Figure 4.25 Word Cloud of the 25 words and terms used most frequently by participants of the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation.

Phenomenologically it was difficult to untangle the synergistic emotive and aesthetic values of the participants (Fig. 4.26). Descriptions of taking part in recreation, however, evidenced aesthetic engagement with the cultural landscape of the Lake District. Weather in combination with unusual lighting conditions generated ambient moods for participants, which might act synergistically with the cultural landscape to facilitate aesthetic engagement. Analogy might be used to liken the cultural landscape to a more remote location that they were familiar with or the Alps (Barthes, 1977b, p.44):

“But the, the light, the scale, err, you know the snow gives it an almost Alpine feel and it’s almost a picture book image in a way (Fig. 4.27), of the little houses nestled under, under the hillside”. (B1, Participant 5)



Figure 4.27 Townend Farm at Troutbeck (B1, Participant 5)

Many of the participants' photographs had been taken when engaged in outdoor activities and some contained images of people (Table 4.3). Around half the participants mentioned taking part in wild swimming, being enthusiastic about the opportunities provided by streams, tarns and lakes. Opportunities for aesthetic engagement with natural capital in the form of water contributed to why participant 6 lived in the Lake District:

"And in terms of people's enjoyment of the Lake District, which is part of what my role's responsible for and why I live in the Lake District, is also my personal enjoyment, having healthy beautiful lakes that people can come and enjoy is, is very, very key...". (B1, Participant 6)

Some participants regularly took part in canoeing, rowing, and sailing (Fig. 4.28), with participant 7 ranking an image of rowing on Derwentwater A1, carefully explaining how weather conditions might influence sensory experience and contribute to a perceived getting away from everyday life and aesthetic engagement:

"I love, I love the cloud, the mist pattern and the cloud rising and the context of the rowers within that (Fig. 4.28), because when you're sitting in a rowing boat looking out, you see the world in a very different way and it was trying to capture that feeling really". (A1, Participant 7)



Figure 4.28 Rowing on Derwentwater (A1, Participant 7)

“Spots of time” or memories of aesthetic engagement, as per section 2.2.3.1, were also recalled by participants who referred to experiences from childhood or experiences with family and friends. Such memories and feelings were strongly associated with water features:

“D2 is a slightly more personal picture, because it’s Bassenthwaite Lake and I live very near to Bass, and also spent very, very, many of my childhood hours sailing on Bassenthwaite Lake and paddling in it and swimming in it and that kind of thing”. (D1, Participant 7)

All the participants explained that taking part in recreational activities in the Lake District contributed to how they valued aesthetically the National Park. Several clearly evidenced that such recreational activities were about aesthetic engagement. For some participants, particularly participants 1 and 5, taking part in climbing and other outdoor activities appeared to be core beliefs.

4.6.4 New Naturalists

The word used most often by participants of the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation was beautiful, but water, important, and landscape were also used often (Fig. 4.29). Farmed, lake, natural, rock, trees, and woodland were used occasionally. Rarely used words and phrases, but important in the context of the interviews, included barns, change, pollards, rivers, and sheep.

Participants of the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation used language associated with natural history and nature conservation. Terms such as vernacular buildings, stone walls, flooding, climate change and World Heritage Site were used in a professional context (Fig. 4.29). However, getting back to nature appeared to be important to these participants, which was reflected in language around spirituality, paganism, and aesthetic engagement.



Figure 4.29 Word Cloud of the 25 words and terms used most frequently by participants of the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation

A combination of wildlife and aesthetic engagement in locations with few visually obvious anthropogenic features appeared to be important to the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation (Table 4.4):

“...it isn’t a wilderness, but it’s quite hard to get to and it feels like you’re sort of really getting back and engaged with nature and the environment”.

(A1, Participant 5)

Table 4.4 Presence of wildlife in photographs ranked A to E by participants

Ranking	Total Number of Photographs	Photographs Including Wildlife	
A1	9	0	0%
B1 & B2	18	3	17%
C1, C2 & C3	27	2	7%
D1 & D2	18	2	11%
E1	9	0	0%
TOTAL	81	7	9%

Although aesthetic engagement in locations with few visually obvious anthropogenic features might be important, objects such as drystone walls, were frequently valued both aesthetically and for their claimed multifunctionality. However, greater aesthetic value was assigned to trees and woodlands, this natural capital being associated with many of the objects ranked A1, which invariably included a water feature, and to a lesser extent to the objects ranked B1 and B2 (Fig. 4.30). Most participants experienced some form of aesthetic engagement in woodlands, including spiritual experiences.



Figure 4.30 Influences contributing to the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation

Nature conservation appeared important to the core beliefs of participant 6, they ranked an image of lichen C1 as a symbol of the fragility of the natural environment (Fig. 4.5). Mosses, and liverworts were also valued aesthetically:

“Rather than head down, striving for the top of whatever it is people are walking to, or busy in their jobs on a daily basis (Fig. 4.5), is actually looking at it from a microscopic point of view and the shape and the colours and the structure of these lower plants is absolutely magnificent”. (C1, Participant 6)

The word used most often by National Trust participants overall was landscape, but beautiful and farming were also used often (Fig. 4.31). Natural, water and change were used occasionally, while rarely used words included important, value, trees, woodland, and mountains. The language used reflected a landscape conservation focus, valuing aesthetically natural capital integral to the cultural landscape. Key influences on the aesthetic values of the participants were the roles of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements and agropastoral agriculture in the development of the cultural landscape. Despite being of the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation, participants 6 and 9 still assigned considerable aesthetic value to a cultural landscape with visually clear anthropogenic features. The diamond nine ranking revealed that influences were associated with conservation of the traditional Lake District rural idyll (Fig. 4.32.).

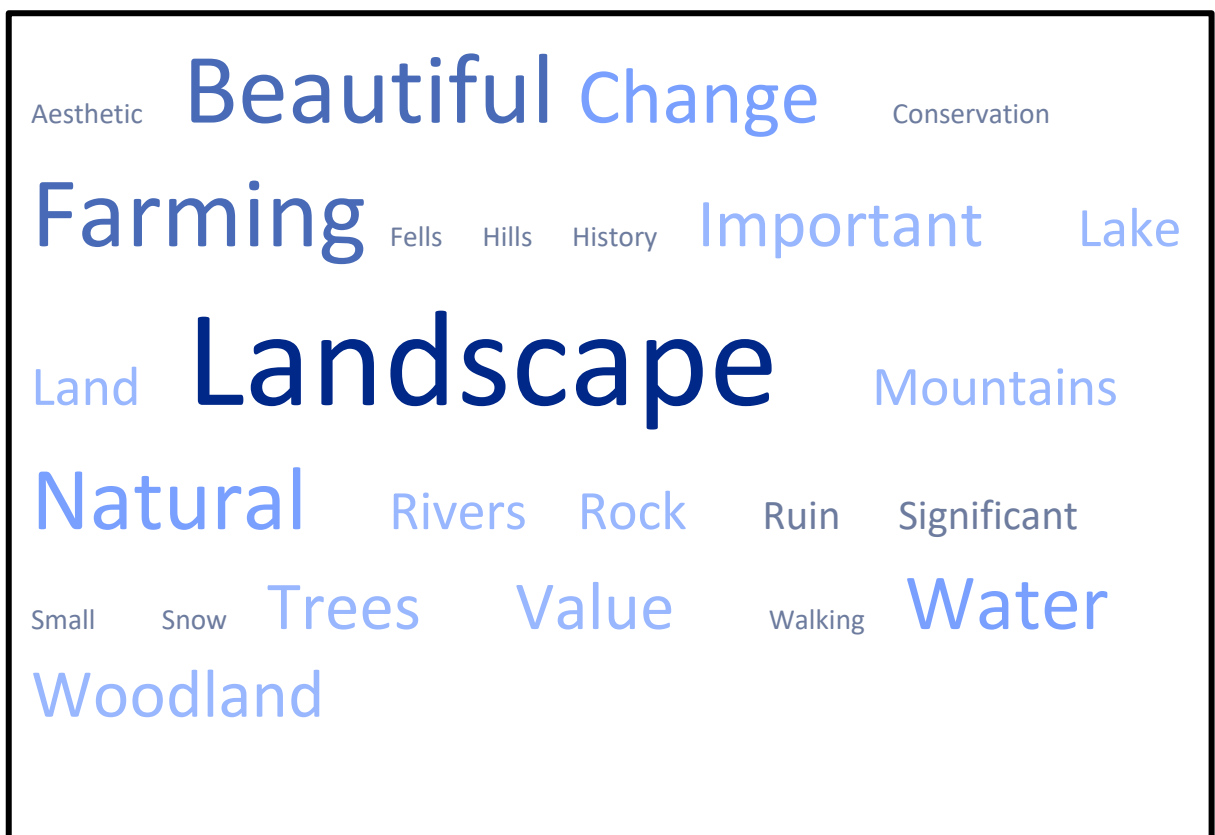


Figure 4.31 Word Cloud of the 25 words and terms used most frequently overall by the National Trust participants.

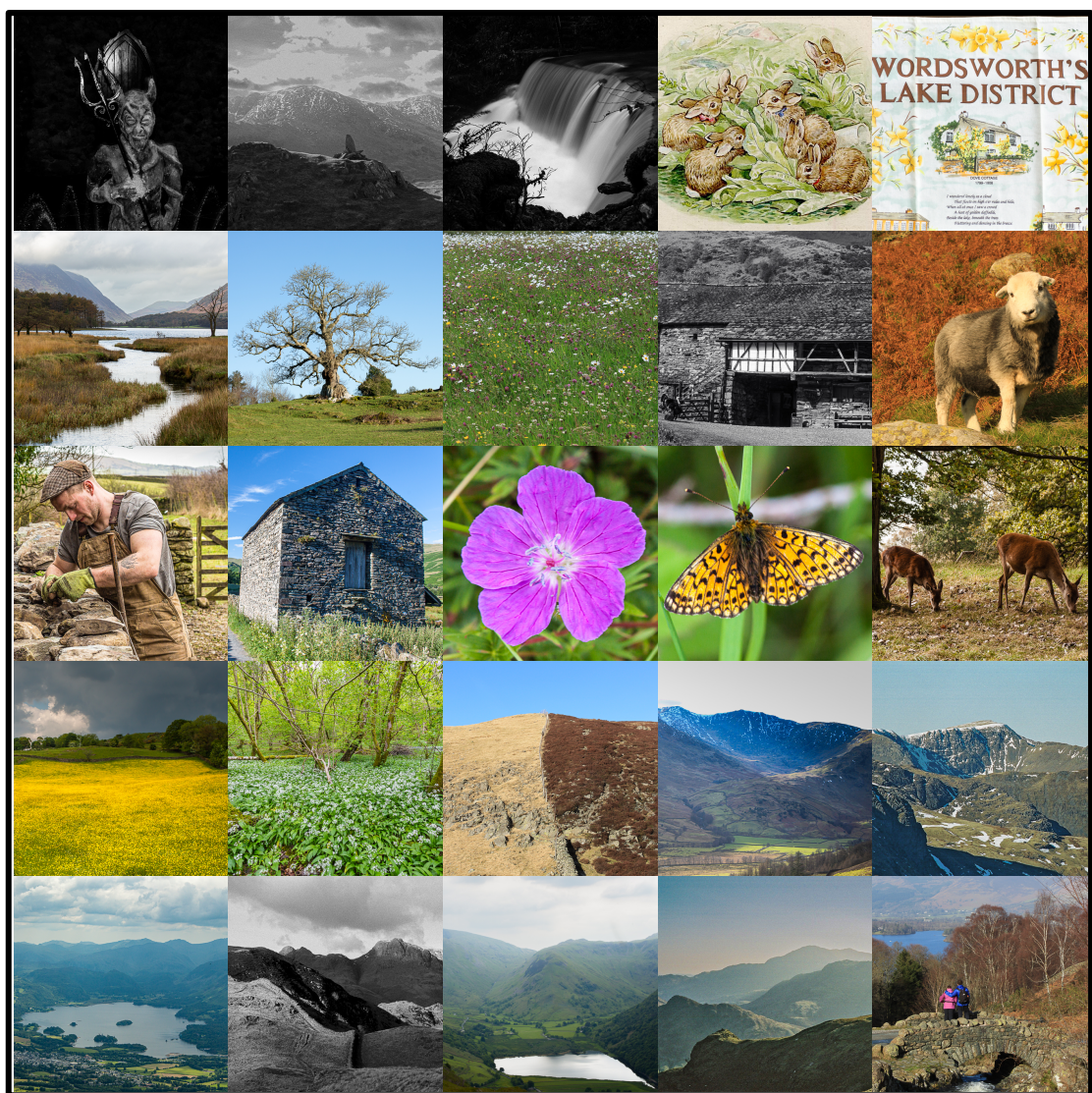


Figure 4.32 Influences contributing to the National Trust aesthetic orientation

4.7 SWOT Analysis

As part of triangulating the information, a SWOT analysis exercise was carried out to confirm which objects participants valued aesthetically and why:

Table 4.5 SWOT Analysis Diagram of how the objects valued aesthetically in the research exercise strengthen or benefit the Lake District and how they relate to opportunities, weaknesses, and threats

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. World Class Cultural Landscape 2. Lakes, Tarns and Rivers 3. Diverse Wildlife 4. Trees and Woodlands	1. LDNPP 2. Emasculated LDNPA 3. Transport and visitor Infrastructure 4. Disparate Groups and no Synergy
Opportunities	Threats
1. World Heritage Site 2. BREXIT 3. Ecosystem Services 4. Sustainable Water Management	1. Climate Change 2. BREXIT 3. Exceeding Carrying Capacity 4. Tree Disease and Invasive Species

4.7.1 Strengths

Participant 1 objected on principle to ranking the objects that they valued aesthetically, and the SWOT analysis exercise (Table 4.5). However, all the other participants engaged enthusiastically with the process. Two key points emerged regarding strengths, firstly and confirming what emerged from the photo elicitation exercise, most participants valued aesthetically what they called a fascinating world-class cultural landscape:

“I’m sure others will say it a bit more eloquently than me, but the idea that the Lake’s isn’t a wilderness impacted by man, it is an environment that has been shaped by humans and that’s the interesting bit”. (Participant 5)

Secondly, it confirmed that even if participants had not used the terms natural capital and ecosystem services, most appeared to understand the concepts. The landscape

and the synergy of its components, were said to produce numerous tangible and intangible benefits:

“There are some sort of tangible benefits in terms of producing stuff and then some intangible in terms of the experience they create that people want to come and see and the stories that they tell”. (Participant 2)

4.7.2 Opportunities

There was general agreement that the Lake District World Heritage Site designation was a privilege. However, some felt that any pride in this designation should be tempered with concern, due to deterioration of the cultural landscape and natural capital integral to it:

“We’ve, we’ve been given this badge of honour, this international badge of honour, by a dispassionate scientific community. So, we’re clearly special, globally, culturally, part of that comes from the farmed landscapes and we need to sustain that, but we also need to make sure that it’s not a wrecked landscape, that, that the intensification of farming over the past forty, fifty years doesn’t continue and we, we perhaps change direction and move towards some sort of high nature value farming”. (Participant 8)

The departure of Britain from the European Union, referred to as BREXIT, was seen as an opportunity to address the damage to natural capital caused by agricultural intensification. There was felt to be potential to move agricultural support away from production subsidies to the delivery of ecosystem services, which some participants termed “public goods” (p.32). However, not all ecosystem services were viewed positively and participant 8 felt that hydroelectric power was controversial and had damaged the aesthetic value of the cultural landscape:

“...the development of hydro has done massive damage to the landscape... the value of the place from a sustainability point of view is about authenticity, not for, not for electricity generation”. (Participant 3)

4.7.3 Weaknesses

To most participants, the World Heritage Site designation was an opportunity, but the LDNPP was a weakness, that might impact adversely on the aesthetic value of natural capital. The Partnership was allegedly moribund and biased towards the form of agropastoral agriculture termed “late twentieth century hill farming”, while allegedly failing to adequately consider other influences on the cultural landscape e.g., vernacular architecture, quarrying, industry, and woodlands. It was alleged to be dysfunctional due to disparate groups and weak political leadership resulting in hostility and disagreement between the various partners:

“There’s a lot of voices to satisfy and I think a weakness of that, is that we could end up just doing nothing”. (Participant 4)

Visitor facilities were said to be inadequate and that the National Trust had insufficient resources to deal with existing visitor pressure, which was damaging natural capital. However, despite insufficient resources, the World Heritage Site designation was actively generating increased visitor pressure, despite the Lake District having allegedly reached “saturation point”. Likewise transport infrastructure had deteriorated and narrow roads were gridlocked in summer. Due to budget cuts the LDNPA was no longer able to deliver some statutory services or exert adequate influence, let alone adequately maintain all visitor facilities, which contributed to damaging aesthetic value.

4.7.4 Threats

Although not mentioned elsewhere in the interviews, almost every participant referred to climate change as a threat, if not the major threat, to the cultural landscape and the natural capital integral to it that they valued aesthetically:

“One in a hundred, one in two-hundred-year extreme weather events are now happening every five years. Some of the fell sides are literally being washed away, we have footpaths washed away, barns that fell down, jetties destroyed”. (Participant 9)

BREXIT was mentioned both as an opportunity and threat:

“Brexit could be an opportunity, but it could be a threat, we don’t know what’s going to happen and it looks, it looks like Government policy is probably going to do away with the basic payment scheme side of things...”. (Participant 2)

Participant 3 argued that capitalism had homogenised natural capital since at least the Second World War, but now the cultural landscape with elements of ruination was as likely to be homogenised by rewilding.

There was conflict between the desire to see people enjoying the Lake District and fear that it had reached carrying capacity, damaging the natural capital valued aesthetically. Participant 1, for example, felt that there needed to be a balance between the needs of farming and tourism:

“One of the fundamental conflicts that the Lake District has is that whilst it’s an extremely beautiful place, it doesn’t earn its living from hill farming anymore, the dominant force in the economy is tourism and tourism is driven by the needs of tourism businesses, which if unfettered by control, planning and so-on, would dominate all aspects of the way the landscape would look like”. (Participant 1)

Participant 9 in contrast, said that although the Lake District was at carrying capacity in certain areas, this did not apply to the entire National Park.

There was concern about the impact of tree diseases and invasive species on natural capital that was valued aesthetically. Participant 8 was particularly concerned about the impact of *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, the cause of ash dieback on ash pollards in areas such as Little Langdale and Great Langdale.

4.8 Influence

4.8.1 Influencing People

Participant 5 was seconded to lead on the regional delivery of the National Trust's response to *Making Space for Nature* in the form of *A Shared Purpose for our Countryside: Our Part in Restoring a Healthier, more Beautiful Natural Environment* (Lawton, 2011; National Trust, 2017), through the then *Land Outdoors and Nature Strategy* (Kehoe, 2017). Held values were influenced through seeking to inspire and enable colleagues, and tenants to achieve more sustainable and biodiverse natural capital:

"Err, it's all about motivating people, showing them the opportunities, and giving them the confidence to err, make a big change in how we look after our land". (Participant 5)

Participants 1, 2 and 4, had roles where influence and impacts were largely at a policy and strategic level. These participants were confident that they could influence the behaviour of tenants, leading to more effective conservation of natural capital, but this might be a long-term task:

"...the type of decisions that I'm making, hopefully, will help our tenants better understand where we want to go as an organisation". (Participant 4)

"The project is looking at that long term ambition, so whilst I might not see any change at the moment, I would hope that if I came back in thirty or forty years, that I would be able to see some difference, ...". (Participant 2)

Participants 3 and 8 had specialist roles and worked with colleagues throughout the Lake District Hub, emphasizing that if they were to be successful, effective leadership, and teamwork was essential:

"It should be one project team working to deliver the best possible outcome".
(Participant 8)

As per section 2.3.3 there was little reference, except for participant 6, to how decisions impact on or influence either the local community or visitors:

“It’s talking to the community, having open days in the landscape and actually walking it with them and showing them, it’s really, really important”.

(Participant 6)

However, there was clear evidence of partnership working, strategic leadership decisions often being made in partnership with other organisations. Such partnerships influenced the conservation of natural capital on land in the wider Lake District outside the ownership of the National Trust and could include opportunities for ‘informal’ leadership:

“As a team we work, err, obviously not only internally with the direct team, but externally with consultants and other agencies, say colleagues such as Natural England, the Environment Agency, the National Park...”. (Participant 6)

4.8.2 Influencing Objects Valued Aesthetically

There was clear evidence of leadership decisions regarding the conservation of natural capital. This included support for agropastoral agriculture, enabling natural capital to deliver mutually reinforcing ecosystem services incorporating cultural services. Notably, the subjectivity and aesthetic values of participants influenced natural capital, including the delivery of ecosystem services and the appearance of the cultural landscape. For example, within operational guidelines, participants were able to prioritise certain activities, including the traditional practice of pollarding ash trees.

Participants 3 and 8 had expert knowledge of archaeology, history, and fine art, together with an excellent understanding of agropastoral agriculture and nature conservation. These participants knew that working with colleagues throughout the Lake District Hub was essential to balance aesthetic value with historic significance. Sharing knowledge and building understanding was seen as crucial for long-term conservation of the cultural landscape and the natural capital integral to it.

Some participants highlighted the importance of quality work and giving accurate professional advice to tenants and colleagues. Participant 4, noted that if they made a wrong decision, it could have an adverse impact on the economic viability of hill farms. Participants in more operational roles, could give specific examples of how their decisions influenced objects that they valued aesthetically:

“...you can see very clearly when it’s a National Trust Forestry Team that’s undertaken some tree surgery compared with anybody else. Err, it just shows, the experience, the ability, the skill, means that the future of the individual ancient trees is, is in good hands”. (Participant 6)

Some participants influenced developments and planning applications that might have adverse impacts on the aesthetic value of natural capital on land outside the ownership of the National Trust. Prior to the interviews there had been national concern about a proposed ‘zip wire’ across Thirlmere might impact adversely on the aesthetic value of the reservoir:

“A very busy place the Lakes, but a lot of it, no one ever goes into, so you want to keep the shadows if you like, very, very important, that you keep the shadows, you don’t shine a light into every little corner, you don’t develop every little bit, I think that’s really, really important”. (Participant 3)

As noted, participants were supportive of what they termed “traditional hill farming” but frustrated over the inability of the National Trust to reduce alleged overgrazing on the open commons. Overgrazing was said to be damaging the ability of this natural capital to deliver ecosystem services e.g., the contribution of peatlands to carbon sequestration:

“I’m trying to reduce the numbers of sheep that there are in the landscape, because of the damage that they do (Fig. 4.10), Err, but, I’m actually very fond of sheep per se and I’ve worked with sheep a lot in the past as a shepherd...”. (C1, Participant 7)

“...nature’s created this wonderful silhouette of fells and a thousand years of farming culture have added interest and texture to it”. (C1, Participant 8)

4.9 Discussion

4.9.1 Influences on Aesthetic Values and Natural Capital

To identify possible influences on the aesthetic values of the leadership of the National Trust.

To identify whether the aesthetic values of the leadership of the National Trust influence their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital.

4.9.1.1 Subjectivity

As per section 4.5.1, over half the participants stressed the influence of strong personal connections regarding the objects that they valued aesthetically. But the diamond nine ranking had revealed how they valued aesthetically diverse forms of natural capital, which might sometimes be modified as construction materials for a traditional farmhouse, barn or drystone wall. The diverse influences of their complex and subjective aesthetic values and how these aesthetic values may in turn influence the conservation of natural capital are now explored.

4.9.1.2 Aesthetic Engagement

Most participants evidenced relational values including eudaemonic values, influencing how they assigned aesthetic value to diverse natural capital. The Diamond nine ranking and interviews revealed how aesthetic engagement was achieved by activities including scrambling over mist covered mountains, meditating in deciduous woodlands and swimming in streams, tarns and lakes. The influence of natural capital and ecosystem services on the aesthetic values of the participants will now be considered.

4.9.1.3 Organisational Culture

As per section 2.2.4.1, core beliefs may have motivated participants to live and work within the Lake District. In addition, associating with conservation and heritage professionals, may over time influence the held values stemming from these core beliefs. These held values can become very strong, which as identified in the four aesthetic orientations, may influence how they assign aesthetic value to natural capital and in turn how they influence it both physically and how it is perceived by others.

4.9.1.4 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

As per section 4.5.4, these participants made little use of the terms natural capital and ecosystem services. However, use of the term public goods as an apparent simile for ecosystem services, reflects a possible misunderstanding of both terms (pp.32-33). Even if no use was made of the term natural capital, like other studies of ecosystem services, the cultural service of aesthetic benefits was highly valued.

4.9.1.4.1 Water

Water only covers around 3% of the Lake District but is highly valued aesthetically, the National Park being named after the glacial lakes, while water strongly influenced the aesthetic values of these participants. As per section 2.2.2.5.2, this observation is supported by empirical scientific research, but there are also claims that synergy between water and vegetation, together with composition may increase aesthetic value. Research also indicates that such natural environments of vegetation and water features may benefit health and wellbeing through such aesthetic and emotive responses. Water in composition with vegetation appeared to influence the aesthetic values of these participants, but much of the Lake District is dominated by vegetation and appeared in 72 of the 81 photographs provided. The remaining nine photographs included snow-covered summits (Fig. 4.7), livestock, industrial archaeology, a traditional barn (Fig. 4.18), and three rocky streams (Figs. 4.13, 4.14). However, the cultural and symbolic influence of water should also be noted, for example, within religions e.g., Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism and Christianity (Cobbold, 1934, pp.293-294).

Confirming the comments by participant 9 (pp.127-128), analysis of images has indicated how participants assign greater aesthetic value to water than to rocks and that aesthetic value is the most common benefit assigned to water (Kaplan, R. and Kaplan, 1989, p.291; Yang and Kaplan, 1990; Yang and Brown, 1992; Howley, 2011a; Plieninger *et al.*, 2013). The synergy of aesthetic value, semiotics, inspiration, social relations, and cultural diversity have been shown to be of great benefit, and this is evidenced by how five of these participants valued aesthetic engagement with water (Grizzetti *et al.*, 2016; Reynaud and Lanza, 2017).

The photographs created for the diamond nine ranking were integral to the semi-structured in-depth interviews within phenomenological analysis and this combination of photographic evidence and interviews revealed that these participants valued aesthetically the synergistic combination of natural capital as water and vegetation (pp.87-89). While most participants valued aesthetically a cultural landscape with visually clear anthropogenic influences, this was not exclusive and despite being from a farming background, participant 4 valued aesthetically a length of the River Eamont without any visually clear anthropogenic influences (Fig. 4.12).

Aesthetic values like those of the leadership of the National Trust, often influencing the composition of water and vegetation, are likely to have inspired the physical management of many of the Lake District's most iconic locations over the past 150 years. The composition of Tarn Hows (Fig.4.3) and Grasmere Tarn in the surrounding cultural landscapes (Fig. 4.15), probably influenced why some of these participants and many other people value them aesthetically. Participants 3 and 8 clearly explained how their aesthetic values had influenced the reinstatement of the original landscape design for Tarn Hows by Garth Marshall (p.39). Consequently, these two participants had physically influenced the management of natural capital at Tarn Hows by being responsible for the clearance of trees from sightlines included in the original landscape design at Tarn Hows. Links with the Romantic Movement, together with the composition of the trees and water positively influenced their aesthetic values and their preferences for the management of natural capital (Luttik, 2000; Price, C., 2000, p.48; Price, C., 2003). The photographs these participants presented of these iconic locations were not of the 'snapshot' genre, but carefully composed and distanced, indicating Kantian or traditional subject and object relationship, rather than aesthetic engagement (Kant, 2000; Hiles, 2008; Cooper *et al.*, 2016).

Water was an integral part of this cultural landscape and had a synergistic influence on the aesthetic value of other natural capital (p.163). However, except for participants 3, 4 and 6, there was little reference to how physical management influenced how they valued aesthetically streams and rivers. Participants 4 and 6 referred to how

climate change was the major threat to how they valued aesthetically such watercourses. During the SWOT analysis, participant 6 explained how sustainable water management could address this threat, providing multifunctional benefits, including aesthetic value. However, regardless of community consultation, a combination of a vociferous minority and weak political leadership had ignored agreed approaches to sustainable flood management in Borrowdale.

While participants 4 and 6 perceived sustainable water management as an opportunity linked to the threat of climate change, participant 3 perceived small-scale hydroelectric power (HEP) as a threat to natural capital that they valued aesthetically. While some might perceive small-scale HEP as a valuable ecosystem service in response to climate change, participant 3 was opposed in principle to HEP in the National Park. Echoing the perspective of Heidegger (p.26), to participant 3 there was a failure to perceive the intrinsic or aesthetic value of streams that have few visually obvious anthropogenic influences. Only if such streams could be converted to a measurable purpose would they be valued by some key decision makers and little or no attention was paid to the impact of the disruptive installation works, and infrastructure on aesthetic value (Lambeir, 2002; Macfarlane, R., 2025, pp.9-10). Participant 3 held a key leadership role, and their aesthetic values may influence the development of small-scale HEP in the National Park.

4.9.1.4.2 Trees, Woodland, and Forestry Plantations

Vegetation typically has a positive influence on peoples' aesthetic values but variations in culture and socialisation, may lead to different people valuing aesthetically quite different vegetated environments. However, for most participants individual trees, woodland, and forestry plantations had a positive influence on their aesthetic values. Then again, the subjectivity surrounding such aesthetic value is evidenced by participant 2 reluctantly explaining the positive influence of plantation forestry on their aesthetic values. But cultural influences are evidenced in how participant 2 (pp.121-122) made an oblique reference to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and how this inspired the aesthetic value they assigned to snow-covered coniferous

forestry plantations. Conservationists tend to be hostile to such forestry, which is influenced by how plantation forestry in the UK was historically based on monocultures of non-native species (Shoard, 1980, pp.55-57; Green, 1981, pp.138-139; Pye-Smith and Rose, 1984, pp.39-47). For around a quarter of a century, however, the Forestry Commission has promoted a move towards more diverse plantations (Malcolm, Mason and Clarke, 2001). Consequently, contemporary coniferous plantations may be quite biodiverse, but such plantations are still widely considered controversial and the culture in conservation organisations can make it difficult for staff to articulate their aesthetic values, possibly having a negative influence on decisions regarding such natural capital (Price, C., 2006, pp.146-149).

Similarly to participant 2, participant 7 explained how *The Garden* by Andrew Marvell (1621-1678 CE), including the sense of solitude in the poem, encapsulated how they valued aesthetically deciduous woodlands (Seymour, L., 2018; Marvell, 2024):

*Annihilating all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.*

Conservation is sometimes justified on the intrinsic qualities of an object, but more frequently on scientific, historic, social and aesthetic values. For example, ash pollards are valued aesthetically for their contribution to the Lake District cultural landscape but while featuring prominently in early landscape paintings (p.131), appear to have been ignored by Romantic Movement artists, who evidence the influence of wildness on their aesthetic values (Lacina and Halas, 2015; Lacina, 2016). Art certainly appeared to contribute to why participant 9 valued ash pollards aesthetically, likening them to bonsai and the abstract expressionist paintings of Jackson Pollock. There is correlational evidence that visual complexity and fractal geometry may contribute to why both bonsai and Pollock's paintings are valued aesthetically. However, no studies appear to have been carried out regarding ash pollards and fractal geometry (Van Tonder, Lyons and Ejima, 2002; Van Tonder and Lyons, 2005; Van Tonder, 2008; Taylor, R. *et al.*, 2011; Walker, 2018).

It has been claimed that people have an innate preference for trees of a rounded savannah form, but similarly to claims regarding ash pollards, it is hard to defend against cultural influences. For example, the wild Japanese cherry tree has a rounded savannah form, but it has remarkably strong cultural associations, being highly symbolic and delivering diverse ecosystem services, aesthetic values being particularly significant when blossoming in spring (Lohr and Pearson-Mims, 2006; Vecco, 2010; Katsuda *et al.*, 2022).

Then again, the three participants who assigned such considerable aesthetic value to ash pollards, may have been influenced at least in part by the historic prominence of landscape conservation in the National Trust (p.110). Ash pollards were considered integral to cultural landscapes and consequently pollarding was grant aided through Countryside Stewardship in the 1990s (p.131). The relational values associated with traditional practices, clearly influenced the preferences of participants 6, 8 and 9 for the management of the National Park's natural capital and they were particularly enthusiastic about continuing ash pollarding. However, their claims that pollarding is beneficial for the trees is supported by evidence and it should be stressed that the National Trust researched this practice before they began rehabilitating many trees, some of which are over three hundred years old (Quelch, 2001, p.13). The longevity of ash pollards is partly because it delays the veteran stage of life when the demand for water and nutrients exceeds the ability of the roots to supply them, but the reduced crown of the tree also reduces the risk of wind throw. There was concern that the fungus *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, which causes ash dieback was a threat to traditional ash pollards, but the multiple branches increase the number of vascular connections into the trunk, forming separate compartments and making it more difficult for pathogenic agents to spread internally (Read, 2000, p.30). Claims regarding the multifunctionality of the trees are also supported by evidence (Rackham, 2006; Quelch, 2012), but there is subjectivity concerning the aesthetic value assigned to ash pollards, so education regarding these benefits may be one way forward (Tilden, 1957; Read, 2000, p.112).

These participants perceived how trees and woodlands delivered a diversity of ecological and cultural benefits and consequently appeared to want more trees. However, only a few voiced a clear desire for increases in montane vegetation and temperate rainforest, which may indicate that aesthetic values focussed on a cultural landscape with visually obvious anthropogenic influences was influencing their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital.

Except for participant 6, there was little apparent awareness of how decisions might influence the local community, yet community engagement is a fundamental skill for conservation professionals. As illustrated in the example of Borrowdale (p.165), community consultation does not necessarily prevent subsequent difficulties, but failure to consult can easily have negative influences on the conservation of natural capital.

Numerous factors influence the aesthetic values of the leadership of the National Trust, which in turn influence their preferences for management of the National Park's natural capital and associated delivery of ecosystem services. These aesthetic values will now be considered in the context of the aesthetic orientations, identified as per section 4.6.

4.9.1.5 Aesthetic Orientations

As per section 4.6, the diamond nine ranking and SWOT analysis methods revealed how complex factors influence the aesthetic values of the participants, summarised in the four aesthetic orientations of New Romantics, New Statesmen, New Naturalists and New Alpinists. These factors include biophilic responses, the Picturesque and Romantic Movements, agropastoral agriculture, associations with adventurous activities and a Thoreau wilderness aesthetic. Such factors may influence not only how the cultural landscape and natural capital is perceived and valued aesthetically (p.79), but these aesthetic values may in turn influence participants preferences for the management of natural capital (Cloke, 1993, pp.53-67; Stotten, 2016). Consequently, the National Trust leadership are likely to perceive the Lake District as having a multi-

faceted identity, combining the rural idyll of agropastoral agriculture or “traditional hill farming”, a shrine to the Picturesque and Romantic Movements, Thoreau inspired wilderness and one of the best places in the UK for outdoor activities. It will now be outlined in more detail how the held, assigned and relational aesthetic values integral to these multi-faceted identities influence the preferences of the National Trust participants for the management and conservation of the National Park’s natural capital and the ecosystem services that flow from this natural capital.

4.9.1.5.1 New Statesmen

Most of these participants valued aesthetically vegetation in the context of a cultural landscape with visually clear anthropogenic influences. Participants 2, 4 and 7 were of the New Statesmen aesthetic orientation, but the word used most often was landscape, although beautiful and farming were also used often (Fig. 4.19). A major influence on the aesthetic values of participants was the cultural landscape of agropastoral agriculture, which they termed “traditional hill farming”, although no precise definition was given. The core beliefs and held values of these participants appeared to be associated with an ill-defined form of high nature value farming.

What some participants termed “late twentieth century hill farming”, was perceived as a threat to the cultural landscape of agropastoral agriculture that they valued aesthetically, defined as being dependent on subsidies, external inputs, and excessive numbers of poorly shepherded sheep (p.134). Overgrazing by sheep was allegedly the key problem on the open commons owned by the National Trust, it being almost impossible to control numbers due to the complex laws surrounding common land. Consequently, the natural capital integral to the cultural landscape, which influenced the aesthetic values of the participants was said to be being damaged (Burton, R. *et al.*, 2008; Davies *et al.*, 2016, p.18; Denyer, 2013, pp.8-9; Winchester, 2018; French, 2022). Therefore, while the aesthetic values of the participants influenced their preferences for the management of the open commons, they were often unable to achieve their desired outcomes. Yet, the number of sheep grazing the mountain core of the Lake District has reduced from its peak in around 2000, but the National Trust still considers

the numbers unsustainable. But there is subjectivity and animosity surrounding this debate, with some hill farmers using the media to support claims that the National Trust aims to eliminate their way of life.

Despite the above concerns and hostility from some hill farmers, the role of sheep and other livestock in the maintenance of the cultural landscape positively influenced the aesthetic values of most of these participants (Walling, 2014; Rebanks, 2015; Parry, 2020; Rebanks, 2020; Bateman, A., 2022). However, subjectivity also surrounds the importance and relational aesthetic values associated with traditional breeds of livestock, it being difficult to trace breeds back more than two hundred years (Walling, 2014, p.xviii). The Herdwick may have co-evolved with the cultural landscape, but over a relatively short time scale, the farming of sheep was traditionally only part of rotational mixed farming (Rebanks, 2020; Bateman, A., 2022, pp.16-25; Schofield, 2022, p.57). There is a detailed historical background, which provides support to those who question why the LDNPP assigns so much importance to contemporary agropastoral agriculture (Ovaska and Soini, 2016; Lloyd, Convery and Schofield, 2025; Schofield, 2025).

Landscape conservation is arguably more superficial than nature conservation but combined with the grant aid influence of the former Countryside Commission, it was more acceptable to land agents and tenant farmers in terms of perceived impact on income. The Countryside Commission provided grants in partnership with bodies such as National Park Authorities, and the National Trust was well placed to benefit from this public money (Andrews and Rebane, 1994, p.342; Reynolds, 2016a, p.106). More extensive Countryside Stewardship Schemes were piloted between 1991 and 1996, before being transferred to the then Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food. Traditional practices could be grant aided, which may have influenced some participants to value aesthetically and maintain ash pollards, but participants also valued aesthetically 'hot spots' for the co-production of cultural services e.g., Grasmere, Troutbeck, Borrowdale and Ullswater, which are rich in cultural artefacts and practices (National Trust, 2015; National Trust, 2017). Valuing aesthetically a

cultural landscape of agropastoral agriculture, together with an organisational culture orientated towards landscape conservation, influenced the preferences of participants for the management of the National Park's natural capital (pp.137-138).

4.9.1.5.2 New Romantics

Participants 3 and 8 were inspired by and had deep professional knowledge and experience of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements, consequently their held values influenced how they assigned aesthetic value. This was notable during the interviews, but also in selection and composition of photographs regarding Grasmere Tarn (Fig. 4.15), Tarn Hows (Fig. 4.3), Aira Force, Claife Station (Fig. 4.24) and Townend Farm. The aesthetic values that these participants assigned to natural capital, appeared to stem from their core beliefs. However as per section 2.2.4.2, their aesthetic values were also likely to be entwined with held values, in the form of the principles or ideals of behaviour that had become the standards by which they lived their lives (Brown, T., 1984; Smith, D. *et al.*, 2016).

Tarn Hows is perhaps the most famous, but not the only example of natural capital which was modified through landscape design inspired by the Romantic Movement. The cultural landscape around Windermere, Rydal Park, Grasmere Tarn and Aira Force has also been modified to a greater or lesser extent in response to the influence of the Romantic Movement. As per section 4.6.2, participants 3 and 8 valued aesthetically the influence of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements on the cultural landscape, but they also championed this influence. How their aesthetic values influenced their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital could be evidenced in how they had successfully targeted resources towards the restoration of Claife Viewing Station as a symbol of the Picturesque Movement and towards Tarn Hows as an icon of the Romantic Movement.

The leadership decisions exercised by participants 3 and 8 focus on curatorship and interpretation, which has a easily overlooked subjective and subtle influence on the management of the National Park's natural capital. Although no participant showed

support for rewilding, participants 3 and 8 appeared to perceive rewilding as a threat to their core beliefs from which their held values stemmed and damaging to the natural capital which they valued aesthetically. As per section 2.2.2.3, the visual interpretation of Romanticism is often very selective, little consideration being given to how key figures such as Coleridge valued aesthetically wild and untamed natural processes. For example, the likely influence of Burnet and Ruskin could be observed in how participant 3 had ranked relict parkland at Rydal as A1 (p.62), the assignment of aesthetic value to this location being influenced by perceived wildness and ruination (Fig.4.11 and p.144). However, this perceived wildness, and ruination is not too dissimilar visually from the wood pasture and savannah theory, a habitat which Frans Vera claims in prehistory dominated much of western Europe. Vera's theory is in direct contradiction to the theory of unbroken forest proposed by Sir Arthur Tansley (1871-1955 CE) (Tansley, 1939b, pp.149-170; Rackham, 2006, pp.92-100). Vera's theory has been employed at Oostvaardersplassen Nature Reserve in the Netherlands and informed the approach to rewilding at the Knepp estate in West Sussex (Barkham, 2018; Tree, 2018; Dempsey, 2021; Leadbeater, Kopnina and Cryer, 2022; Thomas, 2022; Weston, 2022; Allen, 2023). If participant 3 had considered the approaches at Oostvaardersplassen and Knepp, which use domestic livestock as part of rewilding, perhaps it would have been more acceptable to them? However, the hyperbole surrounding rewilding in the Lake District, together with their interview discussion, indicated that they may have developed an extreme perception of rewilding. The interpretation of rewilding at sites such as Knepp, might be closer to both their aesthetic values and key figures from the Romantic Movement than they realised.

The influence of the Picturesque Movement may have contributed to why no participant claimed to value bogs and wetlands aesthetically (Callicott, 2003; Kellert, 2012, pp.192-193). As per section 2.2.2.3, Tarn Hows is a Romantic Movement inspired transformation of natural capital from wetland into an idealised natural environment with unclear anthropogenic features (Thompson, I., 2010, pp.154-158). It is valued aesthetically today as an icon of the Lake District, but if it had remained a

wetland, participants 3 and 8 may not have assigned aesthetic value to it (Donaldson, 2018; Reinhold, Gregory and Rayson, 2018).

As no participant said that they valued aesthetically the Lake District's coastline and estuaries, it might be assumed that little aesthetic value was assigned to this natural capital. However, as the name Lake District and its media profile suggest, it is usually perceived as a rural idyll of mountains, lakes, and tarns, leading even conservationists to neglect that the National Park has a coastline.

The aesthetic values of Participants 3 and 8, together with most of their colleagues were influenced by the Picturesque and Romantic Movements and these aesthetic values influenced their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital. But through their interpretation of these cultural movements, they also influenced how natural capital appeared to visitors, influencing their core beliefs, the held values which stem from these beliefs and in turn how they assign aesthetic value to natural capital.

4.9.1.5.3 New Alpinists

There were clear examples of how influences on the aesthetic values of these participants were closely entwined with influences of other cultural services. Participants 1 and 5 were passionate rock climbers and mountaineers, but the legacy of the Romantic Movement also influenced how they valued aesthetically the mountain core of the Lake District. It is likely that this mountain core had a strong influence on the held values and aesthetic values of all the participants, while the Lake District as a place to engage in adventurous outdoor activities appeared to influence why most of the participants lived in or close to the National Park.

While the openness which characterises the mountain core of the Lake District may have influenced the aesthetic values of participants 1 and 5, the presence of trees in the cultural landscape also appeared to influence their aesthetic values. This was more obvious in the case of participant 1, who explained that they would like to see an

expansion of temperate rainforest in the mountain core and the benefits that such expansion might bring. However, they admitted that this might be impossible to achieve in current circumstances, due to the largely uncontrolled grazing by sheep on the open commons owned by the National Trust.

Some participants described visitor facilities as grossly inadequate, which conflicted with a desire to see people enjoying the Lake District. Some participants claimed that the National Park had already exceeded carrying capacity, but participant 9 felt that this problem was localised. Participants also had concerns that no real thought had been given to how World Heritage Site designation might impact on natural capital. In direct contradiction to such concerns, the LDNPP Management Plan 2020-2025 and Cumbria Tourism Strategy 2020-2025 aim to ensure the Lake District visitor economy continues to grow (Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership, 2019; Cumbria Tourism, 2020; Lake District National Park Partnership, 2021). Accordingly, since the Lake District became World Heritage Site, visitor numbers have risen from around 16 million to over 18 million and are projected to reach 22 million by 2040 (Lloyd, Convery and Schofield, 2025; Schofield, 2025). Even if potential damage to natural capital is localised, sustainably managing such numbers has resource implications and there was no evidence that the National Trust had the capacity to do so.

4.9.1.5.4 New Naturalists

Wildlife appeared to influence the aesthetic values of all participants, but the natural capital integral to the cultural landscape was a stronger influence. Participants 6 and 9, were of the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation and their core beliefs and held values appeared to be strongly influenced by wildlife.

The interviews were taking place in winter 2018, which may explain why photographs of wildlife valued aesthetically were restricted to mosses and lichen, visible at that time of the year. Generally, the scale of objects did not appear to influence how they were valued aesthetically. However, there is evidence that when valuing natural

capital aesthetically, landscape professionals may have a different appreciation of visual scale than the public (Tveit, 2009).

In some cases, concerns over threats to specific species, appeared at least in part to influence the assignment of aesthetic value. Participant 4 was of the New Statesmen aesthetic orientation but very concerned over the impact of pollution and climate change on threatened species, including the freshwater white clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* and freshwater pearl mussels *Margaritifera margaritifera*.

Participants from the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation often evidenced aesthetic engagement and spiritual experiences in woodlands, with few visually obvious anthropogenic features. These participants wanted more trees and woodland, but in this case their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital could not be fully realised due to sheep grazing the open commons.

These participants also valued aesthetically A cultural landscape with visually clear anthropogenic features, often in the form of drystone walls, also influenced the aesthetic values of these participants and the multifunctionality of dry stone walls appeared to be a key factor. Drystone walls could be an excellent habitat for ferns, moss and lichen, which influenced an enthusiasm for the conservation of this modified natural capital in the cultural landscape. This also appeared to complement how they valued aesthetically complex structures in the landscape and at a smaller or more focussed scale than other participants.

4.9.1.6 Summary

The diamond nine ranking and SWOT analysis revealed results in alignment with empirical scientific research, indicating how a combination of light, colour, sound and touch, together with natural capital in the form of vegetation and water, may influence how people value aesthetically natural environments (p.42). However, there are also the influences of synergistic social and cultural factors, in the case of these participants including the Picturesque and Romantic Movements, agropastoral agriculture,

adventurous activities and a Thoreau wilderness aesthetic. Despite sharing many of the above influences, participants had curated quite individualistic rural idylls, which could be grouped into four aesthetic orientations.

The organisational culture of the National Trust is anthropocentric, the core beliefs of the participants and the held values which stemmed from these beliefs, influenced how aesthetic value was assigned to natural capital, largely in the context of the cultural landscape (Brown, T., 1984; MacCabe and Yanacek, 2018, p.368). The aesthetic values of participants were linked not simply to other cultural services, but also to different bundles of ecosystem services, highly compatible with the purposes of UK National Parks (Chan *et al.*, 2011; Milcu *et al.*, 2013; Fish *et al.*, 2016; Fish, Church and Winter, 2016; Tratalos *et al.*, 2016; Vaz *et al.*, 2018; Schmitt *et al.*, 2021). One key influence of their aesthetic values was that the National Trust must sustainably manage its extensive property portfolio, participants requiring keen awareness of the need for agropastoral agriculture and rural businesses to be financially viable (p.109).

Conservation organisations tend to attract employees with values similar to their organisational cultures, so the aesthetic orientations of these participants were highly compatible with the focus of the National Trust on landscape conservation (Fieldhouse, 2005). Thus, nature conservation initiatives in the cultural landscape such as wildflower meadow creation and tree planting, as part of the strategic move towards nature recovery would likely be compatible with their aesthetic values.

The aesthetic values the leadership of the National Trust Lake District Hub influenced the conservation of natural capital integral to the Lake District cultural landscape. Regardless of claims by vociferous stakeholders, there was no apparent support for rewilding or even the reintroduction of some native species e.g., beavers. These participants were largely committed to landscape conservation, retaining a cultural landscape physically reflecting self-definitions of influential groups grounded in culture. Their approach clearly reflected the purposes of UK National Parks and the statutory Sandford Principle, while also being compatible with the World Heritage Site

OUV of identity, inspiration, and conservation which participants perceived as an opportunity for the conservation of natural capital (pp.6-7). Yet, most participants claimed that due to the dysfunctionality of the LDNPP, the cultural landscape and the natural capital integral to it was under threat. These claims indicate that the LDNPA may not be meeting the purposes of UK National Parks or the Sandford Principle. In addition to the LDNPP writing the nomination of the Lake District for inscription on the World Heritage list, the LDNPA delegates its statutory duty for producing the National Park management plan to the LDNPP. The latter references the fundamental purposes of conserving and enhancing natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, but places greater emphasis on seeking to foster social and economic wellbeing. Notably, it makes no reference to the statutory Sandford Principle, which may reflect claims by participants that the LDNPP was dominated by farming interests. Yet the NFU argues that social and economic functions are neglected in comparison with wildlife, which adds weight to claims that much of the conflict is influenced by disparate groups and weak political leadership (pp.6-7). These factors are claimed to have had a long-standing negative influence on the conservation of natural capital in the Lake District. However, most of the participants said that it was exacerbated by relentless cuts to the LDNPA budget since 2010, greatly reducing its operational capacity, at a time when World Heritage Site designation was increasing pressure on the National Park.

The National Trust owns over 500 km², or around 21% of the Lake District and Due to its extensive land ownership and resources is the most influential conservation organisation in the Lake District. However it is not the only organisation that has an interest in conservation in the National Park and consequently the answers to the two questions below will be sought in chapter five:

- What are the possible influences on the aesthetic values of the leadership of other organisation involved in the conservation of the Lake District?
- Do the aesthetic values of the leadership of other organisation involved in the conservation of the Lake District influence their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital?

Chapter Five

5. Results and Discussion: Other Conservationists in Leadership Roles

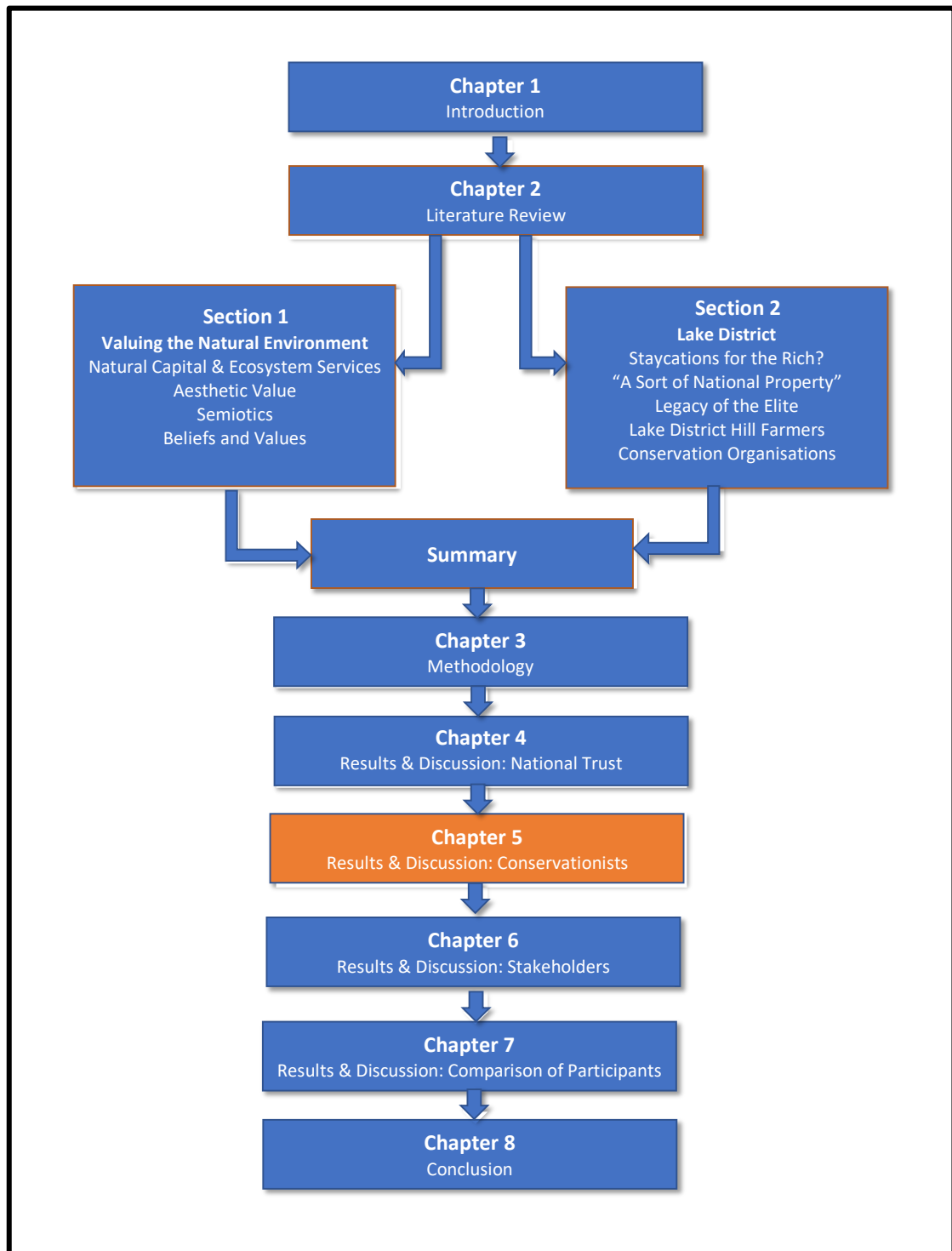


Figure 5.1 Chapter five in relation to the other thesis chapters

5.1 Introduction

Chapter four concluded by asking whether aesthetic values like the National Trust participants, apply to other professional conservationists in leadership roles within organisations concerned with conservation in the Lake District. But also, do their aesthetic values influence their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital? Chapter five seeks to examine these questions (Fig. 5.1), focussing on identifying and critically considering how the aesthetic values of these participants are integral to the themes that emerge and how their aesthetic values may influence their behaviour towards the conservation of natural capital in the Lake District.

Invited participants were drawn from organisations who own, lease, and manage land in the Lake District, for purposes including conservation. These organisations were the Forestry Commission, United Utilities, RSPB, Woodland Trust, and Cumbria Wildlife Trust, who all have a strong influence on natural capital.

This chapter follows the broad structure of chapter four regarding the National Trust. The context is provided by reflecting on the role of the five organisations in this research. The views expressed by the participants regarding the objects valued aesthetically are then revealed through a combination of photo elicitation and diamond nine ranking (pp.92-95), plus questions relating to the influence of participants. These results are subsequently triangulated by SWOT analysis (p.96).

5.2 Research Question Revisited

The contribution of chapter five, towards answering the research question, is to identify:

- What are the influences on the aesthetic values of the leadership of organisations, other than the National Trust, involved in the conservation of the Lake District?
- Do the aesthetic values of the leadership of these organisations influence their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital?

5.3 Organisations with an Interest in Conservation

The organisations from which the participants were drawn influence the conservation of natural capital, owning or leasing around 16% of the Lake District (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2016, p.32). Notably, the Forestry Commission and United Utilities, own or manage around 4% and 8% of the National Park respectively.

Approximately 13% of the Lake District is covered by woodland and plantation forest, of which around 30% is under Forestry Commission ownership or management (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2013, p.50; Lake District National Park Partnership, 2018, p.28). United Utilities is the largest private landowner in North West England, owning 56,000 hectares of land (United Utilities, 2021b). Landholdings in the Lake District include the catchments surrounding Haweswater, Thirlmere and Ennerdale. Drinking water from these reservoirs is difficult and expensive to treat due to the presence of eroded peat, believed to be caused by overgrazing of the surface vegetation (United Utilities, 2021a). Consequently, United Utilities want catchments more resilient to peat erosion and other pressures (United Utilities, 2021a).

As part of its approach to addressing the problem of eroded peat in drinking water, since 2011 United Utilities has leased Naddle Farm and much of the Haweswater Catchment totalling around 3,000 hectares to the RSPB (Schofield, 2022, p.14).

Working in partnership with United Utilities, the RSPB is seeking to demonstrate that agropastoral agriculture can be compatible with conservation (Schofield, 2022, p.16). Founded in 1889, the RSPB is now the largest nature conservation organisation in the UK, owning around 134,355 hectares nationally, with over one million members (Elliston-Allen, 1976, pp.198-199; Sheail, 1976, pp.10-19; RSPB, 2022).

The Woodland Trust owns 24,700 hectares nationally, these woodlands are often natural capital of high conservation value and in the Lake District includes the 42 hectare Great Knott Wood at Lakeside (Vannan and Schofield, 2012, pp.36-37). It now largely aims to enable others to create new woodlands, working in partnership with landowners (Woodland Trust, 2022).

The Cumbria Wildlife Trust is the only voluntary organisation focussed specifically on nature conservation in the county (Sheail, 1976, pp.225-233; Cumbria Wildlife Trust, 2022). The Trust owns or manages over 3,000 hectares of land, providing a diverse range of natural capital, including 44 nature reserves in the Lake District (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2016, p.138).

These organisations impact on natural capital and associated ecosystem services, through land management, but in some instances also through advice and grant aid. How people perceive and understand natural capital is influenced through membership, volunteering opportunities, extensive recreation facilities, environmental interpretation and education (Tilden, 1957).

5.4 Method in Practice

The method was applied as for the National Trust participants (p.111). Four of the participants had delegated responsibility for extensive areas of the National Park, including mountain, moorland, bog, meadowland, woodland and plantation forest. The fifth participant had more indirect influence, mainly working in partnership with a diversity of landowners. Participants largely followed the advice in the information sheet provided, but as most of the interviews were taking place in winter 2020, most included at least one photograph from other seasons. The inclusion of these photographs appeared to have no adverse influence on the photo elicitation interviews. The diamond nine ranking and the SWOT analysis were completed quickly and enthusiastically.

Four of the interviews were before the first COVID-19 lock-down and completed face-to face in the offices of the participants or a café in the case of participant 13. The interview with participant 22 was, however, carried out via Zoom in June 2021. Unlike some of the earlier interviews via Zoom, communication was excellent, the interview proceeding smoothly.

5.5 Results

5.5.1 Overview of Results

As with the National Trust participants, the photographs in the diamond nine ranking combined with photo elicitation method could be described as polysemous (p.112), further emphasising the importance of interpreting such visual data within the context of semi-structured in-depth interviews. However, unlike some of the National Trust participants (p.112), all of these stressed their personal connections with much of the natural capital they assigned aesthetic value to. Also, in contrast to the National Trust participants, the diamond nine ranking method indicated that the core beliefs, held and relational values of these participants were orientated towards nature conservation. Clearly situated in the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation, their aesthetic values were influenced by diverse wildlife, a cultural landscape of wild character and conservation.

5.5.2 Semiotics

In contrast to the National Trust participants, the term cultural landscape was scarcely used by these, and little aesthetic value was assigned to clearly anthropogenic features. As per section 4.5.2, the Lake District cultural landscape carried signs with meaning, 14 objects being icons and 31 being symbols, but these participants generally responded to different signs than those from the National Trust. However, like the National Trust participants, these signs may influence their aesthetic values and their approach to the conservation of natural capital.

5.5.2.1 Icons

All the objects ranked A1 were icons (pp.46-47), employing compositional techniques typical of landscape photography. The participants clearly demonstrated the relationship of the foreground in the photograph, to natural capital in the wider cultural landscape (Fig. 5.2 and Fig. 5.3):

“It’s healthy, diverse, rich, and beautiful. The wildlife is diverse, but the habitat is restricted at the landscape scale, as shown by the bald terrain on the opposite side of the reservoir”. (A1, Participant 10)

“The photo’s taken at Ennerdale, err, and it’s showing the expansion, the natural expansion of native woodland, err, above, err, a SSSI oak woodland at Side Wood”. (A1, Participant 12)



Figure 5.2 Woodland, Naddle Valley, Haweswater Reservoir (A1, Participant 10)



Figure 5.3 Woodland regeneration, Ennerdale (A1, Participant 12)

Participant 22 ranked an image of the River Liza in Ennerdale A1, it was iconic and analogous of untamed rivers which they had seen in mainland Europe (Fig. 5.13):

“It reminds me of the rivers I've seen across Europe as well, so I do like to think it's probably the most wild and view that in the context of a very beautiful river system”. (A1, Participant 22)

5.5.2.2 Symbols

31 signs functioning as symbols were identified, indicating that symbols were more important than icons to these participants (p.44). Similarly to the National Trust participants, the size of an object did not appear to adversely influence aesthetic value, as explained by participants 10 and 11 (Fig. 5.4 and Fig. 5.5):

“I like detail in the landscape. The typical aesthetic of the Lake District is on a much bigger scale. I prefer beauty at a smaller scale”. (D1, Participant 10)

"I suppose part of it is the beauty of small things, as opposed to grand vistas".

(B1, Participant 11)



Figure 5.4 Puss moth *Cerura* sp. on aspen *Populus tremula* (D1, Participant 10)



Figure 5.5 *Sphagnum pulchrum* and *Sphagnum medium* (B1, Participant 11)

These five participants provided 17 images of wildlife, including mountain pansy *Viola lutea*, sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*, honey fungus *Armillaria sp.*, ichneumon wasps *Ichneumonidae sp.*, carpenter bees *Xylocopa sp.* (Fig. 5.26) and adder *Vipera berus* (Fig. 7.5). Participant 11 had ranked images of plants B1 and B2, but explained that such objects might be symbols, tied to value judgements and representing the wider cultural landscape, in addition to being valued aesthetically in their own right:

“I suppose it’s that thing that there ought to be pretty flowers. For me a lot of these are not necessarily, just aesthetic, not just aesthetically, they’re tied up with value judgements about what the countryside would be like. And they’re not just it looks nice; they’re tied to other things”. (B2, Participant 11)

Participants valued the presence of wildlife aesthetically, but wildlife could be symbols of biodiverse and wilder elements of the cultural landscape. To participant 11, the presence of young adders was a symbol that the nature reserve was being managed effectively for conservation (Fig. 7.5).

However, livestock appeared to have little influence on the aesthetic values of participants, but participant 13 ranked a short horn cow C1, as a symbol of how more trees could be achieved in the cultural landscape and biodiversity enhanced. This participant claimed that the National Park was badly managed ecologically, stating that the wood pasture had survived by *“either luck or judgement, but it’s probably luck”* (Fig. 5.6):

“So, she’s a lovely short horn, in a woodland pasture down in Low Borrowdale. Wood pasture is pretty much alder with a few ash. Again, it should be much, much richer than that, so there is an issue about species diversity. Err, but err, equally the cow is there to create wood pasture, so she is there as a sign of hope. Take the sheep out, put the cattle in, that’s a sign of hope that we will get there”. (C1, Participant 13)



Figure 5.6 Short horn cow in wood pasture, Low Borrowdale (C1, Participant 13)

The golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* demonstrates that wildlife did not require a physical presence to be either a symbol or to influence aesthetic values. Participant 12 was from the Lake District and greatly valued being employed in a conservation role in the National Park and having responsibility for the area where this raptor had nested until relatively recently. It was a symbol of a cultural landscape with wild characteristics:

“...looking up, that’s Kidsty Pike the high point there and Riggindale (Fig. 5.7), where until a few years ago, we had, England’s last golden eagle lived up there and you know it was just a place that was just a little bit special, well it still is and I’m lucky enough to work there now”. (B2, Participant 12)



Figure 5.7 *Juniperus communis* Haweswater, view to Kidsty Pike (B2, Participant 12)

Participants claimed that excessive numbers of sheep were causing overgrazing and in effect damaging natural capital and associated ecosystem services, which influenced an enthusiasm for reducing the number of sheep or removing this livestock entirely.

Only participant 22 claimed to value aesthetically anthropogenic structures in the cultural landscape. They appeared to have little enthusiasm for the concept of cultural landscapes and a Mediaeval longhouse and derelict dry-stone wall were ranked D1 and E1 respectively:

“People who value the historic landscape, see the sheep grazed fells as the sort of cultural landscape, which we should value, they would want to keep what we have now, which means to continually maintaining, but probably to lose more nature. So, there is a conflict in my head when I see an image like that (Fig. 5.8)”. (D1, Participant 22)

“I like drystone walls in the Lake District I think, they are attractive and beautiful, but they are far from natural, and I think I quite like them, actually more so when they are fallen down and moss covered (Fig. 5.21), than when they are fully rebuilt”. (E1, Participant 22)



Figure 5.8 Archaeological remains of longhouse (D1, Participant 22)

Unlike the National Trust participants, the industrial archaeology of the cultural landscape e.g., mining, quarrying, bobbin factories and charcoal burning appeared to have little if any positive influence on the aesthetic values of these participants.

5.5.2.3 Indexicality

In contrast to some of the National Trust participants, other than it being part of the ontology of photographs, there was no clear evidence of indexicality.

5.5.3 Aesthetic Engagement

Similarly to most National Trust participants, these were aesthetically engaged in the cultural landscape, at least two of whom talked about spending time with their families canoeing, wild swimming, and hill walking (p.120). Most accounts of these activities described the multi-sensory influence of changing weather (Fig. 5.9):

“There is something spiritual as well as aesthetically pleasing about mountains in different weather..., they reappear and they go away, they remind me of the times climbing up Snowdon...” (C3, Participant 22)



Figure 5.9 Changeable weather in the mountains (C3, Participant 22)

In contrast to the National Trust participants (p.121), only participant 22 used analogy, regarding yr Wyddfa “Snowdon” and comparing the River Liza to rivers in continental Europe. Also, in contrast to the National Trust participants, these were strongly orientated towards achieving aesthetic engagement at an intimate scale (Fig. 5.10). This might be through exploring diverse habitats and the associated wildlife, perhaps in inaccessible locations, such as above Haweswater, away from grazing sheep:

“The picture shows complexity in the landscape. The location is very private and hidden”. (B1, Participant 10)



Figure 5.10 Harter Fell above Haweswater (B1, Participant 10)

The importance of all five senses in aesthetic engagement was explained by participant 13, who described how they valued aesthetically a newly created traditional hay meadow (Fig. 5.11):

"I think that it's aesthetically beautiful in its own right because of the colour, I love the colours, err, but also, you can't see it in the photograph, but it's humming in insects, hoverflies, bees, butterflies, moths; err, and obviously quite a good number of birds alongside". (B1, Participant 13)



Figure 5.11 New traditional hay meadow (B1, Participant 13)

5.5.4 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

As per section 5.3, despite making decisions over the conservation of extensive areas of natural capital and the delivery of ecosystem services, no participant mentioned the term natural capital and only two referred directly to ecosystem services:

“The ecosystem services benefits are implicit in all the shots of trees”.

(Participant 10)

“So, I suppose it’s in one way it’s a nod to the ecosystem service element of, y’ know, our lives would be a lot better if there was a lot more of, a lot more nature around in all its forms”. (C3, Participant 12)

However, there was concern that the commonly shared aesthetic of the Lake District, said to be devoid of ecological interest, could impact adversely on the delivery of ecological benefits:

“Well, it’s a beautiful landscape photograph in the sense that, err, it’s probably what the Lake District National Park sells itself on (Fig. 5.20). So, it’s open, bare, rocky, mountainous landscape; it’s quite rich in colour, despite being a

winter photograph, err, but it's lacking for me any kind of sign of ecological health". (E1, Participant 13)

5.5.4.1 Water

Water covers only around only 3% of the Lake District (White, C. *et al.*, 2015, p.4), but it strongly influenced the aesthetic values of participants. Like the National Trust participants, it was present in and referred to in all the photographs ranked A1 and 40% of the photographs ranked B1 and B2 (Table 5.1). These participants were also aware that water as natural capital delivers a diversity of ecosystem services e.g., tourism and recreation:

"Water features in four of the photographs and is a massive draw for visitors".
(Participant 10)

Table 5.1 Presence of water in photographs ranked A to E by Participants

Ranking	Total Number of Photographs	Photographs Including Water		References to Water in Associated Transcript	
A1	5	5	100%	5	100%
B1 & B2	10	4	40%	3	30%
C1, C2 & C3	15	5	33%	5	33%
D1 & D2	10	2	20%	2	20%
E1	5	1	20%	0	0%
TOTAL	45	17	37%	15	33%

Diverse water features influenced the aesthetic values of participants, with participants 12 and 22 having had long-term involvement in *Wild Ennerdale*. Ennerdale is in the west of the National Park and the stretch of the River Liza flowing through the valley had a positive influence on their aesthetic values. One factor was that it is relatively undisturbed, due to it being located some distance from more popular tourist areas, but more importantly this natural uncontained valley bottom river system, was perceived as destructive and constructive in equal measure.

Participant 12 ranked a length of the river as B1, valuing aesthetically the “cluttered mess” of the river channel, described as a fantastic attenuator of storm events:

“...this sort of wilful destructive dynamism is, is something that I find really exciting in nature (Fig. 5.12). I think we’re so hard wired as humans, to try to control things, that we sometimes lose sight of the benefits to us of that dynamism and that free willed nature”. (B1, Participant 12)



Figure 5.12 River Liza, Ennerdale (B1, Participant 12)

Similarly, participant 22 had ranked lengths of the river as A1 and B1, the length ranked A1 described as exhibiting many wild qualities. Geomorphological processes influenced aesthetic values, the composition of the river constantly changed and evolved with riparian woodland vegetation, scrub, and animals. However, *Wild Ennerdale* also demonstrates cost-effective approaches to addressing climate change, making land more resilient and mitigating the impact of floods (Fig. 5.13):

"It's very messy, it's very untidy, it doesn't look well-kept, it's full of debris, it's all those things, but it's very beautiful at the same time". (A1, Participant 22)



Figure 5.13 River Liza, Ennerdale (A1, Participant 22)

The length ranked as B1 in contrast, influenced aesthetic values through flooding, different after each storm event it was perceived subjectively as beyond easy human control (Fig. 5.14). This included the damaged dry-stone wall, natural debris and contorted natural regeneration:

"Incredible dynamism among the habitats, so whilst there's a lot of conifer among the tree cover, it's constantly being washed away, you get new gravel bars forming, you get new life...". (B1, Participant 12)

"I just like that sense of free will that this natural feature has, it's not an animal, it's not a living being, but it has a life of its own its own in some respects and it can feel like that. The word Liza in Norse means bright shining and again I get the feeling that Norse settlers felt the same thing, they were referring to its clear qualities and the way it looks and feels". (B1, Participant 22)



Figure 5.14 River Liza, Ennerdale (B1, Participant 22)

There was, however, an awareness that many stakeholders might find such aesthetic values unusual or be openly hostile to associated land management. Participant 12 explained that they had acquired aesthetic values concerning unmanaged rivers, a consequence of the growing realisation that unfettered natural processes were invaluable for nature conservation:

"I don't necessarily think that many people would necessarily agree with my viewpoint, a lot of people would maybe look at that picture for example of the river and say well that is just a cluttered mess, y' know, there's loads of conifers in there and what's going on kind of thing..." (A1, Participant 12)

From the available evidence, bogs, wetlands and peatlands did not appear to have a positive influence on the aesthetic values of National Trust participants (p.129). In contrast, participant 11 not only valued such habitats aesthetically, but was also the only participant to explain their role in storing carbon as part of the endeavour to address climate change. They valued aesthetically the often-associated wide-open spaces and had ranked a bog as A1:

“It’s sunrise over a bog and I have a particular liking for bogs (Fig. 5.15). And this is a bog restoration project that, that we kicked off twenty odd years ago err and it’s been particularly successful, and people really like it now, although they hated it when we were starting to do it”. (A1, Participant 11)



Figure 5.15 Sunrise over a bog (A1, Participant 11)

Similarly to the National Trust participants, none of these said that they valued aesthetically the Lake District’s 42 km of coastline and estuaries.

5.5.4.2 Trees, Woodland, and Forestry Plantations

Despite covering a relatively small area of the Lake District (p.130), trees, woodland, and forestry plantations had a strong positive influence on the aesthetic values of these participants. Three images including the natural expansion of native woodlands, had been ranked as A1, while images of woodland and a stand of juniper had been ranked B2, as a sign of regeneration following the exclusion of grazing sheep.

Participants explained that they wanted to see more woodland in the Lake District:

“Err, and this is what I would like to see throughout our landscape, err, certainly more commonly than it is at the moment (Fig. 5.16). Err, great to have a Scots pine, I think it is a beautiful tree, and birch and Scots pine together is a very habitat rich. Proximity to the watercourse allows for lots of wildlife...”

(A1, Participant 13)



Figure 5.16 Riverside trees (A1, Participant 13)

Recent woodland planting did not appear influence aesthetic values as strongly as established woodland, but aspen saplings at Thirlmere were ranked E1 (Fig. 5.4). However, new woodlands, were seen as opportunities to increase public access (Fig.

5.17), the habitats delivering cultural services in the forms of recreation and tourism and appearing extensive visually, in comparison with similar open environments:

“This sort of woodland doesn’t obscure the views (Fig. 5.17), it just means that when you’re walking you can hear more birds and see more wildlife and have loads of lovely trees to give you some shade and shelter”. (B2, Participant 22)



Figure 5.17 Woodland regeneration, Ennerdale (B2, Participant 22)

Native broadleaved woodlands appeared to have the strongest influence on aesthetic values, particularly if such woodlands were able to follow natural processes and where deadwood was an important component (Fig. 5.18):

“Very much like the wild wood kind of, err, appearance. And there is something about massive trees and massive trees lying down and the tangle of, of nature coming up through the branches of the massive tree”. (D1, Participant 11)



Figure 5.18 Deadwood (D1, Participant 11)

However, perception was important and damage to a habitat by grazing had a negative influence on how it was valued aesthetically. A woodland on the edge of a bog, recovering from grazing damage was only ranked as E1 by participant 11.

Individual trees could be valued aesthetically, veteran and ancient trees positively influencing the aesthetic values of participant 13. Consequently, a sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa* was valued aesthetically as a “big, fat old tree...”, but also as a symbol of the importance and multifunctionality of such trees in terms of wildlife habitats (Fig. 5.19):

“I think my favourite tree in the Lake District, which is a big old sweet chestnut down at Rydal Hall. It’s the fattest, biggest, ugliest brute of a tree and it’s absolutely amazing, well worth a visit”. (B2, Participant 13)



Figure 5.19 Sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*, Rydal Hall (B2, Participant 13)

As per section 5.5.2.2, some participants valued the use of specific breeds of livestock in woodland conservation and regeneration (Fig, 5.6). There were no images of black Galloway cattle in the photograph of woodland regeneration at Ennerdale ranked A1, but their role in facilitating regeneration was referred to positively (Fig. 5.3).

5.5.4.3 Mountains and Moorlands

No participant expressed hostility to agropastoral agriculture and there was certainly no attempt to defame hill farmers. Participant 10 was indeed leading on a project to integrate agropastoral agriculture with conservation. However, if the cultural landscape associated with agropastoral agriculture had any positive influence on aesthetic values, it was tempered with concern, it was perceived as something transformed and damaged by overgrazing. There was concern over the absence of long-term ambition for mountain and moorland environments in Government policy,

together with the failure of the Government to recognise the legacy of homogenisation and reduced diversity of ecosystem services:

“There’s no wood, no scrub, no trees, the vegetation is sheep grazed, it’s very monotonous vegetation (Fig. 5.20), it’s not heterogenous, so for me it’s what could be called a landscape photograph...” (E1, Participant 13)

“...for me sheep grazing is a significant impact on the Lake District as a whole and has been man’s biggest impact negatively on nature across the (Fig. 5.21), across the Lake District really...” (E1, Participant 22)



Figure 5.20 Treeless mountains and moorland (E1, Participant 13)



Figure 5.21 Drystone wall, mountain, and moorland (E1, Participant 22)

Photographs provided by the participants, evidenced how reducing the grazing activity of sheep created a diversity of habitats. These generally had a wild and unfettered character that the participants valued aesthetically:

"This is Bampton Common (Fig. 5.22). Grazing has been removed and there are now trees". (B2, Participant 10)



Figure 5.22 Natural regeneration, Haweswater (B2, Participant 10)

No participant said that they wanted to rid the Lake District of agropastoral agriculture, the general attitude being summarised below:

“We’re a big landowner, we don’t want to see those guys go out of business. We want to be able to sustain their businesses for them and their families and all the rest of it. And we don’t want to remove, we don’t want to remove people from the landscape either, they’re an intrinsic part of the landscape...”
(Participant 12)

For example, as per section 5.5.4.2, in partnership with local hill farmers, black Galloway cattle had replaced sheep as part of *Wild Ennerdale* (Schofield, 2022, p.188). This breed was helping to facilitate natural regeneration of trees (Fig. 5.3), valued aesthetically by the participants:

“I’ve been lucky enough to see that happen (Fig. 5.3). And that’s happened through a direct management decision that we took, in this case it was to remove sheep from the equation and replace them with cows, with large herbivores”. (A1, Participant 12)

Participant 22 made most use of the term rewilding and explained that they were both fascinated by and committed to rewilding. All the participants were, however, engaged in projects that some might term rewilding, wanting a more diverse cultural landscape and a sense of wildness. A cultural landscape of corridors, connections, linkages, and much larger sites (Lawton *et al.*, 2010), not too dissimilar to National Trust policy (p.110),

Participants were aware that they were under scrutiny from diverse stakeholders engaged in agropastoral agriculture and some had experienced aggression from neighbouring estate managers and particularly hill farmers (Walling, 2014, pp.244-248; McCormick, 2018, pp.74-76; Schofield, 2022, pp.35-38). Vociferous criticism had also come from members of parliament and those who simply valued the aesthetic of openness, it being claimed that some stakeholders would object to any form of change (Schofield, 2022, pp.50-52):

“Lots and lots of people don’t like there being any change”. (Participant 11)

As per section 2.2.4.2, values are generally quite stable, but are imbued with subjectivity, illustrated by participant 12 who explained that earlier in their career they may not have valued aesthetically the disturbance associated with dynamic systems. Participants 12 and 22 were enthusiastic about spending time working on conservation projects with likeminded professionals from other conservation organisations and volunteers:

“It shows for me this is all about the human side of what we do... People are giving up their time to go up there and do what is quite difficult work in quite difficult conditions for a much wider sort of benefit”. (C2, Participant 12)

5.5.4.4 Farmland

More so than the National Trust participants, unlike water and woodlands, farmland (normally enclosed) did not have a notably positive influence on aesthetic values (pp.134-135). This appeared to be influenced in good part through the observation by participants that enclosed farmland had suffered from a general decline in biodiversity. Those trees and woodlands that positively influenced aesthetic values were often the remnants of previously more extensive and healthier habitats:

“...those oaks are fantastic, but they are the last oak trees planted on that farm and there is nothing following them at the moment. So they’re probably eighty to one hundred years old, there’s been no planting on that farm for eighty to ninety years”. (D2, Participant 13)

However, floristically diverse traditional hay meadows very strongly influenced the aesthetic values of participants 10, 11, and 13, who valued aesthetically such meadows and had considerable experience of their creation and management. These traditional hay meadows were ranked B1 and C1 and described as hosting a great diversity of invertebrate species (Fig. 5.23). There was clear evidence of aesthetic engagement, relational and eudaemonic values, but the synergistic ecosystem services delivered by this natural capital also include winter livestock feed, pollinator habitat, carbon sequestration and flood mitigation. Although some participants may have rejected the term, they had reinstated very successful contributions to the cultural landscape:

“And we made it, it’s a brand-new grassland, brand new species rich grassland and I think this is about two years after it was seeded. And it’s absolutely awash with wildflowers”. (C1, Participant 11)



Figure 5.23 New diverse traditional hay meadow (C1, Participant 11)

5.5.4.5 Geology and Industry

While active geomorphological processes had a positive influence regarding the aesthetic values of some of these participants, the same did not appear to apply to geology or industry. As per section 4.5.4.5, in contrast to the National Trust participants, these participants made no references to Lake District geology or traditional industries. Once again, this natural capital and industrial archaeology is clearly linked to the OUV of the Lake District cultural landscape.

5.6 Aesthetic Orientations

Like the National Trust participants, the data from the diamond nine ranking was analysed and broken down into its most significant elements. The participants were situated in the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation, but as demonstrated earlier, these orientations are not exclusive. The word used most often by the conservationists was landscape, but trees, woodland and natural were used frequently (Fig. 5.24). Change, beautiful, aesthetic and water were used occasionally.

Rarely used words and phrases, but important in the context of the interviews, included value, land management, farming, climate change, wildlife, and sheep. Words such as deadwood, free, freedom, freewill, messy, tangle, untidy, and wildness, were rarely used, but were of even greater importance in the overall context of the interviews. Language demonstrated a radical enthusiasm for nature conservation, woodland creation, and forestry in the Lake District (Fig. 5.25).



Figure 5.24 Word Cloud of the 25 words and terms used most frequently by conservationist participants

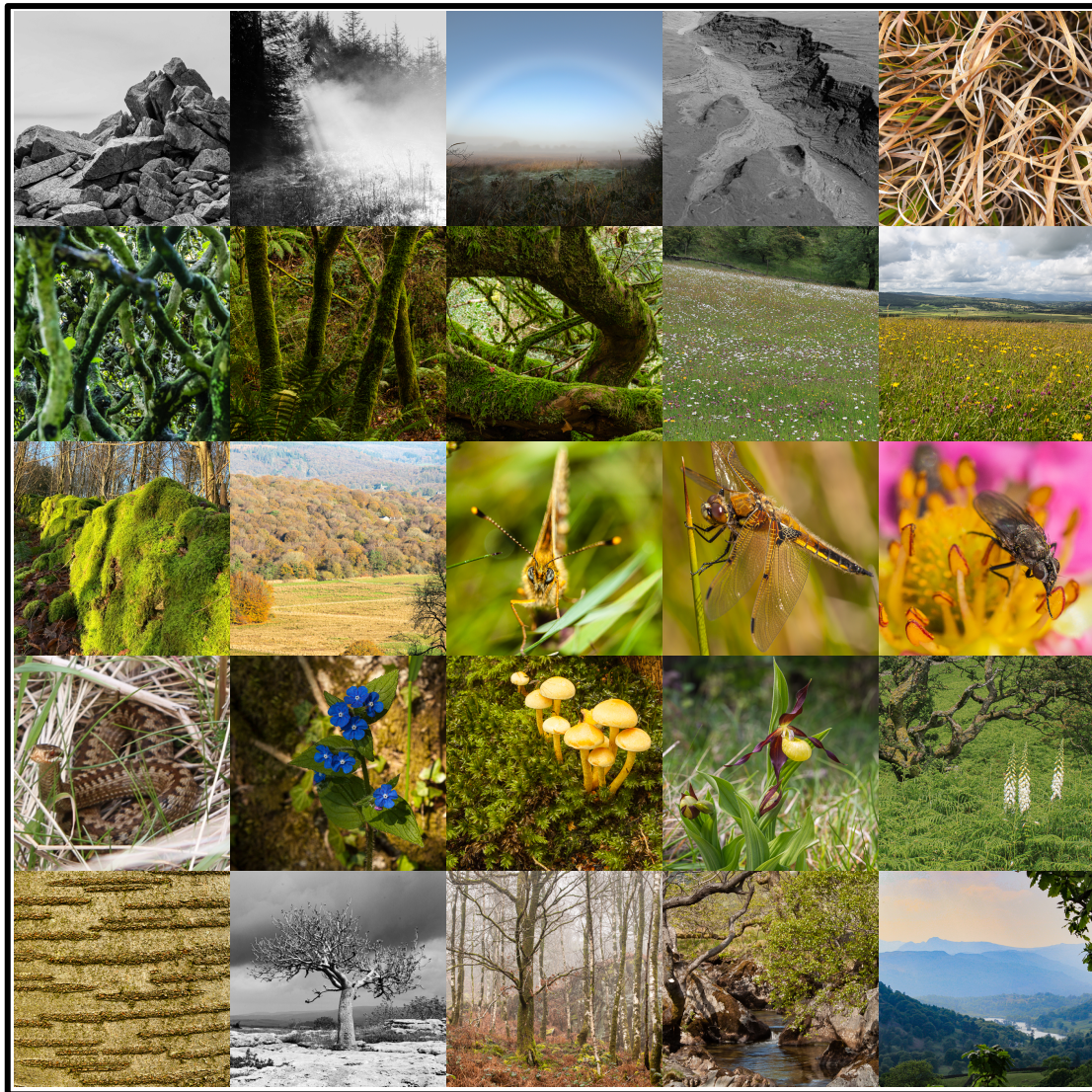


Figure 5.25 Influences contributing to the aesthetic values of conservationists

5.6.1 New Statesmen

The New Statesmen aesthetic orientation was weak, for as per section 5.5.2.2, any interest in rare breeds of livestock was only as tools to achieve outcomes for nature conservation. However, farm woodland and traditional hay meadows positively influenced aesthetic values, seemingly due to the benefits that they provided for nature conservation (p.207). It was claimed that farming businesses should be conserving natural capital and delivering ecosystem services more effectively. However, participant 10 did not feel that farmers were to blame for the current biodiversity crisis, having simply responded over the decades to government policy.

5.6.2 New Romantics

The influence of geomorphological and ecological processes on aesthetic values was particularly notable for participants 12 and 22, who also used words and terms similar to those used by key figures in the Romantic Movement (pp.39-40). However, participant 22 was most strongly inclined towards the New Romantics aesthetic orientation. In addition to valuing aesthetically the foundations of a Mediaeval longhouse ranked D1 (Fig. 5.8) and a derelict dry-stone wall ranked E1 (Fig. 5.21), this participant valued aesthetically “*modern art*” and architecture. However, this was categorised as “*constructed beauty*”, it was nature within the cultural landscape that they valued most aesthetically (Fig. 5.11).

Participant 13 objected to how the Lake District hills and mountains are traditionally represented in landscape paintings and photographs. They felt that such images were, celebrating the aesthetics of a wet desert, of little biodiversity value. There was, however, no apparent dissatisfaction among these participants over the traditional aesthetic of landscape photography, derived from the Picturesque Movement, painting and printmaking. But there was an emphasis on plants within their habitat and technically competent photographs of invertebrates, such as carpenter bees *Xylocopa* sp. within harebell *Campanula rotundifolia* flowers, which were both thought to be “*very beautiful*”:

“*So, you see in the photograph that it’s three or four bees clutched into a little harebell, so they are tiny bees* (Fig. 5.26). *But again, it’s that, that wildlife structure that you get with flowers and insects together...*”. (C2, Participant 13)



Figure 5.26 *Xylocopa* sp. within *Campanula rotundifolia* (C2, Participant 13)

5.6.3 New Alpinists

Despite concerns about the negative impact of overgrazing, areas of the cultural landscape of mountainous and wild character appeared to have a positive influence on the aesthetic values of participants. There were no rock climbers or mountaineers, but most participants appreciated being in the mountains in their leisure time and consequently the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation appeared strong (Table 5.2). Active recreation, often in the company of family members, may have been important for the wellbeing of some participants. Indeed, for two of the participants, wild swimming, canoeing and hill walking, possibly contributed to their core beliefs:

“...as someone who grew up in the Lakes, I like to be able to get up high, I find that I don’t deal with flat landscapes very well, so, I like to be up the height and have some relief (Fig. 5.3)”. (A1, Participant 12)

“So, mountains and a sense of being at home are for me very connected and I love mountains anywhere, wherever we go in Europe, or elsewhere, we have to go and find some mountains. We’re not great mountain climbers, I don’t rock climb, but just being in a mountainous area I find very invigorating, and the Lake District is no different”. (C2, Participant 22)

Table 5.2 Presence of people in photographs ranked A to E by participants

Ranking	Total Number of Photographs	Photographs Including People	
A1	5	0	0%
B1 & B2	10	0	0%
C1, C2 & C3	15	2	13%
D1 & D2	10	0	0%
E1	5	0	0%
TOTAL	45	2	4%

5.6.4 New Naturalists

Table 5.3 Presence of wildlife in photographs ranked A to E by participants

Ranking	Total Number of Photographs	Photographs Including Wildlife	
A1	5	1	20%
B1 & B2	10	6	60%
C1, C2 & C3	15	8	53%
D1 & D2	10	6	60%
E1	5	3	60%
TOTAL	45	24	53%

Wildlife very strongly influenced the aesthetic values of these and they were of a New Naturalists aesthetic orientation, with wildlife being present in over half of the photographs (Table 5.3). As per section 5.5.2.2., specific species could be a symbol of the cultural landscape, often of wild character, which they valued aesthetically. They all also valued natural capital of detail and structural complexity (Fig. 5.4 and Fig. 5.5):

"I mean they're beautiful little butterflies these marsh fritillaries (Fig. 5.27) ...".

(D2, Participant 12)

"So, you could drive to that point and have a lovely long view, or you could drive to here and have a very short view, but this one's got loads of wildlife in it".

(Participant 13)

"There is a lot of joy in finding small-scale things..." (D2, Participant 22)



Figure 5.27 Marsh fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia* (D2, Participant 12)

5.7 SWOT Analysis

As per section 4.7, a SWOT analysis was carried out regarding the objects that the participants valued aesthetically, and all participants engaged enthusiastically with the process. It largely confirmed the photo elicitation and diamond nine ranking exercise.

Table 5.4 SWOT analysis diagram of how the objects valued aesthetically in the research strengthen or benefit the Lake District and how they relate to opportunities, weaknesses, and threats

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Nature 2. Water 3. Woodland Cover 4. Carbon Storage	1. Political Leadership 2. Aesthetic of Openness 3. Homogeneity 4. Visitor Facilities or Capacity
Opportunities	Threats
1. Agri-Environmental Schemes 2. Climate Change 3. Nature Recovery 4. Rewilding	1. Climate Change 2. Increasing Visitor Numbers 3. Farming Lobby 4. Marketing Aesthetic of Openness

5.7.1 Strengths

In contrast to the National Trust participants, three-dimensional structures, detail and complexity, as opposed to the two-dimensional structure of openness was a strength. Most participants did not seem to accept the concept of cultural landscapes and anthropogenic structures had little positive influence on their aesthetic values. However, like the National Trust participants, even if they did not use the terms, they appeared to understand the concepts of natural capital and ecosystem services.

5.7.2 Opportunities

Unlike the National Trust participants, only participant 11 referred to the Lake District World Heritage Site designation and it was certainly not perceived as an opportunity.

However, similar to the National Trust participants, agri-environmental schemes were seen as an opportunity to undo some of the damage caused by agropastoral agriculture over the last 50 years, facilitating nature recovery through better understanding of land economics and carbon storage.

Participant 22 explained that one role of public sector organisations was to take risks, which would be economically unacceptable to some private landowners, demonstrating to such landowners what was possible.

There was the potential to take land out of management as part of rewilding and increase its biodiversity value.

5.7.3 Weaknesses

Similarly to the National Trust participants there was felt to be weak political leadership from the LDNPA, which was adversely influencing natural capital. To these participants strategic leadership of the National Park was bedevilled with hostility and disagreement, but there appeared to be little understanding of the relationship between the LDNPA, the LDNPP and the World Heritage Site. As per section 5.7.2, only participant 11 referred indirectly to the LDNPP and the World Heritage Site, indicating both concern and little clarity:

“The World Heritage Site is based around cultural landscape things, and nobody seems to really know what that is going to mean for us”.

In contrast with the National Trust participants, some of these perceived inadequate visitor services and poor transportation positively as they deterred visitors and their damaging impact:

“And I think those are the single two biggest negatives, openness and sheep farming and in both those cases it destroys ecology, because actually what we want is a messy Park which is difficult to access, difficult to get through, and I mean that absolutely sincerely”. (Participant 13)

However, participant 11 felt excessive visitor pressure was very localised and that the problem could be alleviated by more dispersed distribution of visitor numbers.

5.7.4 Threats

Like the National Trust participants, climate change was the greatest threat to the natural capital that they valued aesthetically. Participant 12, however, felt that the Lake District was insulated from the most damaging influences by virtue of latitude and height, a drive to “*feed the nation*” would be far more significant. The failure of the UK to grasp the scale of climate change was summarised by participant 11:

“Well, if you look at what they’re talking about, in a way, there’s no point doing any of this, because it’s all going to be wrecked. The levels of change that some people are talking about are just catastrophic really, all the things that we don’t seem to be thinking about in any kind of sensible way”. (Participant 11)

Also, like those from the National Trust, most participants were concerned about increasing visitor numbers at ‘hot spots’ seen as damaging natural capital and unsustainable. Commodification of the Lake District was wrecking what the visitors came to see in the first place.

The vested interests of the farming lobby, perceived as adept at lobbying the Government, were another threat. In a failure to understand the reality of public goods (p.32), robust claims were being made that food production was a public good and deserving of the same support as mitigation for climate change.

5.8 Influence

5.8.1 Influencing People

Like the National Trust participants, these also had a high level of professional expertise and delegated responsibility. Those with line management responsibilities influenced core beliefs and held values, through a positive and enabling leadership style. A similar approach was used to encourage colleagues, volunteers, external partners, and landowners to conserve natural capital:

“...planting was great fun, because you’re actually out on the crags and planting things on little ledges where they can’t be eaten. ...this is all about the

human side of what we do, so the people who are growing the plants on, doing it in their own time at their own expense, because they are passionate”.

(C2, Participant 12)

Opposition to works from community groups and other stakeholders, was said to be a great problem, frequently a consequence of opponents disliking change. Response to the concerns of local communities was often tempered by the availability of resources:

“Well, we can’t really pretend that we do what local people want, because sometimes you don’t. Sometimes you do, so, err, a couple of years ago we bought Craggy Wood at Staveley, basically on the behest of the local community, who wanted an organisation to do the site management and the site ownership for them”. (Participant 11)

The focus was generally on achieving the most cost-effective outcomes, which for participant 13, would often include working with landowners to secure grant aid or other support. All participants realised, however, that they were working to long time scales, outside the 12 months of the normal budgeting process.

Most participants expressed concern that stakeholders often failed to recognise the legacy of damage caused by previous land management, as there was no real connection with the land, and they did not perceive the damage inflicted on natural capital. Stakeholders perceiving conservation as unacceptable change, were said to have become much more polarised than in the past.

5.8.2 Influencing Objects Valued Aesthetically

The aesthetic values of participants influenced their preferences for the management of the National Park’s natural capital. To a greater or lesser extent, the participants had delegated responsibility to influence the objects they valued aesthetically in response to corporate priorities, normally linked to national policy e.g., *Making Space for Nature* (Lawton, 2011). However, regardless of interpretation and community consultation, works could still initiate opposition.

5.9 Discussion

5.9.1 Influences on Aesthetic Values and Natural Capital

What are the influences on the aesthetic values of the leadership of organisations, other than the National Trust, involved in the conservation of the Lake District?

Do the aesthetic values of the leadership of these organisations influence their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital?

5.9.1.1 Subjectivity

The results indicate the subjectivity of the aesthetic values that participants assign to natural capital, reflecting strong personal connections as per section 2.2.4.2, likely influenced by their held values, stemming from their core beliefs. The diamond nine ranking revealed that unlike most National Trust participants, these valued aesthetically three-dimensional structures, detail and complexity. The diverse influences of the participants' subjective aesthetic values will now be explored in more detail.

5.9.1.2 Aesthetic Engagement

As per section 5.5.3, in contrast to the National Trust participants the conservationists were orientated towards achieving aesthetic engagement at an intimate scale. These participants often valued aesthetically smaller objects, supporting claims that landscape professionals may have a different appreciation of visual scale than the public (Tveit, 2009). Expertise in nature conservation was closely tied to their held aesthetic values, which influenced their relational aesthetic values with natural capital and, thus, their preferences for management of the National Park's natural capital.

5.9.1.3 Organisational Culture

As per section 2.2.4.1, and quite like the National Trust participants, the beliefs and held values of these participants may have inspired confidence in their ability to achieve their preferences for management of the National Park's natural capital, realised through the objects that they valued aesthetically. Despite holding radical visions of landscape scale change, it was understood that this would be a long-term

process. The culture of both private and public organisations often tolerates radical views among employees with environmental roles (Dalton, 1994).

5.9.1.4 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

As per section 2.2.1.2, despite the relatively high profile of natural capital and associated ecosystem services, there was no mention of the term natural capital and only two used the term ecosystem services (White, C. *et al.*, 2015). The cultural services valued most highly by these participants were aesthetic benefits, and there was evidence that aesthetic benefits acted synergistically with recreation, inspiration, and spirituality (Grizzetti *et al.*, 2016; Reynaud and Lanzasova, 2017).

5.9.1.4.1 Water

Like the National Trust participants and supporting empirical scientific research, water positively influenced the aesthetic values of these participants, and they valued aesthetically diverse water features, often in association with vegetation (Howley, 2011b). Accordingly, water was present in 100% of the photographs ranked A1 and 40% of the photographs ranked B1 and B2. However, bogs and wetlands appeared only to positively influence the aesthetic values of participant 11, who emphasised how they valued aesthetically bogs and wetlands (p.198). Culture and socialisation may have had a negative influence on how such natural capital is valued aesthetically, the Picturesque Movement having allegedly had a negative influence historically on the aesthetic value that people assign to wetlands in the west (p.39). However, this negativity is not shared globally, and Wilfred Thesiger (1910-2003 CE) detailed the relational and eudaemonic values of the Marsh Arabs with the wetlands of Iraq (Thesiger, 1964). The subjectivity regarding the aesthetic value of wetlands should be of concern, as Lake District wetlands are natural capital of international importance for conservation, delivering diverse ecosystem services, including carbon storage, and supporting biodiversity (Bunce, R., Wood and Smart, 2018b). There was no evidence that these aesthetic values were having a negative influence on preferences for wetland management, but no evidence about positive influences either.

As per section 5.5.4.1, two participants discussed the River Liza in a way that almost attributed agency and self-determination to the geomorphological processes that were enabled. The attributing of agency to animals, trees and geomorphological processes by people involved in *Wild Ennerdale*, is something claimed in earlier research (Thomas, 2022). But it should be understood that these participants demonstrated a thorough understanding of the geomorphological processes and tangible benefits that this approach could deliver for society. For example, allowing the River Liza to flow as a dynamic system, would contribute to reducing the risk of flooding downstream, flooding being a tangible risk to homes and grazing livestock.

Similarly to the National Trust participants, none of these said that they valued coastlines and estuaries aesthetically, providing further evidence that even conservationists don't necessarily associate a coastline with the Lake District.

5.9.1.4.2 Trees, Woodland, and Forestry Plantations

Woodlands and individual trees appeared to positively influence the aesthetic values of all participants. Participants 13 and 22 had no hesitation in assigning aesthetic value to conifers and were responsible for the creation of extensive woodlands and forestry plantations. In contrast to the National Trust participants, the focus was on woodland creation for nature conservation, as opposed to landscape conservation.

Reflecting the strategic priorities of their employers, all but one participant evidenced a clear desire for more trees and woodlands in the Lake District, which they were actively achieving. Participant 22 pointed out that woodland cover in Ennerdale was 18%, and the aim was to increase it to 40%, which is around the European average. However, the data on which this target was based seemed unclear, there did not appear to have been consideration of whether a higher target might be achievable, or whether 40% might damage equally valuable habitats. Despite individual trees being valued aesthetically, unlike the National Trust there was no obvious targeting of resources towards these, the focus being on woodland creation and often for nature conservation.

Like the National Trust participants, the aesthetic values of the conservationists appear to influence their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital and the ecosystem services that flow from it.

5.9.1.5 Aesthetic Orientations

Like the National Trust participants, diverse factors influenced the aesthetic values of these participants, but the cultural landscape and the natural capital integral to it was perceived somewhat differently. Consequently, as per section 5.6, the following section will outline in more detail how the held, assigned and relational aesthetic values of these conservationists influenced their preferences for the management and conservation of the National Park's natural capital and the ecosystem services that flow from it.

5.9.1.5.1 New Statesmen

Diverse traditional Lake District hay meadows provide sanctuary for insect pollinators and feeding grounds for migratory birds. Research has demonstrated how greater aesthetic value is assigned to such diverse meadows than to meadows of low diversity. Consequently, this natural capital significantly influenced the aesthetic values of participants, having knowledge and experience of its creation and management (Lindemann-Matthies, Junge and Matthies, 2010; Mansfield, 2014; Martynoga, 2022).

The work of participants with hill farmers over more appropriate livestock for the management of *Wild Ennerdale* is a good example of the lived experiences which form the epistemological foundation of phenomenology (p.205). Such approaches are a positive response to criticism and facilitate greater understanding of hill farmers by conservationists, including their aesthetic values. Like the National Trust participants, some reported aggression from stakeholders over their approach to land management and such targeted aggression can impact negatively on health and wellbeing (Schofield, 2022, pp.40-42). Working with likeminded people might provide relief from such stressful encounters (pp.219-220), but stakeholder engagement is a key skill for

anyone leading on conservation initiatives and responsible organisations provide appropriate training and development.

However, participants did not appear to be fundamentally hostile to agropastoral agriculture and other than one use of the term *“scabby hill sheep”*, there were no indications of imbued negativity. There was certainly no attempt to defame farmers (p.202), in the way that communities in wild and mountainous areas have been since classical times (John of Ephesus, 1924, pp.229-247; Mendelson, 2000; Del Molino, 2016, pp.102-126; König, 2021). These participants appeared to be against alleged widespread overgrazing by sheep, as opposed to agropastoral agriculture.

The Lake District cultural landscape was perceived to be associated with *“scabby hill sheep”*, with drystone walls serving as a *“continuous reminder really of sheep”* and an ecological desert or *“depauperate landscape”*. It was a landscape suffering from overgrazing, which had in effect damaged natural capital and associated ecosystem services. These participants were committed to conserving and seeking a far more sustainable future for natural capital.

The Lake District is not the only mountainous region with a marginal climate where there is conflict between conservationists and stakeholders in agropastoral agriculture. In the European Alps land is being abandoned and this is influencing the different needs and priorities assigned by stakeholders to ecosystem services, but particularly aesthetic values. Like Lake District hill farmers, most Alpine farmers perceive cultural landscapes as the work of their ancestors and feel that actively farming this natural capital is a moral duty. Alpine farmers do not value aesthetically abandoned land and together with some conservationists neither do they value aesthetically rewilding. The wider public appears to value a landscape conservation approach to the Alpine cultural landscapes, certainly in terms of aesthetic beauty (Stotten, 2016; Zoderer *et al.*, 2016; Schirpke *et al.*, 2020; Schmitt *et al.*, 2021; Zoderer and Tasser, 2021).

In contrast to the National Trust participants, three of these referred positively to rewilding, including the replacement of sheep with native breeds of cattle in *Wild Ennerdale*. The cattle were owned and managed by local hill farmers (p.224) and valued as a tool in the regeneration of native woodland (Schofield, 2022, pp.188-191). The replacement of sheep with cattle was also said to be valued by United Utilities as it contributed to improved water quality.

As per section 5.5.4.4, the diamond nine ranking revealed the positive influence of traditional hay meadows on the aesthetic values of these participants and how in turn their aesthetic values influenced natural capital through involvement in the creation of such traditional hay meadows. The relational values that they had developed through this work and their aesthetic engagement in traditional hay meadows demonstrates how cultural services are co-produced and created, due to peoples' interaction with the Lake District's cultural landscape (Costanza *et al.*, 2011; Pert *et al.*, 2015; Fish, Church and Winter, 2016; Kenter, 2016). However, such cultural landscapes incorporating semi-natural vegetation are unstable and rely on regular management. If management ceases, or is carried out at a different time of the year, it will change the appearance of the cultural landscape. A well-established argument is that the aim should be to maintain a viable agricultural sector which meets environmental objectives. However, hill farmers perceive traditional hay meadows as a risk, harvests being highly dependent on the weather and damp hay posing a risk of combustion in storage. Consequently, benefit would be gained from the development of skills and markets, together with payments to hill farmers for maintaining such multifunctional natural capital (Austad and Hauge, 2003, p.64; Riley, 2006).

5.9.1.5.2 New Romantics

It was evident from the diamond nine ranking that the Picturesque and Romantic Movements, together with a Thoreau inspired wilderness aesthetic, may have influenced participants to provide iconic images of how people are supposed to value aesthetically the Lake District. Consequently, for their object ranked A1, participants provided photographs of water features in natural environments of mountainous or

wild character, without obvious anthropogenic influences. A natural environment of wild character may have influenced the core beliefs of participants and in turn their held values, thus influencing how they assigned aesthetic value to natural capital. Consequently, they did not seem to value aesthetically the visual characteristics of much of the contemporary Lake District, their aesthetic values seemingly eco-centric, in contrast to the anthropocentric aesthetic values of the National Trust participants, large areas of the Lake District considered unnatural (Brown, T., 1984). These participants valued aesthetically the wildness of dynamic systems and natural processes reigning unfettered by humans.

As per section 2.3.5, it is claimed that the Lake District is socially constructed and considered the epitome of the rural idyll (Urry, 1995, pp.196-198). The Romantic Movement is often cited as a strong influence, but broadly comparable studies have revealed that most participants know little about and claim to be little influenced by the romantic poets (Jepson, 2013, p.166). The participant who said of *Wild Ennerdale*, “*It’s not Wordsworthian Lake District...*”, overlooks how the nuances of the Romantic Movement have been eclipsed by the selective pillage of its’ Lake District literary heritage (Eddy-Waland, 2022, pp.190-191). As per section 2.2.2.3, in his bestselling book *The Wild Places*, Robert Macfarlane who was greatly inspired by the Lake District experiences of Coleridge, wrote how in 1802-1803 Coleridge emerged with an idea bordering on the theological of multitudinous forms of self-willed nature (Turner, J., 1985; Coleridge, 1991; Mabey, 2005; Macfarlane, R., 2007, pp.207-209; Cladis, 2018; Eddy-Waland, 2022, pp.190-204; Menely, 2023). Macfarlane highlighted how “self-willed forms of wild nature” facilitate “alternative perceptions of life”, which could be interpreted as attributing agency to natural processes (Macfarlane, R., 2007, pp.207-209). To describe geomorphological and other natural processes, participants 12 and 22 used the same or similar words to Macfarlane, and another influential writer Richard Mabey, e.g., “free”, “freedom”, “freewill”, “wild”, and “wildness”. Such rewilding narratives are intricately linked with Romantic Movement notions of nature, and the aesthetic values of these participants may be closer to the Romantic Movement than the contemporary rural idyll of damaged natural capital, which runs

counter to the chaos of ecological and geomorphological processes (Eddy-Waland, 2022, pp.190-191).

Openness had a negative influence on the aesthetic values of these participants, and they were hostile to the active marketing of this aesthetic, which has historically been associated with picturesque paintings and photographs of the Lake District (Ward Lock, 1935, pp.144-145; Steinberg, 2008; Waite, 2022, p.38). However, the “*unfettered*” dynamism of geomorphological processes and the associated disturbance of an “*untidy*” and “*messy*” cultural landscape positively influenced their aesthetic values (Brierley and Fryirs, 2008, pp.108-118). Participant 12 explained that they had acquired these aesthetic values, similar to Wordsworth’s claim that seeking to gaze upon “*picturesque natural scenery*” is an acquired taste (Wordsworth, W., 1974, pp.341-343). Consequently, there was an awareness that stakeholders may find it challenging to value aesthetically these natural processes, supporting the understanding that held values are generally stable and factors leading to changes in held aesthetic values are very significant (p.53). During the SWOT analysis exercise participants claimed climate change was the greatest threat to the objects they valued aesthetically but were responding positively and using funding to positively influence natural capital through mitigation and adaptation works. From the perspective of United Utilities, there are tangible benefits to be gained from mitigation and adaptation as part of rewilding rivers and catchments (United Utilities, 2021a). In this instance the aesthetic values of the conservationists complement the instrumental values of the water company.

There was no apparent consideration of how conservationists might take advantage of the LDNPP and the World Heritage Site designation to influence natural capital. In contrast to the National Trust participants, the focus was very much on the LDNPA, felt to exhibit weak political leadership, partly due to it having been stripped of resources, leading to a ‘negative synergy’. It was perceived as unable to address fundamental weaknesses and threats, in particular the homogenisation of natural capital at a time when the impact of climate change required effective political leadership.

5.9.1.5.3 New Alpinists

The mountainous morphology of the central Lake District positively influenced the aesthetic values of all participants, but particularly participants 12 and 22. As described above the Romantic Movement influenced such aesthetic values and all spent leisure time aesthetically engaged in the cultural landscape of the Lake District, enjoying hill walking, canoeing and wild swimming. Like the National Trust participants, these activities were synergistic to aesthetic engagement, including how they assigned aesthetic value to natural capital.

But these participants sought to influence changes including the introduction of unfettered natural processes. Most of them also wanted more woodland and were working within restrictions to expand temperate rainforest and montane woodland.

5.9.1.5.4 New Naturalists

It is likely that wildlife strongly influenced the core beliefs, held and relational values of these participants. Accordingly, they valued detail in the cultural landscape, with an emphasis on plants within their habitat and technically competent photographs of invertebrates. Objects such as wildflowers might be symbols of the wider cultural landscape (pp.186-188), in addition to being valued aesthetically in their own right. Valuing wildlife aesthetically in this way is clearly traceable to Gilbert White (1720-1793 CE), Wordsworth, Emerson (Emerson, R., 1836), Thoreau (Thoreau, 1854), and Richard Jefferies (1848-1887 CE) (Jefferies, 1889) and continues through influences including nature writing, nature documentaries and Instagram.

Consequently, the aesthetic values of these participants influenced a nature conservation approach and nature was perceived to be of great benefit to the Lake District. Accordingly, apart from hay meadows, these participants evidenced little interest in landscape conservation. These participants were seeking quite dramatic changes to the so-called two-dimensional cultural landscape, valuing aesthetically detail, a complex three-dimensional vegetated landscape where natural processes are allowed free reign. It was stressed that although the underlying landscape

morphology influenced aesthetic values, the structure of the vegetation had a synergistic influence, a three-dimensional vegetation being compatible with a biodiverse natural environment of wildflowers and butterflies. However, bogs and wetlands only appeared to positively influence the aesthetic values of participant 11, who was leading on the conservation of this natural capital (p.198). Yet, wetlands, bogs and peatlands are vital natural capital, peat covering 40.8% of the National Park (Campaign for National Parks, 2024, p.50).

In contrast with the National Trust participants, consideration of how decisions impact on local communities and of positive responses to their concerns were more strongly evidenced. For example, some participants explained how members of local communities had volunteered to participate in conservation activities.

5.9.1.6 Summary

The diamond nine ranking revealed how a cultural landscape without visually clear anthropogenic features, linked to a sense of wildness, influenced the aesthetic values of these participants. However, another influence was the detail of a complex three-dimensional vegetated landscape as opposed to two-dimensional vegetated landscape. These factors clearly influenced the management of natural capital to facilitate natural processes, but three participants also valued aesthetically floristically diverse traditional hay meadows (p.207), being involved in the creation of these high maintenance features of the cultural landscape.

As per section 4.9.1.3, socialisation and culture, in addition to possible biophilic responses are likely to have a synergistic influence on the core beliefs, held values and how participants assign aesthetic value to natural capital. For example, wildlife and a cultural landscape without clear anthropogenic influences, e.g., dry-stone walls and farmhouses, was associated with a strong commitment to nature conservation.

To these participants much of the cultural landscape and the natural capital integral to it was the dark side of the rural idyll, being damaged and influencing a desire to

manage it for conservation. It was generally felt that conservationists were too complacent in their response to threats, one participant argued that biodiversity was an inadequate concept, stating that the aim of conservation should be “*bio-abundance*” (Ickstadt, 2006). Nature recovery was cited as one means of achieving the desired sense of wildness and the shared belief of participants was that the radical enhance of biodiversity on a landscape scale could be achieved through protecting and conserving natural capital in the form of habitats rich in carbon. This could be achieved through actions including restoration of temperate rainforest, montane woodland, and traditional hay meadows. It was said that such land management would contribute to improving water quality and reducing flood damage, delivery of tangible ecosystem services, which in view of the climate change emergency are of great value to society.

However, there appeared to be little understanding of the relationship between the LDNPP and the World Heritage Site. The focus was on the LDNPA, which was said to exhibit weak political leadership, influenced in good part through being stripped of resources. Consequently, the perceived absence of effective political leadership at the time of a climate change emergency and biodiversity crisis was actively damaging natural capital and associated ecosystem services.

The results indicate differences between the aesthetic values of the National Trust participants and other people in leadership roles related to conservation, in organisations active within the Lake District. These will be given greater consideration in chapter seven, but first answers will be sought to the following two questions in chapter six:

- What are the possible influences on the aesthetic values of the stakeholders of conservation organisations in the Lake District e.g., hill farmers, outdoor education leaders and the visitor economy?
- Do the aesthetic values of the stakeholders of conservation organisations in the Lake District influence their preferences for the management of the National Park’s natural capital?

Chapter Six

6. Results and Discussion: Stakeholders

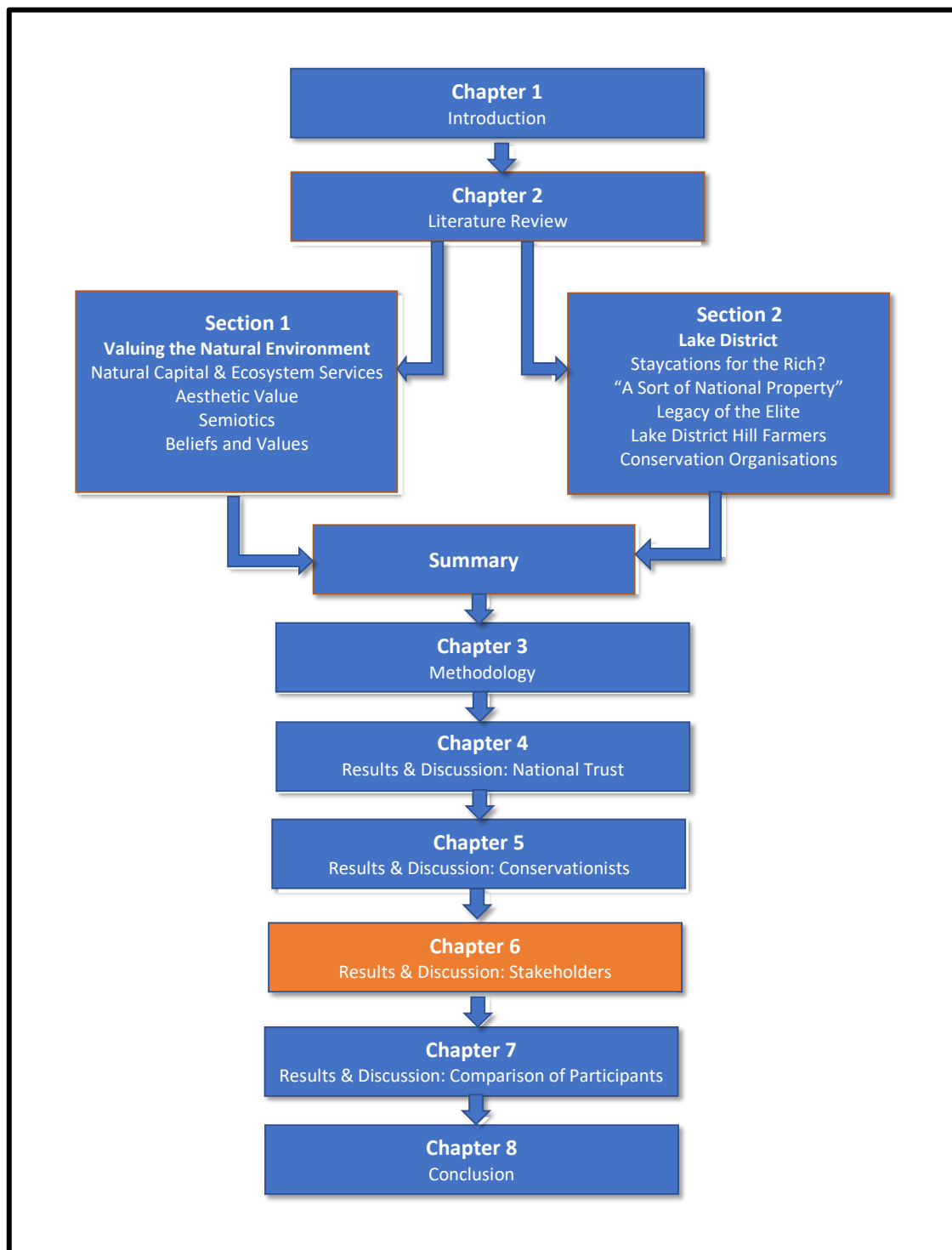


Figure 6.1 Chapter six in relation to the other thesis chapters

6.1 Introduction

Chapter five concluded by asking what influences there may be on the aesthetic values of the stakeholders of conservation organisations in the Lake District and whether their aesthetic values may in turn influence their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital? Chapter six answers these questions by examining key findings of research with representatives of agropastoral agriculture, outdoor activity organisations and the visitor economy (Fig. 6.1). Like chapter four and chapter five, it focusses on identifying and critically considering how the aesthetic values of participants are integral to the themes that emerge and how these values may influence the conservation of natural capital. Invited participants were drawn from organisations including the Federation of Cumbria Commoners, Institute for Outdoor Learning, the Scout Association, the Ramblers, Mosaic Outdoors and Cumbria Tourism.

The structure of this chapter is like four regarding the National Trust and five regarding other professional conservationists in leadership roles within organisations concerned with conservation in the Lake District. The context is briefly provided by reflecting on the role of the five organisations in the research. The views expressed by the participants regarding the objects valued aesthetically are once again revealed through combined photo elicitation and diamond nine ranking, plus questions relating to the influence of participants. These results are subsequently triangulated by a SWOT analysis (p.96).

The COVID-19 pandemic forced a shift to carrying out the diamond nine ranking and SWOT analysis online, but regardless of these barriers the participants were representative and varied, including a tenant hill farmer, outdoor activity leaders and the recently retired Chief Executive and Managing Director of Cumbria Tourism.

6.2 Research Question Revisited

The contribution of chapter six, towards answering the research question, is to seek answers to the two questions below:

- What are the possible influences on the aesthetic values of the stakeholders of conservation organisations in the Lake District e.g., hill farmers, outdoor activity leaders and the visitor economy?
- Do the aesthetic values of the stakeholders of conservation organisations in the Lake District influence their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital?

6.3 Stakeholders in Conservation

The eight participants were in leadership and decision-making roles that influenced natural capital, mostly through the physical and interpretative influence of leading outdoor activity groups or promotion of tourism in the National Park.

Hill farmers were invited to participate via the Federation of Cumbria Commoners, which aims to maintain and improve the sustainability of hill farming and the management of common land (Eden Valley Creative, 2022). Of the three farmers who agreed to participate, two pulled out when their interviews shifted on-line due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The tenant farmer who participated owned 800 sheep and 65 native breed cattle, despite preferring agropastoral agriculture their work as a self-employed agricultural contractor brought in most of the income (Chapman, 2024). As a keen photographer, they regularly posted photographs of agropastoral agriculture on social media.

Outdoor learning professionals were invited to participate via the Institute for Outdoor Learning (Institute for Outdoor Learning, 2023), the professional body for organisations and individuals who use the outdoors to make a positive difference to others. A retired manager of two outdoor activity centres in the Lake District, agreed to participate. Adult walk leaders were invited to participate via the Ramblers (Ramblers, 2023), which promotes and protects access to the countryside, including

the delivery of guided walks. Two leaders from the Ramblers, also active in practical conservation, readily agreed to participate. Outdoor activity leaders, who introduce young people to the Lake District, were invited to participate via the Scouts (The Scout Association, 2023). Of the two leaders who agreed to participate, one involved young people as Explorer Scouts, while the other involved children as Cub Scouts. Outdoor activity leaders, who introduce people from BAME backgrounds to the Lake District, were invited to participate via Mosaic Outdoors (Mosaic Outdoors, 2022), which connects people from BAME backgrounds with the natural environment. An experienced outdoor activity leader from a minority ethnic background agreed to participate.

Cumbria Tourism, the official Tourism Board for Cumbria, which includes the Lake District, was contacted for the perspective of the visitor economy (Cumbria Tourism, 2023). Their recently retired Chief Executive and Managing Director, readily agreed to participate and share their extensive experience and knowledge.

6.4 Method in Practice

Unlike for the National Trust (p.111) and most of the conservationist participants (p.181), except for the tenant hill farmer, who was interviewed face-to-face immediately prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the seven other interviews were carried out remotely via Zoom (p.103). All the participants followed the advice in the information sheet provided. The Government had imposed travel restrictions to reduce deaths from COVID-19, so if appropriate participants were advised to source existing photographs. All the activities, including the diamond nine ranking, were completed quickly and enthusiastically. To ensure compatibility the results from the interviews are set-out in a similar format to chapter four and chapter five.

6.5 Results

6.5.1 Overview of Results

Like those of the National Trust participants and conservationists, most of these participants' photographs could be described as polysemous (p.112). Also like most

previous participants, these emphasised their strong personal connections with the natural capital they assigned aesthetic value to (p.182). Overall, the diamond nine ranking method indicated that the rural idyll of the Lake District cultural landscape influenced the core beliefs, held and relational values of these participants. This appeared to influence the enthusiasm of the outdoor activity leaders and tourism expert for enabling other people to explore a Lake District, often of wild and mountainous character. However, most of these participants had diverse aesthetic values, including wildlife in complex habitats and agropastoral agriculture. The hill farmer shared similar aesthetic values, but with a much stronger focus on agropastoral agriculture.

6.5.2 Semiotics

The term cultural landscape was never used, but like earlier participants, for these eight participants the Lake District carried signs with meaning. Of the 72 objects valued aesthetically, 41 were of the symbol genre, while 31 signs were of the icon genre. But generally, the aesthetic values of these participants were influenced by more diverse signs than either the National Trust participants or the conservationists. However, like these earlier participants, semiotics may influence their aesthetic values and how they influence natural capital.

6.5.2.1 Icons

For participant 14, the hill farmer, six of the nine photographs were iconic and reflected the influence of the Picturesque Movement (pp.46-47). The boundary between icons and symbols can be blurred and consequently three of the iconic photographs contained symbols, illustrating aspects of shepherding, and were ranked A1, C1 and D2 (Fig. 6.2):

“It’s just the thing that I love doing the most, really, in one picture... Just the way the sheep are running down the line, with the mountains in the background... It just always fascinates me how the dogs can do it somehow”.
(A1, Participant 14)



Figure 6.2 Border collie and sheep, Buttermere (A1, Participant 14)

For the outdoor activity leaders, of their 54 photographs, 21 signs were classed as icons. Like many of the earlier participants, landscape photographs generally showed the influence of the Picturesque Movement on composition, sometimes including people (Fig. 6.3):

“Not only am I finding it beautiful, but the young people are enjoying just looking at the landscape”. (A1, Participant 15)



Figure 6.3 Influence of the Picturesque Movement (A1, Participant 15)

Of the nine photographs of objects valued aesthetically by participant 21, the tourism expert, four evidenced being icons, but once again there was ambiguity due to the importance stakeholder participants attached to the presence of other people (Fig. 6.4).



Figure 6.4 Cumbria Tourism promoting Adventure Capital (A1, Participant 21)

6.5.2.2 Symbols

The diamond nine ranking revealed that in contrast to the conservationists, to all these stakeholders' sheep and cattle were symbols of the Lake District as a working community, having a role in the integration of the ecology and culture, positively influencing their aesthetic values. Participant 14 presented a photograph of their young son with three lambs (Fig. 6.5), which was ranked B2 as a symbol of the "future", but tempered with concern that not many young people wanted a hill farming career:

"That's the future. That sums that one up pretty much. That's the future and hope". (B2, Participant 14)



Figure 6.5 Hill farmer's son with lambs (B2, Participant 14)

Three of the outdoor activity leaders provided five photographs of native breeds, mostly ranked C or below, but participant 17 ranked a Herdwick lamb at B2 (Fig. 6.6). They explained that they liked animals, valued them aesthetically and enjoyed talking about farming to attendees on guided walks:

“Yeah, the Herdwick lamb, I’ve taken a lot of pictures of the lambs, and they often do pose for me like that. Err, and I think again when I’m out in the Lake District, I often think what’s the, what are the animals thinking about?” (B2, Participant 17)



Figure 6.6 Herdwick lamb (B2, Participant 17)

Of the outdoor activity leaders, 33 signs were classed as symbols and like the conservationists (p.44), these could be wild animals and plants, sometimes as symbols of the seasons, e.g., the wheatear *Oenanthe Oenanthe* (Fig. 6.7):

“For me, err, I look out for the wheatear coming back in the Spring and it’s like, it’s like a symbol that the season has changed”. (B1, Participant 15)



Figure 6.7 Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* (B1, Participant 15)

There was ambiguity between the genres, but of the nine photographs of objects valued aesthetically by participant 21, four evidenced being icons and five being symbols. This participant explained that they loved seeing people being adventurous and actively enjoying the Lake District and consequently photographs A1, B2, C2, C3, D1 and D2 contained such images. A photograph of mountain bikers was ranked B2, described as a symbol of how the National Park was the *UK Adventure Capital*. A mountain stream was ranked B1, to this participant it symbolised the natural environment of the Lake District, including the diverse wildlife. In addition to the usual nine photographs, they also unexpectedly presented a photograph of Cumbrian food and drink, said to symbolise how the cultural landscape produced food of the highest quality:

"It's about local produce and a celebration local food and drink, I think again, you know, we really have some wonderful food and drink in Cumbria... I think this is to associate this landscape with wonderful produce is again is, is a massive privilege and something I, I am proud of...". (Participant 21)

6.5.3 Aesthetic Engagement

As a hill farmer participant 14 covered an extensive geographical area in changeable weather throughout the year, which contributed to varied experience and a sense of being away from contemporary society. However, the countryside was surprisingly noisy, quiet times enhanced how they valued aesthetically the cultural landscape:

"I don't get a lot of peaceful mornings. But that wasn't a peaceful morning either, but it looked peaceful". (Participant 14, C3)

Participant 17 provided further evidence of how aesthetic engagement with the Lake District cultural landscape is generally biased towards sight, light and colour:

"I like clarity, the brightness, the differences, the blues, the greens and the browns. Compared with when you go abroad on holiday to Europe say, you get a lot of brown, but not much green". (A1, Participant 17)

But participant 19 stressed the importance of sense of smell in aesthetic engagement, referring to the distinctive scent of wild garlic *Allium ursinum* (Fig. 6.12). Also, and reminiscent of comments by an early explorer of the Lake District Celia Fiennes (1662-1741 CE) (Fiennes, 1888, pp.163-164), they explained how they delighted in the rush and murmur of mountain streams (Fig. 6.8):

"I just loved the sound of the water in the becks in the Lake District...".
(B1, Participant 19)



Figure 6.8 Lake District stream (B1, Participant 19)

From a phenomenological perspective, perception and subjectivity influenced how participants saw the world and how they valued aesthetically natural capital (Fig. 6.9):

“it’s just very, err, mysterious and magical and almost spiritual, the old tree.

You can imagine fairies sitting in it, or other beings inhabiting it, err, and it just seems so strong, because it has grown out of and up through the rock, so it seems it’s very powerful as well (Fig. 6.9). Almost other worldly really”.

(A1, Participant 19)



Figure 6.9 A tree growing from the rock: *"mysterious and magical..."*

However, perhaps the clearest description of multi-sensory aesthetic engagement with the cultural landscape was by participant 21 and this may have influenced both their core beliefs and aesthetic values:

"We've got this incredible environment and you know the, the wildlife and the rare fauna and the smells that you get to different times of the year, you get the autumn smells, you get spring smells. Loads of garlic this time of the year, wild garlic, you know you get the bluebells and daffodil seasons".

(B1, Participant 21)

"To me it's the smell and the taste and the touch and the feel, as well as the visual impact that we understand about the images in the Lake District".

(C2, Participant 21)

6.5.4 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

Like most other participants there were no references to the term's natural capital and ecosystems services, but the concepts behind the terms were understood, participant 21 explaining how climate change influenced the need to decarbonise the visitor experience. In addition, some participants provided further evidenced how aesthetic value is linked to other cultural services, including how it acts synergistically with spiritual values.

6.5.4.1 Water

Table 6.1 Presence of water in photographs ranked A to E by participants

Ranking	Total Number of Photographs	Photographs Including Water		References to Water in Associated Transcript	
A1	8	5	63%	3	38%
B1 & B2	16	8	50%	5	31%
C1, C2 & C3	24	8	33%	4	17%
D1 & D2	16	7	44%	4	25%
E1	8	3	38%	2	25%
TOTAL	72	31	43%	18	25%

Like previous participants, the influence of water on the aesthetic values of these participants was high in relation to the small percentage of the Lake District that it covers (p.163). However, despite water being valued aesthetically, familiarity could have a negative influence and participant 14 ranked an image of Buttermere as E1, explaining that due to seeing the lake everyday they had not ranked it above E1 but felt that a visitor may have ranked it higher. A fence-line and the lush vegetation of the surrounding cultural landscape also contributed to how they valued Buttermere aesthetically (Fig. 6.10):

“You never know what you’re watching. There’s something about water, it always looks mysterious to me”. (E1, Participant 14)

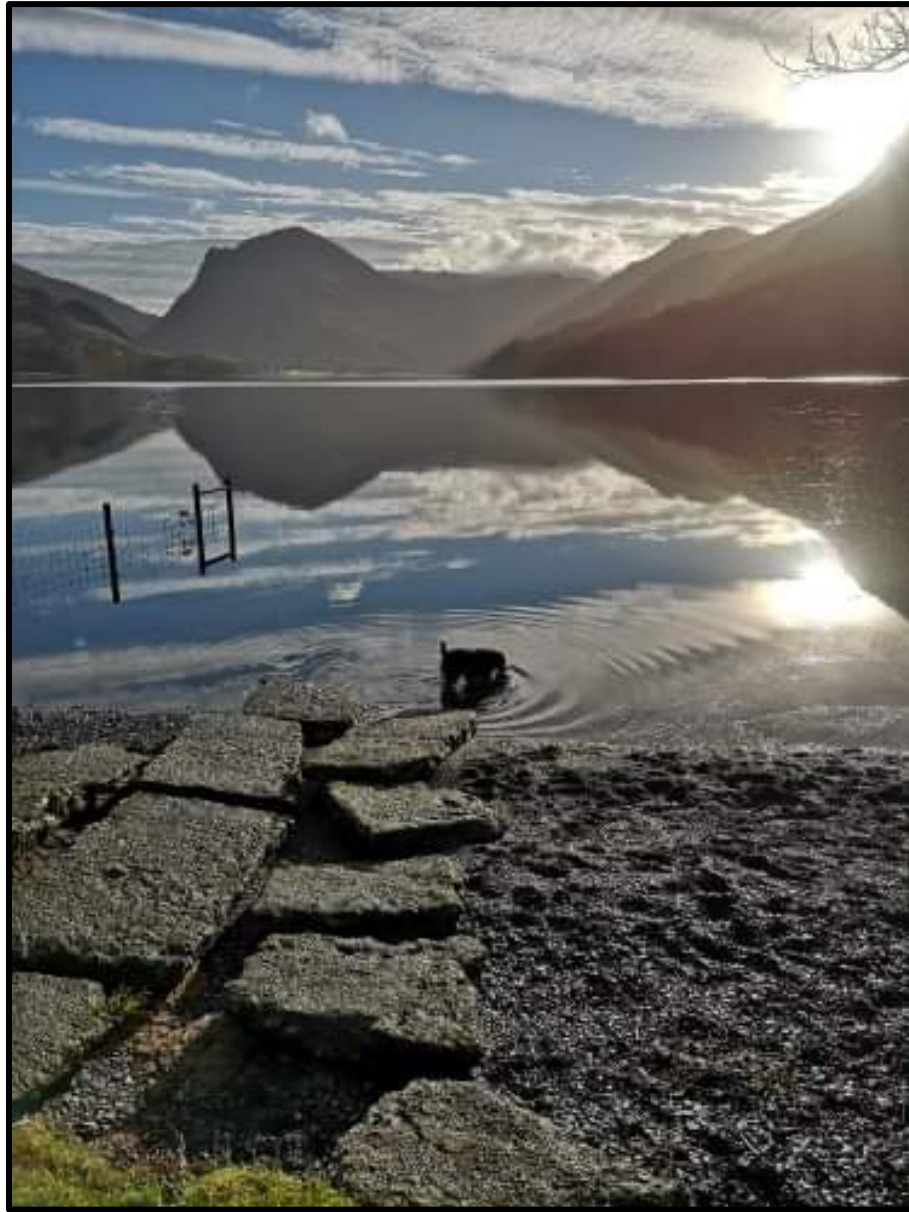


Figure 6.10 Buttermere (E1, Participant 14)

Indicating the influence of water on aesthetic values, it was present in 63% of the photographs ranked A1 by the stakeholders and 50% of the photographs ranked B1 and B2 (Table 6.1). Participant 20 was from a minority ethnic background and had included water in seven of their nine photographs and discussed water positively in relation to eight of the nine objects valued aesthetically. They had ranked Aira Force as A1, the photograph including members of Liverpool's Chinese community (Fig. 6.11), on a weekend visit to the Lake District organised by this participant:

“We thought, “let’s go through to Aira Force”. And then we walked up the waterfall and again, I think that sort of experience of never having been somewhere where they can see that sort of beauty of Aira Force, Ullswater and the hills”. (A1, Participant 20)



Figure 6.11 Liverpool's Chinese community visit Aira Force (A1, Participant 20)

Participant 21 valued aesthetically the lakes, tarns, and streams, but the clearest example of how they valued aesthetically this natural capital was clean water flowing in a mountain stream, which was ranked B1. Despite the Lake District having coastline and estuaries, of all 22 participants and their 198 photographs, only this participant included a photograph of the sea, featuring a cruise liner off the Cumbrian coast:

"I was reminding myself that the, the National Park and the Lake District in Cumbria has a very attractive coast...". (E1, Participant 21)

6.5.4.2 Trees, Woodland, and Forestry Plantations

Like most of the earlier participants, trees and woodlands positively influenced the aesthetic values of these participants. Nearly half the participants took part in practical conservation projects, normally conserving natural capital valued aesthetically e.g., trees and woodlands. Participants 15, 16 and 17 explained the global rarity of bluebell woodlands, while participants 16 and 17 had purchased woodlands in the National Park, involving likeminded volunteers in conservation:

"Well, I love the fact that there are areas of the Lakes where obviously traditional bluebell woods are still viable. This is actually in my wood, err, just to the north of Bassenthwaite and I'm in the process of re-foresting it to increase the diversity...". (D1, Participant 16)

However, although participant 14 planted and actively maintained trees, there was no significant evidence of whether this activity influenced their aesthetic values:

"I've just done a lot of tree planting". (Participant 14)

Participant 19 in contrast, explained that during the first COVID-19 national lock-down they had agreed with their friends, that each day they would *"send each other a little happy snap, to cheer each other up"* (Fig. 6.12). They had all valued aesthetically images of wild garlic:

"...garlic grows wild and it grows everywhere and it has the most amazing smell, and there's so much of it, it just looks like a carpet of snow".
(D1, Participant 19)



Figure 6.12 Wild garlic *Allium ursinum* (D1, Participant 19)

While trees and woodlands positively influenced the aesthetic values of participant 21, they appeared to conflate valuing aesthetically forestry plantations, with their roles as venues for adventurous outdoor recreation (Fig. 6.13):

“There was a huge boost, boom in outdoor recreation in the early two thousands and mountain biking became much more popular. Grizedale Forest was developed and Whinlatter was developed and they are just wonderful places to see people enjoying their favourite activities...”. (B2, Participant 21)



Figure 6.13 Mountain biking (B2, Participant 21)

6.5.4.3 Mountains and Moorlands

What the National Trust participants termed “traditional hill farming” positively influenced the aesthetic values of these participants, while participant 21 also valued its contribution to artisan food. In contrast to the National Trust participants and conservationists, only participant 15 indicated that overgrazing had damaged the ecology of the Lake District, saying that there was potential for rewilding.

Participant 14 was shepherding on-foot throughout the year and valued aesthetically wide-open vistas, the natural capital of peatlands and the associated short vegetation, which in the Lake District is normally associated with sheep grazing. In contrast, they did not value aesthetically perceived untidiness.

The desire of Natural England for further reductions in the number of sheep on the open commons was understood, but they were concerned that this trend had gone too far. Reduced grazing was said to have contributed to the growth of leggy heather and other vegetation, making shepherding physically difficult. It was also claimed that the expansion of bracken, a threat to farming and conservation, was linked to reduced grazing by sheep. The policy pursued by Natural England was perceived as damaging hill farming “heritage” and longer-term sustainability.

Agropastoral agriculture had been central to the life of this participant since infancy. The socialisation integral to agropastoral agriculture was illustrated when their infant child climbed onto the farmhouse kitchen table, where the Diamond Nine ranking was taking place, randomising the photographs, and repeatedly yelling “sheep!”:

“Look, there’s a sheep, it’s coming down the crag end. One day you’ll be there won’t you? It’s just tradition as well somehow. Y’ know, there’s not many people who want to do it anymore, especially of my generation, so I don’t know. If George Monbiot gets his way, that’ll be a lost site”. (A1, Participant 14)

They were not opposed to conservation, but Monbiot was referred to in a wearisome way and understood to be the instigator of rewilding, which was unpopular and perceived as an extreme concept. It was also perceived as a key threat to hill farming, further reductions in the number of grazing sheep would make hefting on the open commons unviable (Walling, 2014, p.158; McCormick, 2018, pp.24-25).

6.5.4.4 Farmland

The enclosed land associated with the form of agropastoral agriculture, termed “traditional hill farming” positively influenced the aesthetic values of these participants. Vernacular buildings such as farmhouses and barns, constructed from locally sourced and modified natural capital in the forms of stone and timber were considered part of the landscape. As per section 6.5.4.3, participant 15 had concerns about the impact of overgrazing on biodiversity, but still valued aesthetically the Lake District cultural landscape (Fig. 6.17):

“So, you’ve got the stone wall, you’ve got the pasture, you’ve got the rough fell, you’ve got the mountains, all in. And I think you’ve got I think, a farmhouse...”.
(D2, Participant 15)



Figure 6.14 Cultural landscape, “traditional” hill farming (D2, Participant 15)

Of the nine photographs provided by participant 14, five contained images of livestock, sheep were present in four ranked A1, B2, C1 and D2, while cattle were present in the photograph ranked D1. Livestock were valued aesthetically, but their grazing also influenced how this participant valued aesthetically the cultural landscape, their preferences for the management of this natural capital and their role in the process.

Keeping sheep was uneconomic and this participant was sad that maintenance of what they valued aesthetically had to be subsidised through their agricultural contract work. This agropastoral agriculture was dependent on public subsidies and it was thought right to deliver what was termed “public goods” in return for public money:

“You know, a lot of other people whine a hell of a lot about it, but they get the same money. Y’ know, what do they think they’re getting the money for? ...I’m providing public goods in the form of this for the Stewardship money and I appreciate that.” (Participant 14)

Like the conservationists, traditional hay meadows and haymaking had a positive influence on the aesthetic values of this participant (Fig. 6.15), hay providing an important source of winter feed for livestock:

“...well there is hay making schemes, but it doesn’t say that you have to make it into little bales of hay. It’s a dying art really and there’s not many people still do it. So, I just think it’s quite traditional, but with a hint of modern, being lifted on by a machine, but the process is still the same and the way we got it to that stage is still the same. With the sun hitting the mountains to the back, just fetches something else to it really and of course with the lake in”.
(B1, Participant 14)



Figure 6.15 Traditional small bale haymaking, Buttermere (B1, Participant 14)

6.5.4.5 Geology and Industry

Most participants appeared to value aesthetically the contribution of traditional industries to the cultural landscape. Participants 16 and 17 valued aesthetically the industrial archaeology, claiming that these matters were undervalued by the LDNPA. Participant 16 stated *“I’m hugely disappointed with the Park, with the way they vandalise the history of the industrial part of the Lake District”*. One of their interests was mineralogy, valuing aesthetically geological exposures (Fig. 6.16), arguing that geological natural capital was undervalued by the LDNPA:

“I mean this is Bannerdale Crags, which was a lead mine, but if you can see there the malachite and the baryte, which was also in the vein. But it’s more a case of also the history that this entails...”. (C1, Participant 16)



Figure 6.16 Malachite and baryte, Bannerdale Crags mine (C1, Participant 16)

6.6 Aesthetic Orientations

Once again, the data was analysed and broken down into its most significant elements. The outdoor activity leader participants and the tourism expert (participant 21) were situated in the New Alpinist aesthetic orientation, while the hill farmer (participant 14) was situated in the New Statesmen aesthetic orientation. However, the outdoor activity leader participants had diverse aesthetic values, more so than either the National Trust participants or the conservationists (Fig. 6.20).

There were both similarities and differences in the aesthetic values of these participants and the factors influencing these aesthetic values. Consequently, separate word clouds and photomontages have been created for the hill farmer, outdoor activity leaders and tourism expert.

The word used most often by the hill farmer was sheep, but farm, gathering, Herdwick and lake were also used often (Fig. 6.17). Change, fells, hedge, heritage, land, tidy and tradition were used occasionally. Rarely used words and phrases, included agriculture, cattle, change, messy and World Heritage Site. Phrases such as clean ground, George Monbiot and Natural England were rarely used, but important in the context of the interview. Language demonstrated a commitment to conserving what they perceived as “traditional hill farming” within the cultural landscape of the Lake District (Fig. 6.17).



Figure 6.17 Word Cloud of the 25 words and terms used most frequently by hill farmer



Figure 6.19 Word Cloud of the 25 words and terms used most frequently by outdoor activity leaders



Figure 6.20 Influences contributing to the aesthetic values of outdoor activity leaders

The word used most often by the tourism expert was walking, but mountains was also used often (Fig. 6.21). Beauty, change, countryside, lake, farmers/farming, natural and partnership were used occasionally. Rarely used words and phrases, but important in the context of the interview, included benefit, cycle, positive and preserve. Language demonstrated enthusiasm for hill walking and in the past rock climbing, together with a commitment to enhancing the visitor economy of the Lake District, including a more sustainable future for food producers in the National Park (Fig. 6.21).



Figure 6.21 Word Cloud of the 25 words and terms used most frequently by tourism expert



Figure 6.22 Influences contributing to the aesthetic values of tourism expert

6.6.1 New Statesmen

Participant 14, the hill farmer wanted to spend as much time as possible in the cultural landscape of the Lake District, valuing aesthetically the unenclosed fells, enclosed fields, and hay meadows. The photograph ranked as A1 was of shepherding on the crags above the lake (Fig. 6.2), the interaction of the dog with the sheep bringing back enjoyable memories:

“The dog at the time wasn’t a lot of use, it were still working, but it made it into one hell of a dog. The best dog without a shot...”. (A1, Participant 14)

“That’s a sheep moving on top of the crag on the way home. That’s at the top end of Loweswater Lake on a bit of allotment. Sheep and lambs, and I like

sheep and I like dogs and I just like the way the sheep are flowing, like the sheep know best". (C1, Participant 14)

However, as per section 6.5.4.3, all these participants valued aesthetically the influence of what was perceived as traditional agropastoral agriculture on the cultural landscape, it was a rural idyll influenced by the Picturesque and Romantic Movements:

"There are sheep everywhere in the Lake District, they're just everywhere and I know that they help to form the landscape and things like that and are very important because of all the breeds and things...". (C3, Participant 19)

The photograph of traditional hay making, with the lake in the background and evening sun on the mountain was ranked B1. Relational and eudaemonic values were illustrated by participant 14 explaining that good weather, plus the involvement of friends from the local community, the tractor alleviating heavy lifting, contributed to positive memories, and valuing aesthetically these surroundings (Fig. 6.5):

".....It's a dying art really and there's not many people still do it. So, I just think it's quite traditional,.....". (B1, Participant 14)

The cultural landscape was understood to be highly anthropogenic, which contributed to how most participants valued it aesthetically. However, there was an awareness of changes in how natural capital was being managed and some of these changes were perceived positively:

"...it's not the necessarily unspoiled. It's been the subject of farming or traditional industries, mining, whatever, for thousands of years now. And I do nevertheless, I still think the environment that has been created and which we have the, the privilege to enjoy is just absolutely inspiring". (A1, Participant 21)
"They're great to see and they've become very popular interestingly of late, you wouldn't have seen belted Galloways here ten years ago. They've become quite popular, and they reflect a bit of a change in the environmental use of the land". (D1, Participant 18)



Figure 6.23 Belted Galloway cattle (D1, Participant 18)

6.6.2 New Romantics

Like the National Trust participants, the influence of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements was clear in both the content of photographs and the creative processes. For example, participant 20 presented a photograph of Aira Force and ranked it A1 (Fig. 6.14), while participant 16 had photographed Aira Force frozen in winter from the same position and ranked it D1. An image of Wastwater was once more picturesque and iconic (Fig. 6.26), but with intended irony participant 16 had photographed a landscape photographer, with camera mounted on tripod, in the shallow waters of a lake, capturing a picturesque view:

“Y’ know, a very important element of this is getting people to be able to see these sort of views”. (C3, Participant 16)

The legacy of the sublime and a wilderness aesthetic could be detected in photographs of rock scrambling and snow-covered Lake District mountains. Participant 16 ranked such a photograph A1, recalling a spot in time, they had highlighted a distant walker in a red jacket dwarfed by the snow-covered landscape (Wordsworth, W., 1850, p.326; Bishop, 1959; Kellert, 2012, p.14). In contrast, participant 18 had ranked as C2, a summer photograph of their partner scrambling up Sharp Edge on Blencathra. Participant 19 was unable to visit the mountainous core of the Lake District due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, and felt that they had little alternative but to photograph the mountains that they valued aesthetically from afar (Fig. 6.21):

“They’re revered and feared and I can see why, I can see why, because they’re so majestic and they’re so, err, y’ know, grand and you have to take them on their terms, because they will not take you on your terms y’ know”. (B2, Participant 19)



Figure 6.24 A sublime Lake District from Hampsfell (B2, Participant 19)

The legacy of the Romantic Movement could be detected in various ways. Participants 18 and 19 valued ruined buildings aesthetically, the use of modified natural capital in the construction of such buildings identified them with the Lake District. Participant 16 said that they much preferred bluebells to daffodils, regardless of what Wordsworth may have valued aesthetically. Participants 19 and 20 clearly evidenced aesthetic engagement by describing how ancient trees or romantic landscapes, provided opportunities for other worldly experiences or meditation. For example, participant 20 valued aesthetically the Grot at Rydal Hall and the view from it; built in 1668 with the aim of providing a place from which to view Rydal Falls, it is the UK's earliest purpose built viewing station and inspired key figures in the Picturesque and Romantic Movements (Emerson, R., 1836; Nash, 1967, pp.84-87; Williams, 1973, pp.28-29; Bunce, M., 1994, pp.27-28). Participant 20 also stressed how historical links to certain geographical spaces, provided additional ethical and historical context, the memorial to Thomas Clarkson on the Ullswater Way being ranked C3 as a symbol of the anti-slavery movement in the Lake District (Hague, W., 2008, pp.430-431).

Participant 21 valued aesthetically the physical influence of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements on the cultural landscape, as illustrated by a photograph of the Claife Viewing Station, ranked C1 as a symbol of the Picturesque Movement:

"It's part of educating people about the countryside and the beauty of the countryside in the visual beauty. As I say, I make reference in the slides that I sent you, to me aesthetics is about the range of senses... I like this one because it, it does show that we are respecting the past and now how aesthetics may be evolving". (C1, Participant 21)

They also valued how the Romantic Movement continued to influence literary associations with the Lake District, which included valuing aesthetically representations of the Lake District by Potter (Bunce, M., 1994, pp.65-66) and Alfred Wainwright (1907-1991 CE) (Thompson, I., 2010, pp.286-291). Potter's art in the collections of the National Trust and the Armit Museum in Ambleside, was felt to be under appreciated and could be used more effectively in interpretation:

“Fantastic drawings of the flora and fauna again and of plants and vegetation... She was a very accomplished artist... Using Beatrix Potter as an educator as a reference point for people, a little bit the same as Wainwright, but in a different way, to a different market”. (C2, Participant 21)

6.6.3 New Alpinists

These participants wanted more people to take part in outdoor activities and value aesthetically the Lake District (Fig.6.12):

“Well, it’s all about people and team work. I mean that’s a great one, a scramble on Dow Crag and basically, y’ know, some, it’s all about people’s, people working with each other, but also the sheer beauty of being in parts of the Lakes that are not necessarily that most frequently visited...” (Fig. 6.12). (B1, Participant 16)

Living in the Lake District facilitated easy access to the mountains for participant 21. As a keen walker and former rock climber, a photograph of the Lake District mountains was ranked A1 (Fig. 6.4):

“I’m passionate about mountains and in the Lakes. I think it’s a massive privilege to live here and to work here”. (Participant 21)

This participant was firmly committed to enabling more people to value the Lake District aesthetically and supportive of organisations such as the Calvert Trust, which had helped to widen access by enabling people with disabilities to take part in outdoor activities and be aesthetically engaged with the Lake District:

“It makes me smile to see people, y’ know, being able to go up a mountain in a wheelchair. You see them doing more extreme things every year you know, you see them on rockfaces these days in a wheelchair harnesses specially made up for them”. (D1, Participant 21)

They found it difficult to remove themselves from promoting the National Park and around 15 years previously had run a campaign to widen access, encouraging young people to explore the mountains and moorlands:

"It's just the majesty of the fells and the ability to get into the natural environment". (A1, Participant 21)

The outdoor activity leaders volunteered to lead groups of people in the Lake District and had diverse interests, including ecology, farming, history, and minerology, which appeared to influence how they valued aesthetically objects (Fig. 6.13). They used such knowledge when interpreting the wildlife, farming, geology, and industrial archaeology to people taking part in the activities which they were leading. They believed that such information helped people to value aesthetically the Lake District and deter unintentional damage to natural capital:

"I talk a lot when I'm leading walks, I like to tell people a bit of the background of the place". (B1, Participant 17)

All six participants wanted more people to value aesthetically the Lake District, as evidenced by their photographs and the associated interviews, but there was particular concern that low-income families, young people and people from BAME backgrounds were among the grossly underrepresented visitors:

"I think there's a big opportunity to continue diversifying the people that come to the Lakes, it's obviously still a very white middle-class sort of environment...". (Participant 16)

The main activities were walking and rock scrambling, although participant 15 enjoyed canoeing, and 18 was a member of a mountain rescue team.



Figure 6.25 Leading a scramble on Dow Crag

Participant 20 recalled introducing friends from London to the Lake District and was delighted that they had become aware that there were natural environments to value aesthetically in England (Fig. 6.26):

“We don’t have to go to the other side of the world to see some beauty, we can just go six hours and spend a week with you, and we will see so much beauty in a week” (Fig. 6.26). (C2, Participant 20)



Figure 6.26 Wastwater and Great Gable in the distance

Photographs of people were prominent in three photographs ranked A1, and another ranked A1 included the image of a launch on Derwentwater. People were included in photographs for clear reasons, and generally ranked A, B or C (Table 6.2). There could also be affective reasons for the absence of people in photographs, or due to restrictions on travel and enforced social distancing of the COVID-19 pandemic (Fig. 6.21).

Table 6.2 Presence of people in photographs ranked A to E by outdoor leaders

Ranking	Total Number of Photographs	Photographs Including People	
A1	6	3	50%
B1 & B2	12	3	25%
C1, C2 & C3	18	5	28%
D1 & D2	12	1	8%
E1	6	1	17%
TOTAL	54	13	24%

Participants 15, 18 and 19 engaged young people in the natural environment of the Lake District, explaining that for young people to value the natural environment aesthetically and for sustained participation, it needed to be enjoyable:

“So, whatever you’re going to try and do, it’s got to be enjoyable”.

(Participant 18)

Agropastoral agriculture ensured that participant 14 was active in the cultural landscape seven days a week, which might include friends and family, people being present in photographs B1, B2 and D2, or one third overall.

6.6.4 New Naturalists

Participant 14 provided no photographs of individual wild plants or animals, but was enthusiastic about the use of their cattle for conservation grazing and clearly valued aesthetically the bluebells at their grandfather’s farm:

“That’s a view of me, the farm I’m aiming to go to, the land surrounding it and the bluebells. And it’s just peaceful, there’s nothing happening, really...”.

(Participant 14)

Table 6.3 Presence of wildlife in photographs ranked A to E by outdoor leaders

Ranking	Total Number of Photographs	Photographs Including Wildlife	
A1	6	0	0%
B1 & B2	12	2	17%
C1, C2 & C3	18	6	33%
D1 & D2	12	2	17%
E1	6	2	33%
TOTAL	54	12	22%

The New Naturalists aesthetic orientation was strong among the outdoor activity leaders, who were generally knowledgeable about wild animals and plants, valuing detail. Participants 16 and 17, valued aesthetically, the woodlands which they owned and managed. Participant 20 spoke positively of wildlife and perceived litter as a threat to both wildlife and domestic livestock, volunteering to clear it in both the Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District.

As per section 2.2.3.3, wild animals and plants could be a symbol, participant 18 having ranked a mummified viviparous lizard *Zootoca vivipara* at E1, explaining that it represented the diversity of wildlife that was valued aesthetically (Table 6.3). Animals and plants were often valued aesthetically or as a symbol of the seasons, as exemplified by red deer *Cervus elaphus* (Fig. 6.23) and the wheatear *Oenanthe* *Oenanthe* (Fig. 6.7):

“I looked up onto the skyline and there was this, this red deer stag, just standing on the skyline, looking back at me as if to say “What are you doing here?”, and I just found it, y’ know, so beautiful.” (C2, Participant 16)



Figure 6.27 Red Deer Stag *Cervus elaphus* (C2, Participant 16)

Like participant 14, participant 21 provided no photographs of individual wild plants or animals but stressed that wildlife contributed to how they valued aesthetically the Lake District. No significant reference, however, was made to trees and woodlands.

6.7 SWOT Analysis

Table 6.4 SWOT analysis diagram of how the objects valued aesthetically in the research strengthen or benefit the Lake District and how they relate to opportunities, weaknesses, and threats

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Aesthetic Value of Cultural Landscape 2. Traditional Livestock e.g., Sheep 3. Diverse Wildlife 4. Artisan Food Production	1. LDNPA 2. Visitor Facilities and Transport 3. Economics of Hill Farming 4. Disparate Groups and no Synergy
Opportunities	Threats
1. Responding to Climate Change 2. Nature Recovery 3. Sustainable Transport e.g., Cycleways 4. World Heritage Site	1. Climate Change 2. Visitor Pressure and Traffic Peaking 3. Failure to Engage Diverse Audiences 4. Homogeneity

6.7.1 Strengths

All participants valued aesthetically the influence of traditional agropastoral agriculture on the Lake District cultural landscape, but participant 15 felt that contemporary agropastoral agriculture could be more sustainable. The “traditional breeds”, e.g., hefted flocks of Herdwicks and black Galloway cattle, were perceived as Lake District heritage and participant 14 emphasised that they contributed to the World Heritage Site designation. Despite the poor profitability of sheep farming, most participants cited the main benefit of sheep and cattle as food production. Most participants claimed that the Lake District had diverse wildlife, although in contrast participant 15 argued that there were more diverse areas outside the National Park.

6.7.2 Opportunities

Participants 14 and 21 had coherent ideas for responding to climate change, through opportunities including carbon sequestration and nature recovery. New woodland, upland pasture, and hay meadows are widely valued aesthetically and a notable

contribution to the cultural landscape. However, only participant 15 claimed that rewilding might be an opportunity.

The dearth of public transport and excessive vehicle pressure was perceived as damaging natural capital, but successful connection of cycleways would help reduce this pressure. Participant 21 felt that climate change would force the decarbonisation of the visitor experience:

“I think the inevitable opportunity is the realisation that we all live on a planet with finite resources and we need to look after our environment the best we possibly can. So the opportunity is to decarbonise the whole visitor experience”.

(Participant 21)

Participant 14 perceived the World Heritage Site designation as a great opportunity for the objects they valued aesthetically, claiming that the designation would prevent Natural England from removing the hefted flocks of Herdwicks from the mountain core of the Lake District. Education was seen as a means of protecting hill farming heritage, there was interest in hosting educational visits to the farm, possibly providing a source of income.

6.7.3 Weaknesses

Like previous participants, most felt that the effectiveness of LDNPA officers had been weakened through the influence of budgetary cuts. However, participant 21 stressed that weak political leadership and ineffective organisational structures were the most significant negative influences. Disparate groups and no synergy were said to be partly a consequence of reduced funding opportunities; partnerships were undervalued diminishing ability to seek opportunities for sustainable development. Participant 20 claimed that the LDNPA was unrepresentative and completely out of touch with society (Glover, 2019, pp.9-10; Carrington, 2024):

“If you look at the boards, if you look at the National Park Authorities, if you look under volunteers, they’re all old, retired white men and women”.

(Participant 20)

Most participants claimed that visitors to the Lake District were provided with quite poor facilities; there was a need for better car parking, toilets, and litter bins. Like the National Trust participants and conservationists, some participants said that visitor carrying capacity had for years been exceeded in summer at 'hot spots' e.g., Bowness-on-Windermere and Keswick, damaging natural capital and aesthetic value. However, the Lake District was not overrun with visitors, rather it was a longstanding failure to resolve peaking at such 'hot spots'. Participant 21 highlighted this argument (Fig. 6.4):

"Well I can certainly find the areas that are relatively quiet of people even at the busiest time of the year". (A1, Participant 21)

The road network was described as notoriously poor and congested, which increased the cost of farming and contract work for participant 14. Likewise, public transport was perceived as a fundamental weakness, summarised by participant 21 as *"not very joined up at the moment and it never has been in my experience, it is still ridiculously expensive..."*. The absence of management proposals to reduce traffic congestion was said to be another consequence of weak political leadership and impacted adversely on natural capital and aesthetic value.

Participant 14 felt that the economics of hill farming had become a significant weakness.

6.7.4 Threats

Although climate change was perceived as a threat, most participants had difficulty describing adverse implications. However, participant 14 felt increased precipitation might damage aesthetic value through flooding and erosion, while also voicing concern that farmers were being blamed for the emergency:

"The people that are threatening farmers with global warming, blaming them for it, which is a terrible thing to do, because they may contribute something, but carbon, my land especially, this land will take in, it will be unbelievable. That site those cows are on, it will just absorb it, like nowt else. And there's trees in where the cows are at". (Participant 14)

Participant 21 was concerned how the number of people visiting the Lake District by private car contributed to climate change and damaged natural capital, but felt that addressing climate change could become an opportunity:

“Yeah, managing visitor numbers managing visitor pressures is something we must live with and it's something that isn't going to go away, so there's no point burying our heads in the sand”. (C1, Participant 21)

The interviews were taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic and at this time furlough and the difficulty of travelling abroad had influenced a surge in visitor numbers, a minority of whom had engaged in anti-social behaviour. Some participants claimed that there was little apparent effort by the LDNPA to manage these visitors and if such unprecedented pressures were left unchecked, might become a significant threat to natural capital and the aesthetic value of the National Park.

Participant 14 was concerned that Natural England would impose further reductions on sheep numbers, reducing the viability of hefting on the open commons, while damaging cultural heritage and aesthetic value. Participant 15 in contrast claimed that the biodiversity and aesthetic value of the mountainous core of the Lake District had been damaged, repeating their assertion that areas outside the National Park were more diverse. In contrast to participant 14, participant 15 was the only one to consider the designation of the Lake District as a World Heritage Site as a possible threat, which might facilitate *“...bigger types of development, hotels and there will be a different kind of tourist maybe”*.

Participant 20 was concerned about racist abuse from a minority of Lake District residents and a perceived smaller minority of visitors, in addition to a failure by the LDNPA to engage underrepresented groups. Participant 20 cited some of the unpleasant vitriol that had been directed at the National Trust for seeking to engage a more diverse audience (Olusoga, 2021). A small but vociferous minority was also said to racially abuse foreign workers, having a negative impact on the tourism and hospitality sector.

6.7.5 Summary

The SWOT analysis was a valuable method for triangulation purposes. Like the National Trust participants and conservationists, climate change was identified as a threat to natural capital valued aesthetically, but also as an opportunity to conserve and extend some natural capital. It also further highlighted the concerns of many participants regarding the political leadership of the LDNPA. While some issues raised were marginal to the research question, it generally served to confirm their aesthetic values.

6.8 Influence

6.8.1 Influencing People

All participants, with the understandable exception of participant 14, actively encouraged people to value aesthetically and responsibly explore the Lake District. Participant 20 explained that they aimed provide people from BAME Backgrounds with the confidence to explore the beauty of Lake District on their own terms. The professional background of participant 19 was in special needs and advised the Scouts on related matters. Similarly, participant 17 had assisted with holidays for partially sighted people in the Lake District.

One way that participant 21 influenced people, was through sharing their extensive knowledge and experience of strategic tourism development, with stakeholders in the visitor economy:

"I'm glad to share my experience this is with the with the young people in particular". (Participant 21)

Participant 14 enjoyed engaging positively with visitors and felt that this might influence their behaviour and reduce unintentional damage to natural capital. They emphasised that it was important in an open landscape that was a tourist area that the farm should be tidy and that they should behave appropriately:

"Y' know, if you start shouting and swearing at your dogs, it just makes you look like a fool". (Participant 14).

6.8.2 Influencing Objects Valued Aesthetically

Anthropogenic damage had a negative influence on the aesthetic values of these participants and influenced their preferences for natural capital devoid of such damage. Consequently, when appropriate all participants sought to influence responsible behaviour by visitors, including advising the removal of litter, a tangible threat to livestock and other aspects of the natural environment. The outdoor activity leaders advised those taking part in activities to keep to footpaths, to avoid soil erosion. Activities such as visits to hill farms and demonstrations of sheep shearing, raised awareness of hill farming among young people e.g., why they should not damage drystone walls. Participant 21 said that they sought to respond to arguments over visitor pressures positively, by turning problems into opportunities, and offering solutions.

As per section 6.5.4.2, participants 16 and 17 owned woodlands, which they were diversifying for nature conservation. One of these participants involved volunteers in this task, including some from a local university.

Participant 14 explained that they followed good farming practice and abided by all the appropriate codes. They were deeply concern about conserving hill farming practices, termed “tradition” or “heritage”, widely considered economically unviable. The short-cropped vegetation associated with sheep grazing was valued aesthetically and they also kept the farm and surroundings neat and tidy:

“I don’t like messy farms, this isn’t tidy at the minute, because a bloody tree come down in the yard last night”. (Participant 14)

6.9 Discussion

6.9.1 Influences on Aesthetic Values and Natural Capital

What are the possible influences on the aesthetic values of the stakeholders of conservation organisations in the Lake District e.g., hill farmers, outdoor activity leaders and the visitor economy?

Do the aesthetic values of the stakeholders of conservation organisations in the Lake District influence their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital?

6.9.1.1 Subjectivity

Once again, the results indicate the subjectivity of the aesthetic values that participants assign to natural capital, reflecting strong personal connections, probably influenced by their held values, stemming from their core beliefs. Except for the hill farmer, their aesthetic values were diverse, those of the outdoor activity leaders being more diverse than either the National Trust or conservationist participants. These diverse influences will now be explored in more detail.

6.9.1.2 Aesthetic Engagement

Like the National Trust participants and the conservationists, most of these evidenced how relational values including eudaemonic values, influenced how they assigned aesthetic value to natural capital (Berleant, 2013). Most participants evidenced aesthetic engagement with the Lake District's cultural landscape, but participants 19 and 21 appeared more confident than the others in actively discussing these matters (Berleant, 2013). It was clearly explained how spiritual experiences and all five senses contributed to aesthetic engagement. Colour appeared to be a significant influence, supporting claims that perceived colour of a visual exercise environment can affect mood, green having the most positive influence (Akers *et al.*, 2012; Barton, J. *et al.*, 2016, p.30; Rogerson *et al.*, 2016). Light was a related influence, research indicating the affective benefits of light in the natural environment (Pretty and Pencheon, 2016, p.5). Participants 19 and 21 both referred to the pungent smell of wild garlic and how for them this was a symbol of spring. But unlike light and sound, scents introduce

chemicals into the bloodstream, having a potentially measurable physiological influence, yet research into the sense of smell has been neglected in comparison with the other senses. Consequently there has also been little research into the influence of scent on how people value aesthetically the natural environment (Willis, K., 2024, p.87). Participant 14 explained that silence was a rarity in an actively farmed tourist area and enhanced the aesthetic benefits that they obtained from working in the cultural landscape. Research, however, supports the claims of participant 19, that natural sounds such as a flowing stream can be calming and indicates that these sounds may have a positive influence on aesthetic values (Krzywicka and Byrka, 2017; Ratcliffe, 2021; Willis, K., 2024, p.121).

6.9.1.3 Organisational Culture

Raising awareness of the natural environment, appeared to be a core belief of the outdoor activity leaders (p.259). Leaders of such activities are expected to develop knowledge and understanding to share with participants, a process which may enhance their own aesthetic values. There was a focus on positively influencing natural capital wherever possible and seeking to reduce any negative influences.

6.9.1.4 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

Regardless of whether they used the terms or not, participant 14, the hill farmer and participants 16 and 17 were actively involved in the conservation of natural capital and the delivery of tangible and intangible ecosystem services. All the outdoor activity leader participants were influenced by natural capital to deliver cultural services via guided walks and other outdoor activities. The most highly valued of these services was aesthetic benefits and there was some evidence that they acted synergistically with recreation, inspiration, and spirituality (Grizzetti *et al.*, 2016; Reynaud and Lanzanova, 2017). However, for these participants aesthetic value was not simply linked to other cultural services, but also to other bundles of ecosystem services.

The *Landscapes Review* highlighted the need for a robust assessment of the state of natural capital in National Parks such as the Lake District (Glover, 2019, pp.12-14).

Similarly, ecosystem services were highlighted as a means of helping to enshrine links between people and nature in National Parks (Glover, 2019, p.38). It is understandable that these terms were not used by the outdoor activity leaders, but more surprising in the case of the tourism expert. Given the profile of public goods in the agricultural press and claims by NFU members that food should be a public good, the hill farmer was conflating the term with ecosystem services (p.32).

6.9.1.4.1 Water

Once more, the held values of most, possibly all participants, included valuing aesthetically clean water. Likewise, aesthetic value was again assigned to diverse water features, indicating a bias towards the aesthetic benefits of water (Howley, 2011b).

However, no participant said that pollution of lakes and rivers adversely influenced how they assigned aesthetic value, despite pollution leading to blooms of toxic blue green algae being a long-standing problem for several lakes and rivers. Monitoring since the 1940s has detailed the gradual eutrophication of Windermere, a problem which is getting worse with increased visitor numbers since the WHS designation in 2017 (Pearsall and Pennington, 1973, pp.70-78; Jones, J., 1997). A contributing factor may be that extensive media coverage of the impact of pollution on the aesthetic value of Windermere and other water bodies has been since the interviews (Laville, 2024a; Laville, 2024c; Laville, 2024b; Ungood-Thomas, 2024b; Ungood-Thomas, 2024a),

Out of all 22 participants only participant 21 provided a photograph of the coast and were unsure why they ranked it E1 but explained that as people sometimes forget that the Lake District has a coastline, which motivated them to include it. Yet despite the 42 km of Lake District coastline and estuaries often being of international importance for conservation, for nearly all 22 participants the most iconic and culturally entrenched images of the Lake District were of mountains and water bodies (Bunce, M., 1994, p.40; Taylor, John, 1994, p.245; Thompson, I., 2010, p.154; Ferguson, 2020).

As discussed, the juxtaposing of industry with the commonly shared perception of the rural idyll, is today widely perceived as incompatible to the legacy of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements (pp.64-65). However, the West Coast of the Lake District was a popular destination for eighteenth century visitors, who valued aesthetically both sublime coastal industry and the sublime Borrowdale.

6.9.1.4.2 Trees, Woodland, and Forestry Plantations

Outdoor activity leaders engaged in multi-sensory aesthetic engagement with trees and woodland (pp.243-244), the experiences described by participant 19 complementing research in Japan, which demonstrates that the health benefits of so-called forest bathing are closely tied to the aesthetic benefits. Early research was criticised for focussing exclusively on men, but more recent research has demonstrated that the benefits apply to both men and women. Phytoncides in the atmosphere are likely to be one among many mechanisms benefitting the participants (Park *et al.*, 2010; Furuyashiki *et al.*, 2019; Rogerson, Brymer and Barton, 2021, p.2; Schertz, Meidenbauer and Berman, 2021, p.10; Yeh *et al.*, 2021; Willis, K., 2024, pp.91-99).

Broadleaved woodlands were clearly valued aesthetically, the content of the photographs and the associated interviews indicating that most of these participants valued aesthetically biodiverse woodlands (Fig. 6.12). Purchasing woodland for nature conservation in the Lake District and actively involving volunteers in its management demonstrates a particularly high level of commitment.

6.9.1.5 Aesthetic Orientations

Once again as per sections 4.6 and 5.6, the aesthetic values of participants were influenced by a complex combination of factors, summarised in the four aesthetic orientations. All these participants valued aesthetically a cultural landscape of agropastoral agriculture, but for the outdoor activity leaders this included valuing aesthetically the detail of complex three-dimensional vegetation. The agropastoral agriculture was natural capital managed in a perceived form of “traditional hill

farming”, not necessarily reflecting the historical reality (Rebanks, 2020, p.102; Bateman, A., 2022, p.18; Schofield, 2022, pp.57-58). The evidence reinforces the argument that the Lake District is often physically reflecting self-definitions of influential groups grounded in culture (Cloke, 1993, pp.53-67; Stotten, 2016). The following section will outline in further detail how the held and assigned aesthetic values of these stakeholders influence their preferences for the management of the National Park’s natural capital and the ecosystem services that flow from it.

6.9.1.5.1 New Statesmen

Participant 14 had a background in agropastoral agriculture, and the interview largely aligned with associated literature (Harvey, D. *et al.*, 2013; Walling, 2014; Rebanks, 2015; Edwards, M., 2018; McCormick, 2018; Parry, 2020; Rebanks, 2020). The synergistic influences of culture and socialisation on the core beliefs and held aesthetic values of this participant placed them in the New Statesmen aesthetic orientation (Kelly, J. *et al.*, 2015, p.235). Like many hill farmers and despite the Lake District having World Heritage Site status, they claimed that the heritage and traditions of agropastoral agriculture were under threat from economic and environmental forces (Stockdale, 1872, pp.197-200; Mabey, 1980, pp.164-165; Burton, R. *et al.*, 2008; Winchester, 2018; Winchester, 2019, p.19; French, 2022).

This participant was aware that agropastoral agriculture in the Lake District takes place in a largely treeless cultural landscape of mountain and moorland which is highly visible to National Park residents and visitors alike (Fig. 6.2) (p.279). Accordingly, one factor influencing core beliefs and the held values that stem from them, while in turn influencing conservation of natural capital, is pressure from others involved in agropastoral agriculture regarding what they perceive as acceptable land management (Burton, R., 2012; Stotten, 2016). Likewise, core beliefs and held values might be influenced by the risks and costs of reduced numbers of sheep, for what is normally a very marginal business (Carr and Tait, 1991; Beedell and Rehman, 1999; Fielding *et al.*, 2005).

As per section 2.3.4, most farmers value aesthetically natural environments with visually clear anthropogenic influences, but while such influences may not be apparent to some stakeholders, hill farmers are very much aware that grazing has modified the cultural landscape. However, it should now be clear that hill farmers are not alone in valuing aesthetically a cultural landscape modified by grazing (p.70), accordingly the tourism expert and outdoor activity leaders believed that agropastoral agriculture was important and valued aesthetically the associated cultural landscape. Even participant 15 who said that the flora of the fells had been “decimated” by sheep grazing, valued aesthetically the cultural landscape termed “traditional hill farming”, ranking a photograph D2 (Fig. 6.17). Most participants valued the integration of ecology and culture through the farming of Herdwicks and other practices that they considered traditional (Yarwood and Evans, 1998; Robinson, G., 2014; Ovaska and Soini, 2016; Marsoner *et al.*, 2018; Humphries, 2020; Parry, 2020; Halfacree and Williams, 2021).

To most of the outdoor activity leaders and the tourism expert the uniformly sheep grazed, wide-open vistas of natural capital in the form of mountain and moorland was perceived as sublime and awe inspiring. These participants valued the challenge of aesthetic engagement in a cultural landscape with visually unclear anthropogenic influences. They were fully aware that the cultural landscape had been greatly modified by agropastoral agriculture, but this was perceived as “traditional hill farming”, where sheep and other livestock are part of a multifunctional Lake District of great benefit to society. The rise of this rural idyll has been subtle, as illustrated by the editor of *The Guardian’s* country diary column revealing that the animals featuring most in the column had gradually moved from wildlife in the nineteen twenties to sheep and dogs today (Barkham, 2024).

The uniformly sheep grazed, wide-open vistas also influenced the aesthetic values of participant 14, but it appeared that these might be closely tied to the physical practicalities of shepherding. To this participant uniformly sheep grazed vegetation was termed “clean ground”, which in the context of the interview, was also easily traversable on-foot. As per section 4.9.1.5.1, it can be argued that the “tradition” and

“heritage” which maintains this “clean ground” does not reflect the historic reality of agropastoral agriculture which was in the past much more diverse. Hill farmers, however, feel aggrieved about such criticism, as since the Second World War they have largely followed Government policy. For example, the hostility of participant 14 towards Natural England was partially because they perceived that the organisation was accusing them of damaging nature. From the perspective of participant 14, it was Natural England that was damaging the “heritage” of “traditional hill farming” by demanding unsustainable reductions in the number of sheep grazing the open commons. This participant claimed that reduced numbers of sheep would lead to the expansion of three-dimensional vegetation which they did not value aesthetically and might lead to the hefted flocks on the open commons becoming unviable, with the expansion of rewilding being the most extreme consequence

The area farmed by participant 14 is rich in cultural artefacts and practices, a geographical ‘hot spot’ for co-production of cultural services (p.35). This participant valued aesthetically the producing and caring activities of hay meadow management, which together with the associated relational values is a notable example of co-production, being mentally challenging and requiring a high level of skill. They enjoyed producing the labour-intensive small bales which were valued aesthetically, but also instrumentally as a source of external income and as a source of winter livestock feed. Only this participant stressed how the soils of upland hay meadows can provide a valuable means of storing carbon.

Only participant 15 mentioned that the World Heritage Site designation might be problematic. In contrast, the hill farmer and tourism expert claimed that the World Heritage Site designation was a great opportunity for the Lake District. The former believed that it would help protect the “heritage” of agropastoral agriculture, while the latter said that it would help secure external resources towards sustainable tourism.

6.9.1.5.2 New Romantics

The Lake District cultural landscape has often been physically changed due to the influence of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements e.g., Windermere, Rydal Park, and Aira Force (p.171). However, it is a selective interpretation of the Romantic Movement that has had a particularly strong influence on held aesthetic values regarding the Lake District cultural landscape, emphasising the distil sense of sight in how it is represented through diverse media (Urry and Larsen, 1990, pp.173-175; Bunce, M., 1994, p.34). But culture and socialisation are likely influences why several participants valued aesthetically picturesque and iconic geographical locations e.g., Aira Force and Wastwater, there being records of these locations being valued aesthetically since at least the mid-eighteenth century. Several participants photographed these locations from the same points as photographers from the nineteenth century onwards, the influence of the Picturesque Movement being observed in the composition of both historic and contemporary photographs (Steinberg, 2008).

Like participants 3 and 8 from the National Trust, participant 21 valued Claife Viewing Station, as a symbol of the Picturesque Movement (pp.38-39). Qualifying originally as a planner, the influence of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements on landscape appreciation and architecture would have been part of their academic training. Their academic and professional knowledge adds context to their use of the words' "aesthetic", "beauty" and "landscape".

The legacies of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements were salient influences regarding the aesthetic values of these participants. This in turn influenced their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital, in the form of a cultural landscape of water bodies, mountains, moorlands, woodland and enclosed farmland, but also natural capital with visually unclear anthropogenic influences.

6.9.1.5.3 New Alpinists

Participant 21 had played a key role in developing and marketing the Lake District as the *UK Adventure Capital*, although led by Cumbria Tourism, it was supported by the LDNPP (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2010). The initiative linked into the historic role of the Lake District in the development of climbing and mountaineering, but also more recent outdoor activities, including canoeing, white water rafting, wild swimming and mountain biking. All participants, except for participant 14, took part in such outdoor activities and were of the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation. It is possible that some of the photographs associated with these activities evidenced Kantian distancing, viewing the cultural landscape from afar, but this could easily have also been influenced by the wide-angle optics of smartphone lenses (Kant, 2000; Hiles, 2008; Hirsch, 2012; Cooper *et al.*, 2016).

However, as per section 6.6.3, there was no indication of the elitism often associated with activities such as mountaineering, climbing and sailing. The outdoor activity leaders and tourism expert wanted others to value aesthetically the Lake District and it was likely that an enthusiasm for engaging new people contributed to their core beliefs and held values. These participants evidenced a clearer desire for encouraging more diverse Lake District visitors than either the National Trust participants or conservationists. Participant 20 was particularly concerned about the under participation of people from BAME backgrounds in outdoor activities in the Lake District and National Parks in general (p.279). Their views are supported by the former Conservative Government's *Landscapes Review*, which used the Government's own statistics to demonstrate how certain segments of society are grossly underrepresented among visitors to National Parks. The *Landscapes Review* stated that every effort should be made to achieve greater diversity of visitors based on social background, gender, age, ethnicity and disabilities (Glover, 2019, p.40). It revealed in stark contrast that the majority of visits, often repeat ones, are made by wealthy and relatively wealthy segments of society (Glover, 2019, pp.68-69).

The Landscapes Review, together with recent statistics show that only four people from BAME backgrounds and four with a declared disability were present on the boards of National Park Authorities. This represents 1.7% from BAME backgrounds and 1.3% from people with disabilities across the membership of all the boards (Glover, 2019, p.157; Carrington, 2024). However, as evidence by the 2021 UK census data 18% of the population of England and Wales is composed of people from BAME backgrounds (UK Government, 2024). 70% of the 225 members of the National Parks' boards were male and many of these were of retirement age, having often served for decades, forming a biased and unrepresentative elite (Glover, 2019, p.30; Carrington, 2024).

The National Park is funded by the nation to serve everyone yet is unrepresentative of contemporary society (Glover, 2019, pp.9-10). Such disparity serves to sustain a rural idyll of the "last bastion of Englishness" a concept often used in the defence of exclusion. It deters people from underrepresented segments of society and leads to them feeling that the Lake District is not for them. Such underrepresentation also risks influencing an inaccurate concept of contemporary society for those employed by conservation organisations or volunteering to lead groups in the Lake District.

However, over 18 million visitors come to the Lake District each year and in something of an ideological conflict, these were said to be contributing to the National Park exceeding its carrying capacity. Most of these participants claimed that numbers were not entirely to blame, it was inadequate public transport, poor visitor facilities and excessive promotion of visitor 'hot spots', which damaged natural capital in such 'hot spots' (Christian, 1966, p.142; Patmore, 1970, p.96; Urry, 1995, p.185). Perhaps the main concern was that all these problems have been exacerbated since 2010, due to relentless cuts to National Park budgets. There are now inadequate resources to maintain sustainable public access to publicly owned natural capital e.g., Haverthwaite Heights and Torver Common (Horton, 2024). Yet, the National Park is being actively promoted as a World Heritage Site.

There did not appear to be the same desire for an expansion of temperate rainforest or montane woodland in the mountain core of the Lake District as evidenced by some National Trust participants, but particularly the conservationists. Consequently, except for participant 15, there were no clear comments regarding the benefits that such expansion might bring.

6.9.1.5.4 New Naturalists

Wild plants or animals appeared to influence how most participants assigned aesthetic value to natural capital, there being great attachment to some species, which as with some previous participants acted as symbols (Fig. 6.7). As such, wildlife might also be valued aesthetically in its own right (Table. 6.3) and was often associated with more remote areas of the National Park, or where participants might perceive a sense of wildness. Accordingly, this symbolism could represent approaches to the management of natural capital that participants valued aesthetically e.g., the presence of red deer in Martindale, a grazed Lake District valley, perceived to be of remote and wild character.

The extensive areas of bluebells that participants 14, 16 and 21 valued aesthetically are rare globally, being largely confined to the UK, Northern France and the Benelux countries. Research has identified that the colour blue and the abundance of colour are key influences of aesthetic value, which could explain why so many people value aesthetically bluebell woodlands. However, such research usually involves small groups of participants and often overlooks social and cultural influences (Willis, K., 2024, pp.73-80). Participant 20 volunteered to clear litter, which they described as a threat to wildlife and livestock.

In addition to valuing aesthetically a cultural landscape of agropastoral agriculture, most of the participants also valued the contribution of wildflowers and other vegetation to the detail and complexity of the landscape, which was not shared to any extent by participant 14 (Fig.6.10).

6.9.1.6 Summary

Once again, the cultural legacy of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements influenced both selection of and photographic composition of objects which participants valued aesthetically. However, from a phenomenological context, supported by diverse research; the presence of water, vegetation, weather conditions, colour, and light appeared to influence how most if not all these participants assigned aesthetic value to natural capital. Wildlife was certainly important to most participants, and they valued aesthetically three-dimensional vegetation of structural complexity, including objects of a small and focussed scale.

But the role played by agropastoral agriculture was a key influence of how participants assigned aesthetic value to natural capital. Consequently, the core beliefs of participants and the held values that stem from them are manifest in valuing aesthetically a cultural landscape which might include visually clear anthropogenic influences, such as drystone walls, barns, and farmhouses. Even the participant who expressed concerns regarding overgrazing, claimed that a form of “traditional hill farming” played a valuable role in maintaining the cultural landscape and natural capital. Thus, once again the Lake District was perceived as a rural idyll, imbued with the subjectivity of myth and reality (Bunce, M., 1994, pp.51-56; Burchardt, 2017, p.70).

The issues raised by the beliefs and values identified in chapters four, five and six will be explored through the two questions below in chapter seven:

- Identify any contrasts in aesthetic valuation of the Lake District’s natural capital between the leadership of conservation organisations and the stakeholders of those organisations.
- Identify any shared values where organisations involved in the conservation of the Lake District’s natural capital, can work in partnership with stakeholders on its protection, conservation, and enhancement.

Chapter Seven

7. Results and Discussion: Comparison

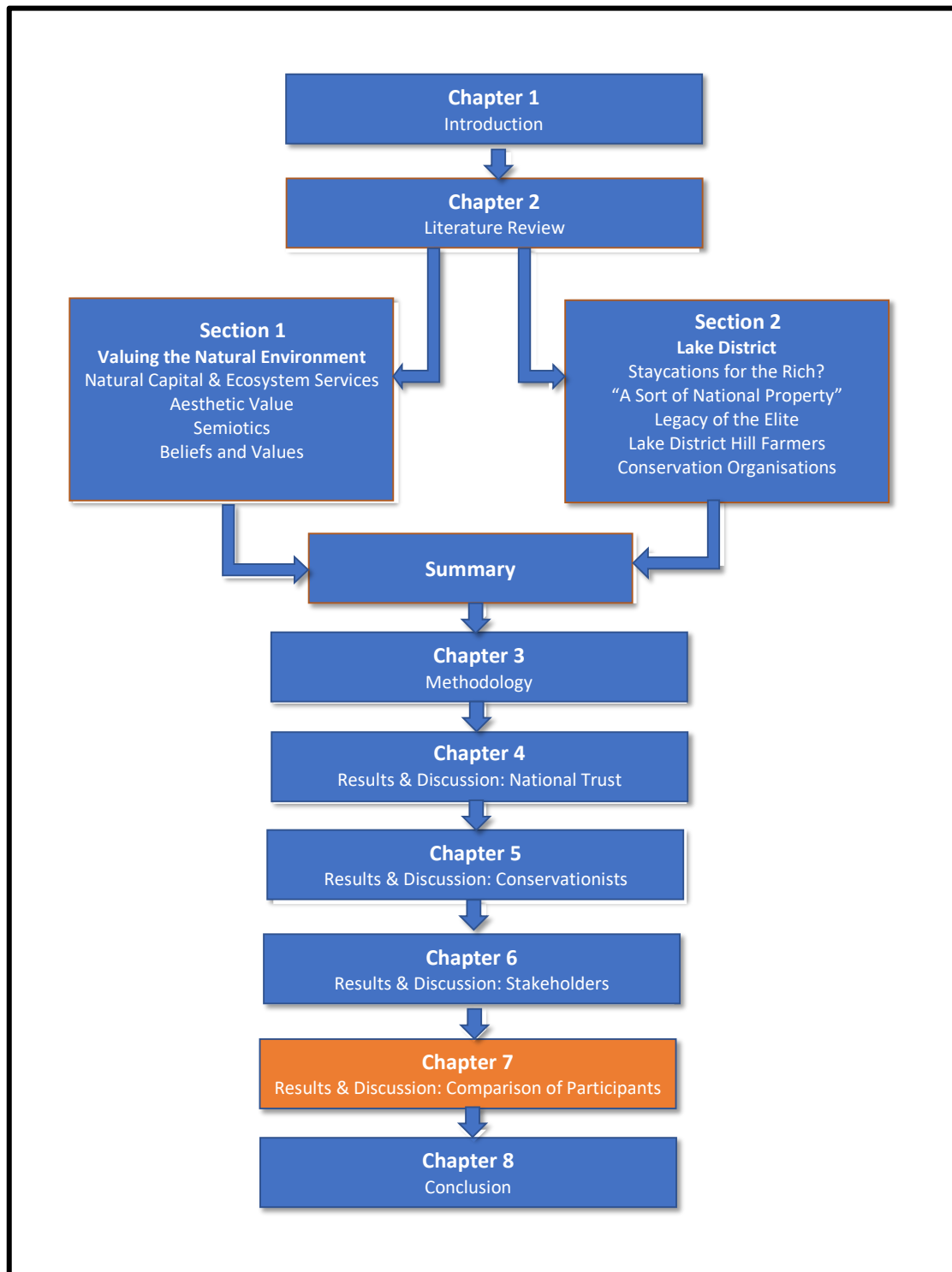


Figure 7.1 Chapter seven in relation to the other thesis chapters

7.1 Introduction

Chapter four focussed on the National Trust, the largest landowner in the Lake District owning around 21% of the National Park and with most direct influence on the conservation of natural capital (p.109). The results revealed the diverse influences of the aesthetic values of participants in leadership roles, but also how their subjective beliefs, and aesthetic values influenced their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital (Fig. 7.2). In chapter five the same approach was applied to similar participants from the RSPB, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission and United Utilities, the combined ownership of these organisations being around 16% of the National Park (pp.180-181). The National Trust, together with these other organisations own or lease over 37% of the National Park, having real-world, practical, everyday influence on the conservation of natural capital, such insights being of great importance in phenomenological analysis (pp.83-84) (The Lake District World Heritage Project Partnership, 2013, p.20; Lake District National Park Partnership, 2016, p.32). Finally in chapter six, this approach was applied to stakeholders in conservation, who influence natural capital either directly or indirectly (pp.234-235).

Analyses revealed four distinct aesthetic orientations termed New Statesmen, New Romantics, New Alpinists and New Naturalists (Fig. 7.2). Whether participants held anthropocentric or eco-centric values also influenced the conservation of natural capital. Building on previous chapters, chapter seven seeks deeper insight into the 'significant influence' of aesthetic values on the conservation of natural capital through answering the two questions below:

- Identify any contrasts in aesthetic valuation of the Lake District's natural capital between the leadership of conservation organisations and the stakeholders of those organisations.
- Identify any shared values where organisations involved in the conservation of the Lake District's natural capital, can work in partnership with stakeholders on its protection, conservation, and enhancement.

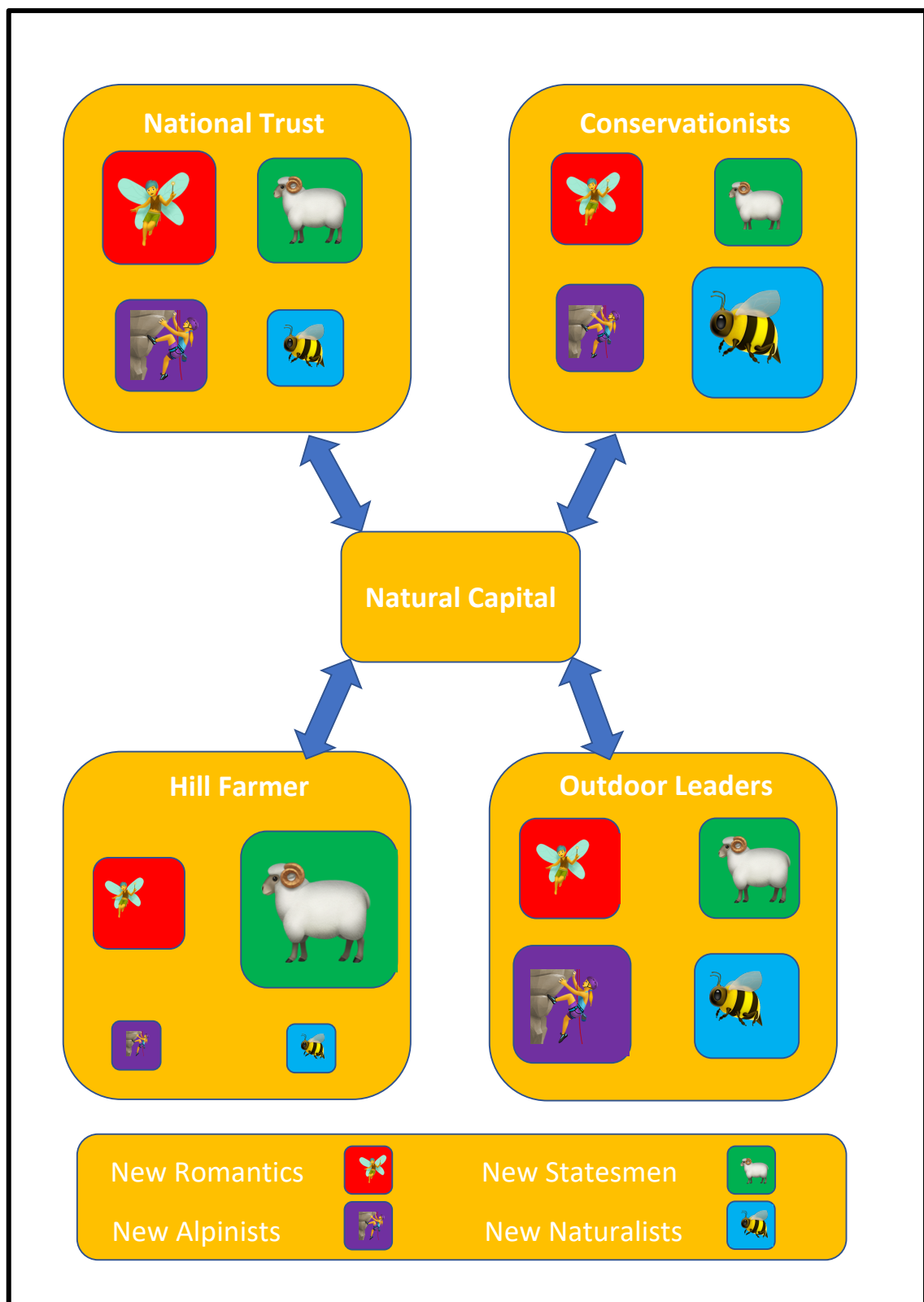


Figure 7.2 Values of participants in relation to Natural Capital revealed through coding qualitative data

7.2 Contrasts in Aesthetic Valuation of Natural Capital

7.2.1 Subjectivity

Subjectivity imbues perception of the Lake District, which has become a rural idyll, perceived differently by the individual leaders and decision makers of organisations and their stakeholders (Burchardt, 2002, p.186). Accordingly, the subjective core beliefs of the National Trust participants, conservationists and their stakeholders are influenced by multifarious factors. These core beliefs in turn influence the held aesthetic values that stem from them, how participants assign aesthetic value and develop relational values with natural capital. This is reflected in the four aesthetic orientations termed New Statesmen, New Romantics, New Alpinists and New Naturalists (Fig. 7.2).

7.2.2 Aesthetic Engagement

In mainland Europe, sensory and emotional perception are accepted values within cultural landscapes, complementing ecosystem services (pp.34-35), but particularly cultural services (López-Galán, 2018, p.123). Thus, most participants evidenced aesthetic engagement with the Lake District's cultural landscape (Berleant, 2013), which for National Trust participants might include scrambling over misty mountains, meditating in woodlands and wild swimming. Despite Barthes claiming that humanity was "doomed to analogy" (p.121), unlike the National Trust participants, only two others made analogies and in somewhat different contexts (p.184) and (p.191). However, the conservationists were focussed towards achieving aesthetic engagement at more intimate scales, valuing aesthetically smaller objects. But most of their stakeholders had more diverse approaches to aesthetic engagement.

Demonstrating how the aesthetic values of participants may in turn influence their preferences for management or conservation of the National Park's natural capital, most participants evidenced how valuing aesthetically natural capital became a set of relations (Toadvine, 2010, p.85; Berleant, 2013; Berleant, 2016). Consequently, the influence of natural capital and ecosystem services on the aesthetic values of the participants will now be revealed and compared in more detail.

7.2.3 Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

Influenced by their core beliefs and the held values, the National Trust participants and conservationists had multiple relationships with the Lake District, including eudaemonic values, which in turn influenced how they assigned aesthetic value to natural capital (Chan *et al.*, 2016; Pascual *et al.*, 2017; Small, Munday and Durance, 2017; Mattijssen *et al.*, 2020). These were highly committed professionals and occupied influential roles, but some appeared to confuse the term's ecosystem services and public goods (p.163), which could adversely influence conservation of natural capital (Bromley, 1992, p.3).

Nevertheless, most of the 22 participants evidenced how aesthetic benefits acted synergistically with other cultural services, which complements the overall constructionism philosophical perspective and phenomenological aesthetics ontology of this thesis (Dandy and Van Der Wal, 2011; Bingley, 2012; Plieninger *et al.*, 2013; Grizzetti *et al.*, 2016; Reynaud and Lanzanova, 2017). The next section will consider how contrasts in aesthetic valuation of the Lake District's natural capital between the leadership of conservation organisations and the stakeholders of those organisations is reflected in the four aesthetic orientations.

7.2.3.1 Aesthetic Orientations

The four aesthetic orientations indicate how the aesthetic values of participants reflect diverse influences, which in turn influence the conservation of natural capital (Fig. 7.2). For example, the aesthetic values of two National Trust participants in the New Romantics aesthetic orientation influenced their opposition to rewilding (pp.171-172).

7.2.3.1.1 New Statesmen

Table 7.1 Exclusion and presence of clear anthropogenic features in participant photographs

Participants	Total Number of Photographs	Photographs Excluding Anthropogenic Features		Photographs Including Anthropogenic Features	
Conservationists	45	40	88%	5	11%
National Trust	81	42	52%	39	48%
Stakeholders	72	36	50%	36	50%
TOTAL	198	118	60%	80	40%

Table 7.2 Exclusion and presence of clear anthropogenic features in participant photographs ranked A1

Participants	Total Number of Photographs	Photographs Excluding Anthropogenic Features		Photographs Including Anthropogenic Features	
Conservationists	5	5	100%	0	0%
National Trust	9	7	78%	2	22%
Stakeholders	8	5	62%	3	38%
TOTAL	22	17	77%	5	23%

Most participants avoided signs of modernity, but did not necessarily exclude anthropogenic features, valuing aesthetically a cultural landscape including drystone walls and farmhouses (Urry and Larsen, 1990, p.175)

“I love the Lakes in winter, err, I believe they are absolutely spectacular, err, but also the complete remote feel to the Lakes in, in a winter environment”.

(A1 Participant 16)

In contrast, the conservationists were clearly in the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation, valuing aesthetically natural capital without clear anthropogenic features (Table 7.1 and 7.2).

Influenced by the values of the Romantic Movement, the founders of the National Trust favoured the acquisition of natural capital of wild character (Lowe, 1995, p.95). However, in the mid-twentieth century there was a shift in policy, widely attributed to the influence of James Lees-Milne (1908-1997 CE) Secretary to the National Trust's Country Houses Committee and a parallel emphasis on increasing income through agricultural intensification. Disquiet arose over the failure of the National Trust to conserve natural capital, leading to a policy proposal that nature conservation be an essential element of aesthetic value and of concern across all countryside and coastal properties (Chatters and Minter, 1986; Phillips, 1995, pp.34-48; *The National Trust Centenary Countryside Conference Proceedings* 1995). But allocating peripheral unproductive areas for conservation was more compatible with the National Trust's anthropocentric culture, which together with its heritage portfolio has influenced a landscape conservation approach (Fig. 4.20). This may in turn have partly influenced how the core beliefs and aesthetic values of the National Trust participants were largely orientated towards a Lake District cultural landscape of agropastoral agriculture (Brown, T., 1984; MacCabe and Yanacek, 2018, p.368). Another influence may have been the knowledge and experience of National Trust participants, at least three having worked in agropastoral agriculture (Table 7.3 and 7.10).

However, as per section 4.3, the National Trust has changed strategic direction towards nature recovery (p.110) but at least at the time of the interviews there appeared to be no shared vision of this (National Trust, 2017, p.10; National Trust, 2022). Another influence on the conservation of natural capital is that despite valuing aesthetically the agropastoral cultural landscape similarly to the hill farmer, outdoor activity leaders and tourism expert, National Trust employees in leadership roles have encountered aggression from tenants and internal opposition from colleagues when seeking to progress nature recovery (Confidential, 2021; Schofield, 2022, pp.41-42).

These external and internal stakeholders perceived nature recovery as a negative influence on the viability of agropastoral agriculture, which was central to their core beliefs and held aesthetic values.

Table 7.3 Presence of livestock in photographs by participants

Participants	Total Number of Photographs	Photographs Including Livestock	
Stakeholders	72	10	14%
National Trust	81	5	6%
Conservationists	45	1	2%
TOTAL	198	16	8%

Whether of the New Statesmen aesthetic orientation or not, no National Trust participant made negative comments about sheep and some regarded traditional breeds as symbols (Fig. 4.10 and Table 7.3):

“But this picture to me captures that history of art and sheep that people have in the Lake District, that, that idea of err, using sheep to represent the Lake District, Herdwick sheep to represent, you know, the spirit of the Lake District”.
(C1, Participant 7)

In contrast to the National Trust participants, the conservationists situated in the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation, scarcely valued livestock aesthetically or otherwise (Table 7.3 and 7.10). However, if livestock could be utilised for conservation (p.187), then they might be assigned value (Fig. 5.12), but not necessarily aesthetic value:

“It's just that sense of freewill, this is happening without much of our intervention. We can encourage more woodland regeneration through creating more disturbance opportunities, which is why we have put cattle into Ennerdale”. (B2, Participant 22)

The hill farmer was clearly in the New Statesmen aesthetic orientation and perceived livestock as symbols of “traditional hill farming”, playing an important role in the maintenance of the agropastoral cultural landscape (Fig. 6.2). However, like the National Trust participants, to most other stakeholders livestock were also symbols of traditional hill farming (Table 7.3 and 7.10). They played a key role in maintaining the agropastoral cultural landscape and were sometimes valued for their aesthetics (Fig. 6.6).

As per section 5.6.2 in contrast to the National Trust participants, the conservationists perceived much of the agropastoral cultural landscape as a “rural anti-idyll” of damaged natural capital (Yarwood, 2005). These participants assigned aesthetic value to a Lake District of three-dimensional vegetation of structural complexity and detail, dynamic systems and unimpeded natural processes (Fig 5.12 and Fig. 5.14). However, regardless of their aesthetic orientations, the National Trust participants and conservationists shared a desire for the sustainable management of mountains, moorlands and enclosed farmland associated with agropastoral agriculture.

There were notable contrasts in how the hill farmer assigned aesthetic value to mountains and moorlands, in comparison with the National Trust participants, but particularly the conservationists. The hill farmer valued aesthetically short grazed vegetation, claiming that reduced grazing influenced the growth of structurally complex vegetation which made shepherding physically difficult. This may mean that they had conflated the practicalities of shepherding, influenced by reduced grazing, with the assignment of aesthetic value. But the SWOT analysis also revealed economic concerns (p.277), linked to the influence of reduced grazing on hefting:

“Well, that’s something that I worry might get lost, walking the sheep down from the gather. The sheep numbers are at incredible risk. Y’ know, if Natural England get their way, they want to cut them even more”. (D2, Participant 14)

Regardless of aesthetic orientation, most participants valued aesthetically trees and woodlands. As per section 4.5.4.2, most National Trust participants wanted more trees and woodlands in the cultural landscape and frequently targeted resources towards conservation of individual trees, particularly ash pollards. In contrast the conservationists focussed on extensive woodland creation, aligned with the strategic priorities of their employers. While it was unclear how much the hill farmer valued aesthetically trees and woodlands, they planted trees and actively maintained them.

Except for the conservationists, all in the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation, traditional industries contributed to how several participants valued aesthetically natural capital. This appeared to have no negative influence on how the outdoor activity leaders and tourism expert valued aesthetically detail in the cultural landscape.

As per section 4.5.4.4, the National Trust participants assigned aesthetic value to the clear anthropogenic features of enclosed farmland, further illustrating the focus of the organisation on landscape conservation (Fig. 4.27). In contrast, most of the conservationists did not value aesthetically enclosed farmland (Table 7.1 and 7.2), and unlike the National Trust participants some failed to comprehend the multifunctionality dry stone walls (p.175):

“There are times when we find tension between the work we do in terms of rewilding and people you want us to repair drystone walls, just for the purpose of drystone walls (Fig. 5.21). But for me, if they are not serving a purpose, then why would we want to repair them? They are no different from a post and wire fence...”. (E1, Participant 22)

The notable exception to the above was that the conservationists and hill farmer assigned aesthetic value to traditional hay meadows (Fig. 5.11), eudaemonic and relational values being associated with their creation and management. The New Naturalists aesthetic orientation of the conservationists clearly influenced the conservation of hay meadows. In contrast, the hill farmer valued the involvement of family and friends in this activity:

“I do a hell of a lot of them bales, we do around six thousand a year and it’s so time consuming and hard work, and yet it’s the most fun and fetches people together (Fig. 6.15)”. (B1, Participant 14)

Perhaps influenced by time of year of the interviews, the National Trust participants and outdoor activity leaders did not refer to hay meadows.

7.2.3.1.2 New Romantics

Table 7.4 Objects identified as icons or symbols by the participants

Participants	Total Number of Photographs	Icons		Symbols	
National Trust	81	58	72%	23	28%
Stakeholders	72	33	46%	39	54%
Conservationists	45	14	31%	31	69%
TOTAL	198	105	53%	93	47%

Table 7.5 Objects identified as icons or symbols ranked A1 by the participants

Participants	Total Number of Photographs	Icons		Symbols	
Stakeholders	8	8	100%	0	0%
Conservationists	5	5	100%	0	0%
National Trust	9	7	78%	2	22%
TOTAL	22	20	91%	2	9%

The National Trust provided most iconic images of Lake District natural capital, notable in the New Romantics aesthetic orientation, reflecting the influence of history, fine art and landscape conservation (Table 7.4 and Table 7.10). Consequently, those of the New Romantics aesthetic orientation celebrated the influence of Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665 CE) and Salvator Rosa (1615-1673 CE) on how the Lake District cultural

landscape was valued aesthetically. But, for their photograph ranked A1, most participants provided iconic images of natural capital in a cultural landscape of mountainous or wild character (Table 7.5), probably influenced by how the Lake District is traditionally promoted (Urry and Larsen, 1990, p.174; Usherwood, 2003; Edmonds, 2006; Scott, A., 2010; Walton, 2016, p.44). In contrast, the conservationists and others in the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation provided more symbolic images (Table 7.4 and 7.10). Wildlife often symbolised natural capital that was managed in ways that these participants valued aesthetically but wildlife might also have aesthetic value assigned directly to it. However, the most diverse images were provided by the outdoor activity leaders, often symbolising natural capital that they valued aesthetically (Table 7.4).

Table 7.6 Presence of people in photographs by participants

Participants	Total Number of Photographs	Photographs Including People	
Stakeholders	72	22	31%
National Trust	81	8	10%
Conservationists	45	2	4%
TOTAL	198	32	16%

Table 7.7 Presence of people in photographs ranked A1 by participants

Participants	Total Number of Photographs	Photographs Including People	
Stakeholders	8	4	50%
National Trust	9	2	22%
Conservationists	5	0	0%
TOTAL	22	6	27%

There were few images of people in the photographs provided by the National Trust participants and conservationists (Table 7.6 and 7.7), mirrored by the New Romantics and New Naturalists aesthetic orientations (Table 7.10). Consequently, images of people were mostly lone figures in a cultural landscape without visually clear anthropogenic influences (Fig. 7.2 and 7.3), a theme in landscape art said to symbolise human dominion (Friedrich,1817; Millais,1854; Urry and Larsen, 1990, p.175; Bordo, 1994, pp.291-315; Schama, 1995, pp.122-124).



Figure 7.3 Lone Figure, Surprise View, Derwentwater (E1, Participant 7)

Lone figures in iconic pictures of the Lake District are claimed to have influenced how similar cultural landscapes are valued aesthetically, while human presence may have been anathema to some conservationists (Franklin, 2006; Whyte, 2007a, p.247; Porter, 2020). In contrast to most of the National Trust participants and conservationists (Fig. 6.3, 6.11 and 6.13), 31% of the photographs provided by the stakeholders and 50% of those ranked A1 included images of people, which was mirrored by 30% of the photographs provided by participants of the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation (Table 7.3, 7.4 and 7.10). The presence of other people appeared important for most stakeholders and participants of the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation.



Figure 7.4 Lone Figure, Haweswater (E1, Participant 12)

Table 7.8 Presence of water in photographs by participants

Participants	Total Number of Photographs	Photographs Including Water		References to Water in Associated Transcript	
National Trust	81	40	49%	35	43%
Stakeholders	72	31	43%	25	35%
Conservationists	45	17	37%	15	33%
TOTAL	198	88	44%	75	38%

Evidence indicates that people place high aesthetic value on water perceived to be clean, particularly when combined with vegetated natural capital, accordingly most of the participants in the four aesthetic orientations valued aesthetically water features (Table 7.8 and 7.10). However, cultural and social influences likely affect how aesthetic value is attributed to the composition of water and vegetation, which in turn may influence conservation of streams, lakes, tarns, wetlands, and bogs (Howley, 2011b; Kellert, 2012, pp.192-194). Thus, the National Trust participants valued aesthetically diverse water features, often without clear anthropogenic influences (Table 7.1). But it was particularly notable in how participants of the New Romantics aesthetic orientation were influenced by historical associations with the Picturesque and Romantic Movements in how they assigned aesthetic value to iconic locations e.g., Tarn Hows (Fig.4.3) and Grasmere Tarn (Fig. 4.15):

“For me Tarn Hows is, is perhaps the most interesting example of, of a landscape entirely imposed upon its setting by the hand of man”.

(C1, Participant 8)

Iconic images of Tarn Hows distributed via mass-media attracted car-borne visitors to this site during the 1960s. It became symbolic of what Julian Huxley (1887-1975 CE) and other adherents to Malthusian eugenics (p.26), believed would be a countryside overrun by people little better than Morlocks (Wells, 1895; Huxley, 1964; Huxley, 1993; Deese, 2011; Weindling, 2012). Tarn Hows was said to be becoming a receptacle for what Michael Dower (1933-2022 CE) termed the “fourth wave”, car-borne visitors making a beeline for a ‘honeypot’ which had exceeded its perceptual, physical and

ecological carrying capacity (Dower, 1965). As per section 2.3.2, car-borne visitors did not have the good taste to value Tarn Hows aesthetically, so partly in response to concerns over visitor pressure at such sites, the Countryside Commission was established in 1968. The Countryside Commission grant aided the creation of accessible urban fringe country parks, closer to where most people lived (Christian, 1966; UK Government, 1968; Patmore, 1970; Green, 1981, pp.183-187; Helsinger, 1994, p.107; Morgan, 2019, pp.66-67). However, the Countryside Commission also provided the National Trust and Lake District National Park Special Planning Board with 75% grant aid towards an innovative project to conserve Tarn Hows, which is a significant influence of the landscape conservation approach at this site (Brotherton, 1977). While Tarn Hows remains a popular visitor destination and is embedded in collective consciousness, composition of water features was why most participants valued aesthetically iconic locations.

Perhaps not so consciously influenced by the Romantic Movement, the conservationists and other participants of the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation valued aesthetically water features, but often exhibiting wild qualities, including active geomorphological processes (Table 7.8 and 7.10).

The negative influences associated with the legacy of the picturesque movement (p.38) may have contributed to why only participant 11 of the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation said that they valued aesthetically bogs and wetlands (p.198). Similarly, the only participant to say that they valued aesthetically the coast and estuaries was of the New Alpinist aesthetic orientation (p.283). The Lake District coast is often closely associated with wetlands, so the above may indicate negative influences on the conservation of multifunctional natural capital delivering ecosystem services (Lake District National Park Authority, 2022).

Unlike other participants, but similar to the shepherds unable to comprehend that death and transience lie below the surface of Arcadia, most conservationists appeared not to value aesthetically the palimpsestic richness of the cultural landscape

(Poussin, 1638; Bordo, 1994, pp.302-303; Schama, 1995, pp.518-519; Thompson, I., 2010, pp.24-26; Neilson, 2019). They apparently failed to appreciate or rejected arguments that a cultural landscape can be a ruin of great heritage and conservation interest, showing evolution of the landscape from prehistoric times to the present day (López-Galán, 2018, p.125). But the concept of an anthropocentric cultural landscape has also been criticised as reinforcing the notion of something that is ubiquitous, people as separate from the natural environment and unsustainable exploitation of natural capital (Phillips, 1998; Denyer, 2013, p.26).

As intimated above, the conservationists may have conflated cultural landscapes with the damaging influence of intensive twentieth century agropastoral agriculture on biodiversity (Bevan, 2008, p.275). Such perceptions may have been further influenced by the alleged domination of the LDNPA and LDNPP by agropastoral agriculture (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2021b, p.15). As per section 1.2.4, the *“Conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage”* may be the first purpose of UK National Parks, but this is only being partly achieved in the Lake District (Brotherton, 1982; IUCN National Committee UK Protected Areas Working Group, 2023, p.59; Campaign for National Parks, 2024). Likewise, although the Sandford Principle is enshrined in law, the focus on seeking to foster social and economic wellbeing may mean that it is not always being adhered to in the Lake District (UK Government, 1995). Across continental Europe cultural landscapes have constantly adapted to the needs of society, whereas the Lake District risks becoming a Romantic Movement themed monument to “late twentieth century” agropastoral agriculture.

Whether conscious of it or not, for these participants the legacies of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements inspire their Lake District rural idyll (Urry and Larsen, 1990, p.174). As per section 2.3.5, a Thoreau inspired wilderness aesthetic, linked to the influence of Wordsworth on the Romantic Movement in North America, still influences not only how the Lake District is valued aesthetically, but also the conservation of

natural capital (Emerson, R., 1836; Thoreau, 1854; Nash, 1967, pp.47-54; Sheail, 1976, pp.71-72; Green, 1981, pp.41-46; Bunce, M., 1994, pp.26-28; Cronon, 1996).

7.2.3.1.3 New Alpinists

All participants of the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation, enthused about being active in the Lake District (Table 7.10). The outdoor activity leaders and tourism expert had experience of encouraging people to develop relational values through engagement with the Lake District cultural landscape, which included promotional material featuring images of people influencing natural capital through participation in outdoor activities (Walton, 2016, p.44; Mattijssen *et al.*, 2020; Mosaic Outdoors, 2022; Ramblers, 2023; Cumbria Tourism, 2023).

Like the National Trust participants and conservationists, the outdoor activity leaders valued aesthetically trees and woodlands, two having purchased Lake District woodlands. Situated in the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation, they were influencing natural capital by actively managing these woodlands for conservation:

“When the colours are so striking and particularly how the different trees colour in different stages and go different colours and so-on”. (B2, Participant 15)

For the outdoor activity leaders and tourism expert wildlife and domestic livestock might be valued aesthetically but were also symbols of the cultural landscape and their role in influencing this was explained. However, it was notable that most of the outdoor activity leaders evidenced little awareness of how rewilding, the biodiversity crisis and climate change might influence conservation of natural capital.

As per section 7.2.3.1.3, the outdoor activity leaders and tourism expert were of the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation and the hill farmer of the New Statesmen (Fig. 7.2). The National Trust participants appeared to have more in common with the aesthetic values of these stakeholders, than their fellow conservationists. The aesthetic values of the National Trust participants often influenced a landscape conservation approach to the conservation of natural capital.

7.2.3.1.4 New Naturalists

Table 7.9 Presence of wildlife in photographs by participants

Participants	Total Number of Photographs	Photographs Including Wildlife	
Conservationists	45	24	53%
Stakeholders	72	12	17%
National Trust	81	7	9%
TOTAL	198	43	22%

Situated largely in the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation (Fig. 7.2), in contrast to the National Trust participants, a sense of wildness may have been a core belief for the conservationists, shaping the held values that stem from this belief and influencing aesthetic value assigned to natural capital (Brown, T., 1984). Their vocabulary reflected a wilderness ethic and was possibly influenced by nature writers including Mabey and Macfarlane (pp.226-227) (Nash, 1967, p.2). Some conservationists held spiritual values, arguing that natural capital should be protected through intrinsic value, believing that they were on the cutting-edge of conservation and wanting a shift from anthropocentric to eco-centric ethics (Guha, 1989; Luque-Lora *et al.*, 2022). However, there appeared to be little awareness of the historic difficulties faced by those attempting to protect natural capital based on intrinsic value (pp.51-52). Nevertheless, most realistically understood that radical landscape wide enhancement of biodiversity through nature recovery would be long term (Sandbrook *et al.*, 2019).

The conservationists held eco-centric values, in contrast to the anthropocentric values of the National Trust participants, reflecting how the leadership of nature conservation organisations is often orientated towards science-led eco-centric values (Luque-Lora *et al.*, 2022). As per section 2.3.5, these contrasting aesthetic values may have been influenced by the dualism in conservation, which was in turn influencing different approaches to the conservation of Lake District natural capital (Green, 1981, pp.41-46; Linnell *et al.*, 2015; Reynolds, 2016a, pp.96-98; Sandbrook *et al.*, 2019).

To the conservationists, the diverse wildlife often in a complex tangle of three-dimensional vegetation were symbols of natural capital associated with visually unclear anthropogenic influences (Table 7.1, 7.9 and 7.10):

“These flowers are where grazing has been removed – mossy saxifrage and wild thyme. They’re pretty in the landscape and I would like more”.

(D2, Participant 10)

“C2 is an adder hiding in the grass (Fig. 7.5), hiding amongst a whole lot of Molinia and it’s just sort of adders are increasingly threatened and again it is perhaps something about, again I suppose, the wildlife in the landscape, rather than just the landscape itself”. (C2, Participant 11)

Unlike the conservationists, only one National Trust participant, situated in the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation, evidenced valuing aesthetically complex structures in the landscape at a small and focussed scale e.g., mosses and lichens (Table 7.9):

“The actual moss itself is very beautiful, and it obviously changes colour when it’s wet or dry, like many mosses do...”. (D1, Participant 6)

Table 7.10 Comparison of photographs by participants and aesthetic orientations

	People	Livestock	Wildlife	Water	Icons	Symbols
National Trust	10%	6%	9%	49%	72%	28%
Conservationists	4%	2%	53%	37%	31%	69%
Stakeholders	31%	14%	17%	43%	46%	54%
New Romantics	6%	6%	0%	56%	78%	22%
New Statesmen	17%	25%	3%	47%	67%	33%
New Naturalists	3%	2%	48%	41%	38%	62%
New Alpinists	30%	6%	15%	43%	51%	49%

The aesthetic values of the conservationists influenced their nature conservation approach to the conservation of natural capital, which might include what they termed “rewilding”. However, rewilding was in direct contrast to the beliefs and values of participants from the New Romantics aesthetic orientation, although this appeared to

be influenced by an extreme perception of rewilding. *Wild Ennerdale* and other approaches to rewilding in the UK and mainland Europe are interventionist and not fully nature-led processes. Similar to Knepp Castle Estate in West Sussex, *Wild Ennerdale* utilises domestic livestock and does not reinstate all trophic levels (Soulé and Noss, 1998; Price, C., 2006; Rackham, 2006, pp.92-100; Convery and Dutson, 2008; Tree, 2018; Hawkins *et al.*, 2022; Rewilding Thematic Group, 2022; Massenberg, Schiller and Schröter-Schlaack, 2023; Allen, 2023). Participant 3 from the National Trust perceived the values of those promoting rewilding as confused and interventionist, while failing to understand that nature conservation could be part of the cultural landscape:

“This idea of nature conservation, nature being some kind of, err, separate chamber of nature out there, that we can go and inhabit. And that’s kind of a fantasy... that’s not going to grasp the value of the place”. (Participant 3)

Mónica Fernández-Aceytuno argues that values surrounding such relationships are particularly complex and claims that any relationships with wildlife and wild places are interventionist and risk the natural world becoming an artifice (Castro, 2015, p.132; Fernández-Aceytuno, 2018, p.14).

Contemporary mountains and moorlands are mere shadowlands of what previously existed (Tanulku, 2019), for historically the Lake District was a unique and biodiverse culturally wild landscape of agropastoral agriculture and industries. Yet, despite historic evidence of the above there is a significant contrast in beliefs and aesthetic values concerning rewilding between participants of the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation and some participants of the other three aesthetic orientations. The concept of wildness is subjective, and this extreme perception of rewilding is having a negative influence on the conservation of natural capital. The associated language can also create barriers against the involvement of some fellow conservationists and other stakeholders, including the desire to badge any conservation initiative as rewilding. Participants of the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation may find that such actions diminish the concept of rewilding and may deter stakeholder engagement (Clope,

1993, pp.53-67; Stotten, 2016). But this should not require the Orwellian expunging of the word 'rewilding' from the LNRS (Westmorland and Furness Council, 2025), for a wilder Lake District would be closer to the original spirit of the Romantic Movement and compatible with the cultural landscape. But the opposition of some participants may also be influenced by claims that nobody with an interest in cultural landscapes is invited to *Wild Ennerdale* meetings. Professional and social networks are sometimes misused in this way to discriminate by bypassing people with ideas thought incompatible (Bohigas, 2004; Esteban, 2014; Rubio, 2022, pp.168-169). There is clearly a need for meaningful engagement with those colleagues and stakeholders who may be perceived to be in opposition.

As per section 2.2.4.2, it is unlikely that held values could be changed in the medium term, for changing values normally requires significant intervention, so there is a need to find shared values by appreciating held, eudaemonic and relational values. Conservationists demonstrated eudaemonic values through working with like-minded colleagues, but frequent association with people of the same mindsets can lead to groupthink (Turner, M. and Pratkanis, 1998). Benefit can be gained from the company of colleagues and stakeholders who perceive the world somewhat differently and it was commendable that some conservationists also worked with community groups and volunteers. Greater understanding of Lake District culture and the concept of cultural landscapes by conservationists, should positively influence working relationships between participants from all four aesthetic orientations (pp.53-54). Culture is a key influence on why the Lake District is internationally significant and there will be shared values where common ground can be found (Shortland, 2021, p.165). For example, a National Trust participant opposed to rewilding, was the one who expressed clearest concern about the impact of overgrazing by sheep on biodiversity and ecosystem services.



Figure 7.5 Adder *Vipera berus* in tangled purple moor grass *Molinia caerulea*

Like the conservationists, most of the outdoor activity leaders were interested in wildlife (Table 7.9), which might be valued aesthetically, but also as symbols of the cultural landscape (Table 7.2). Although the hill farmer and the tourism expert did not provide photographs of wildlife (Table 7.9), the latter valued wildlife aesthetically:

“Yeah, we’ve got mammals, birds, insects; that kind of thing, and since I had that picture of a lizard, a reptile, I thought I would put that in. Because for me,

the natural environment, the wildlife in it is really important”.

(E1, Participant 18)

“I think it’s such a beautiful walk around the lake (Brothers Water) and there’s so much in terms of nature and wildlife that you can see”. (E1, Participant 20)

“It’s a beautiful sort of little place (Tarn Hows) and again the wildlife and trees”.
(B2, Participant 20)

“The flora and the fauna that we actually have. The environment that we have is very, very special...”. (B1, Participant 21)

Reflecting the priorities of their employers, most conservationists desired extensive woodland creation, their aesthetic values influencing conservation of this natural capital, while those involved in *Wild Ennerdale* wanted to increase woodland cover in the valley from 18%, to approximately 40%. They were also concerned that overgrazing of woodland reduced its aesthetic value, and consequently sought to exclude grazing sheep from woodland:

“I find the mountain landscape in the Lakes more attractive when viewed either through trees, or with scrub and trees as part of the picture. We’re so denuded of that kind of vegetation up here...”. (B2, Participant 12)

“This landscape aesthetic which says this open un-treed landscape is to be valued in its own right. And I think we have to challenge that...”.

(Participant 13)

As previously noted only participant 11 said that they valued aesthetically wetlands (p.129), but they also valued aesthetically bogs and peatlands (Fig. 5.15). These are all multifunctional natural capital, creating a matter of conservation concern (p.222). This participant felt that negative history and language contributed to how little aesthetic value was assigned to sites e.g., Foulshaw Moss, where water was historically perceived as unclean and associated with malaria (p.31):

“The words that surround things to do with bogs, mires, swamps; none of them have positive associations.... So, getting some positive feedback about something like that was really helpful”. (A1, Participant 11)

7.2.4 Summary

There were contrasts in aesthetic valuation of Lake District natural capital between the National Trust participants, the conservationists and the stakeholders of their organisations. However, there were also contrasts in how aesthetic value was assigned to natural capital between participants from the anthropocentric National Trust, and conservationists from more eco-centric organisations, or those working within organisations with primary purposes other than conservation (Fig. 7.2). These participants held influential leadership and decision-making roles and consequently could influence the conservation of natural capital across more than one third of the National Park.

The aesthetic values of stakeholders were generally closer to those of the National Trust participants than the conservationists. But the outdoor activity leaders valued aesthetically more diverse forms of natural capital than either the National Trust participants or the conservationists (Fig.7.5).

7.3 Potential Partnerships

Identify any shared values where organisations involved in the conservation of the Lake District's natural capital, can work in partnership with stakeholders on its protection, conservation, and enhancement.

7.3.1 Shared Values

Some natural capital e.g., water was valued aesthetically by participants of all four aesthetic orientations and might be associated with eudaemonic and relational values which are important in the delivery of cultural services (Fig. 7.6). But physical management could influence the assignment of aesthetic value, so as natural capital delivers important ecosystem services, it is likely that there could be stronger influence of conservation where shared or complementary values can be identified. However, the SWOT analysis revealed how reduced external grant aid means that there are perceived to be fewer benefits from engaging in partnerships with diverse colleagues over shared values, which adversely influences conservation of natural capital.

Shared values and actions have been aligned with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Cumbria, which at the time of writing was in draft format. The Cumbria LNRS includes the Lake District and is one of 48 strategy areas in England, the aim being that these will create a nationwide nature recovery network. The Cumbria LNRS sets out priorities for nature recovery and identifies where actions will have the most significant positive impact.

7.3.2 Water

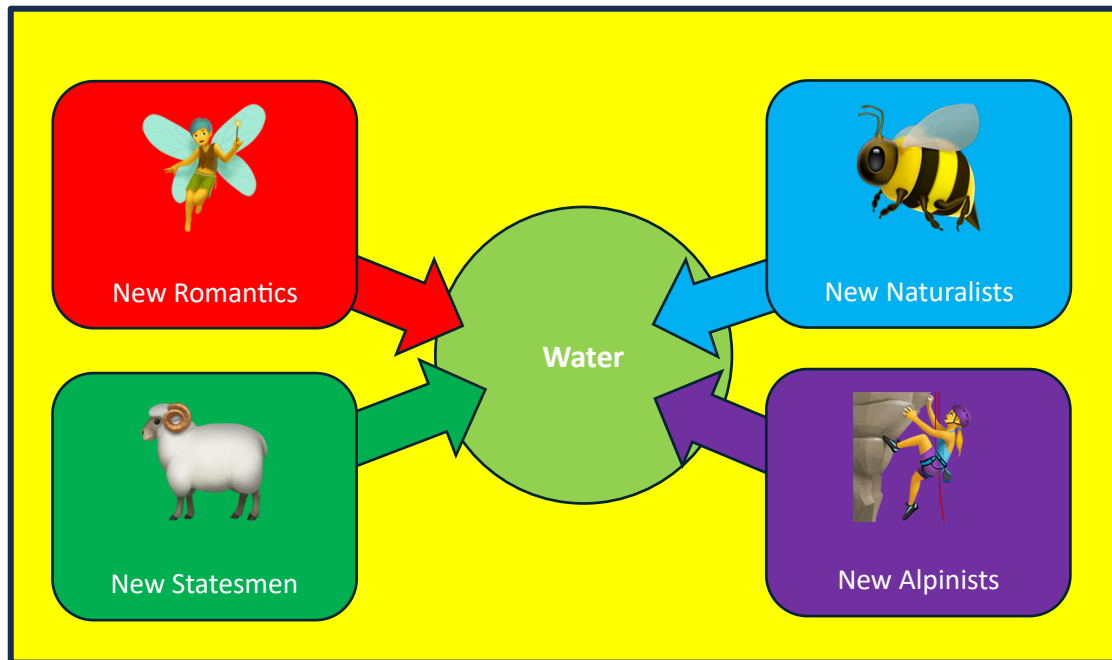


Figure 7.6 Shared values of participants associated with water

Participants from all four aesthetic orientations clearly valued aesthetically water perceived to be clean (Table 7.10), evidencing held, eudaemonic and relational values (Fig. 7.6). Consequently, there are opportunities for organisations involved in the conservation of the Lake District's natural capital to work with stakeholders on the conservation of water features and associated natural capital.

Aesthetic value was assigned to a synergistic combination of water and vegetation and in addition to possible biological affective responses, there is the influence of culture and socialisation (Howley, 2011b). Post Second World War drainage linked to agricultural intensification has damaged aesthetic value and contributed to the flooding of communities. Ironically, in the context of the World Heritage Site, some of the modified streams and rivers which have contributed to damaging drainage are perceived as cultural artefacts that should be conserved (Rebanks, 2020, pp.271-273; Schofield, 2022, pp.219-232; Schofield, 2025). Traditional local knowledge was historically valued and supported sustainable water management in the Lake District and in many other cultural landscapes. There is now potential for evidence-based

reinstatement of such sustainable management (Pérez-Pérez, 2018, pp.144-157; Monbiot, 2022, pp.47-50).

However, little aesthetic value appeared assigned to coastline, estuaries, wetlands and bogs. But such multifunctional natural capital provides defence against the impact of climate change, including extensive flooding and consequently there are shared values in preventing damage to communities and loss of livestock.

7.3.3 Trees, Woodland, and Forestry Plantations

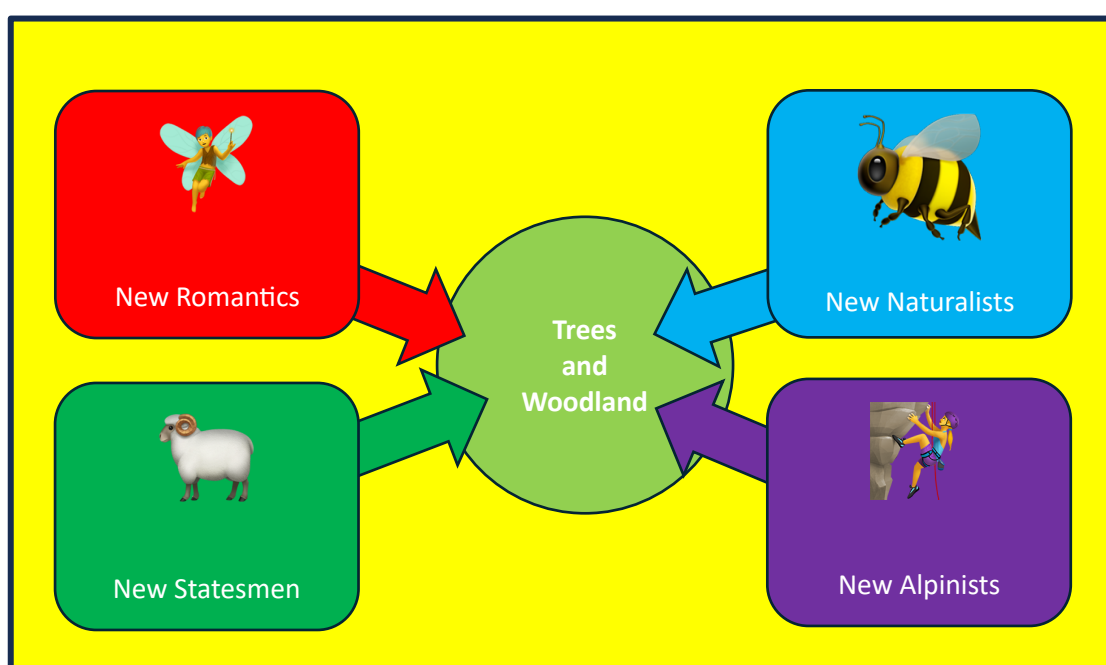


Figure 7.7 Shared values of participants associated with trees and woodlands

Participants from all four aesthetic orientations but particularly those of the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation valued aesthetically trees and woodlands, all participants seeming to want more trees in the cultural landscape (Fig. 7.7). Nevertheless, despite having similar aesthetic values regarding trees and woodland, there appeared to be little cooperation between the anthropocentric National Trust participants and the eco-centric conservationists. Therefore, regardless of outperforming other UK National Parks in recent years, woodland creation remains low, but shared values could form the foundations of a vision for the expansion of native woodland (Campaign for National Parks, 2024, pp.52-53).

7.3.4 Mountains and Moorlands

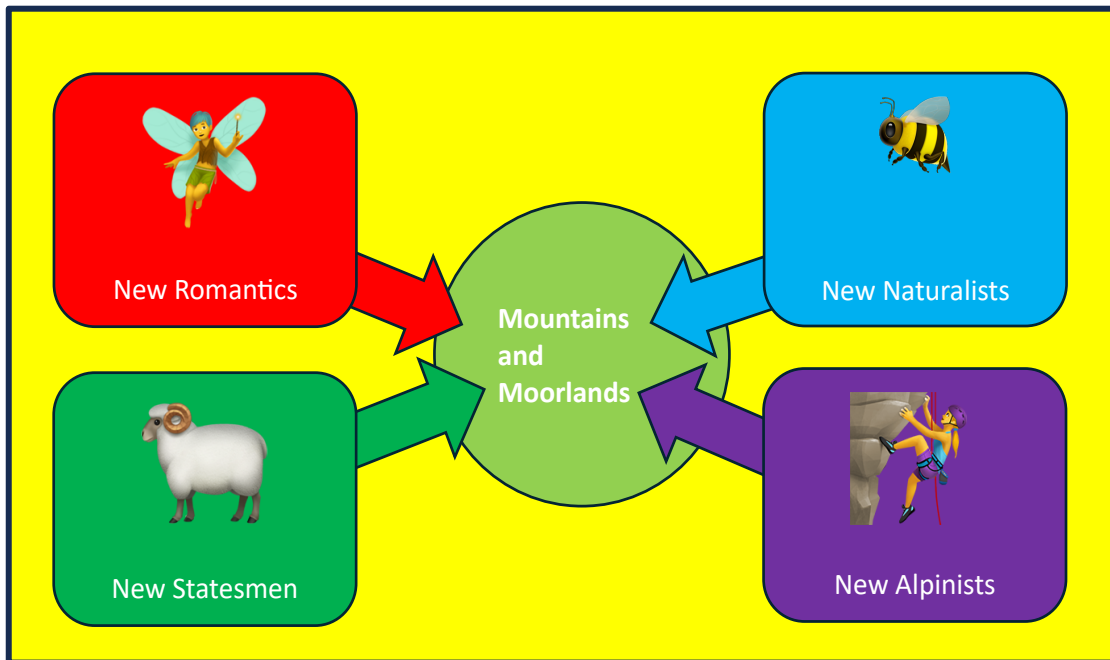


Figure 7.8 Shared values of participants associated with mountains and moorlands

Sheep influence the conservation of natural capital and the delivery of ecosystem services by mountains and moorlands which cover around 46% of the Lake District (p.133), but sheep are increasingly uneconomic livestock (p.275). Despite the deep cultural associations, core beliefs and values associated with agropastoral agriculture, sometimes farmers must subsidise their own sheep farming (p.254). In contrast to most participants from the New Statesmen, New Romantics and New Alpinists aesthetic orientations, most from the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation did not value aesthetically intensively grazed areas of mountains and moorlands (Fig. 7.8).

Covering around half the Lake District (p.133), this extensive multifunctional natural capital should be delivering a wealth of benefits (Lake District National Park Partnership, 2013, p.50). However, it will be recalled that in 2017 when the Lake District was designated a World Heritage Site, only 22% of SSSIs were in favourable condition (pp.9-10), compared with an average of 38% outside the National Park. The summary statistics relating to the condition of SSSIs are greatly influenced by the atrocious condition of habitats associated with mountains and moorlands. Evidence indicates that negligible improvement of these statistics since 2017 is largely

influenced by ongoing poor management and overgrazing of mountains and moorlands (Howie and Hall, 2018, p.19; Anonymous, 2023; Campaign for National Parks, 2024, pp.68-70).

As per section 5.9.1.5.1, the damage inflicted on SSSIs has influenced the values of participants of the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation but even the National Trust participants in the New Statesmen aesthetic orientation. The shared values of these participants included a desire to protect the multifunctionality of the open commons by stopping overgrazing by sheep (Fig. 7.8). Many hill farmers perceive such desires as unjust criticism, which negatively influences cooperation on their part, as they claim that since the Second World War they have rightly responded to Government policy. However, as discussed, it is not simply conservationists alleging overgrazing that may deter the cooperation of hill farmers, but their core beliefs and the held values that stem from these beliefs may be reinforced by pressure from colleagues to comply with perceived best practice in agropastoral agriculture (p.285). As per section 2.2.4.2, values regarding such matters are quite stable, and conservationists are more likely to positively influence hill farmers by appreciating their held, eudaemonic and relational values and using this knowledge to influence them through shared values regarding areas of concern, and general agreement (Fig. 7.8). For example (p.205), conservationists have demonstrated through *Wild Ennerdale* how stakeholders can be actively engaged by working with their values (Schofield, 2022, p.188). Influential people from agropastoral agriculture do share values over the need for a sustainable future for this land use and to address the challenges of the global climate change emergency and the biodiversity crisis. In addition, agreement through shared values may become easier with a new generation of innovative hill farmers, together with the real-world influence of agricultural economics (Lawton *et al.*, 2010; Reynolds, 2016a, p.115; Holmes, G., Sandbrook and Fisher, 2017).

It has been emphasised that of the 22 participants, only participant 11 of the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation said that they valued aesthetically upland bogs and peatlands. These habitats are multifunctional natural capital delivering ecosystem

services which are widely valued, including carbon storage and flood prevention, yet like wetlands their aesthetic value has been tempered by historic negativity.

7.3.5 Farmland

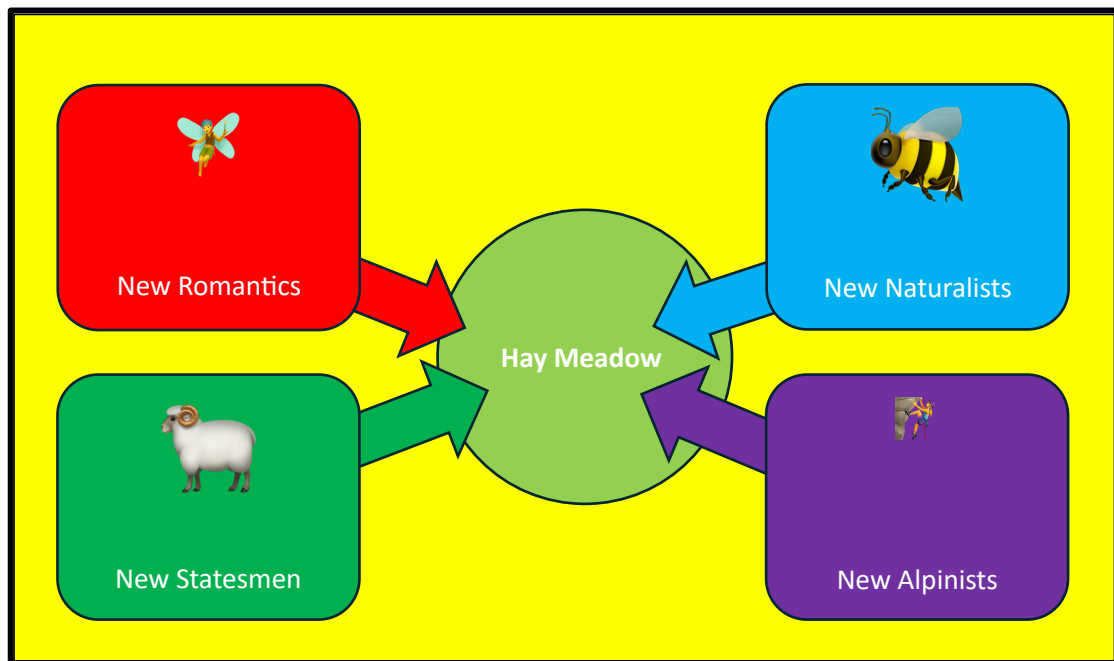


Figure 7.9 Shared values of participants associated with hay meadows

Participants from the New Romantics and New Statesmen aesthetic orientations highlighted how natural capital in the form of modified habitats is a product of traditional farming methods, delivering multiple benefits including carbon storage in the soil, biodiversity and pollination (Phillips, 1998). Such farmland of mainly enclosed character covers around 34% of the Lake District (p.134) and together with mountains and moorlands means that agropastoral agriculture dominates up to 80% of the National Park.

Hay meadows are integral to this farmland and participants of the New Naturalists and New Statesmen aesthetic orientations assigned aesthetic value to hay meadows, which aligns with research that indicates how people value aesthetically habitats with abundant flowers and a diversity of colour (Graves, Pearson and Turner, 2017; Wang *et al.*, 2019; Willis, K., 2024, p.80). However, social and cultural influences may be overlooked, such as the eudaemonic and relational values of the conservationists and

hill farmer regarding creation and management (Fig. 6.5 and 7.9). Likewise, compared with similar research in the UK, wildflower meadows in Beijing Parks were not valued very highly aesthetically (Jiang and Yuan, 2017; Willis, K., 2024, p.81). Reservations concerning the production of hay may have economic origins, for although hay attracts a premium as equine fodder, the wet Lake District climate negatively influences the enthusiasm of farmers to produce it. Retained moisture can lead to fungal infections and combustion during storage making it a difficult and unreliable crop.

7.3.6 Geology and Industry

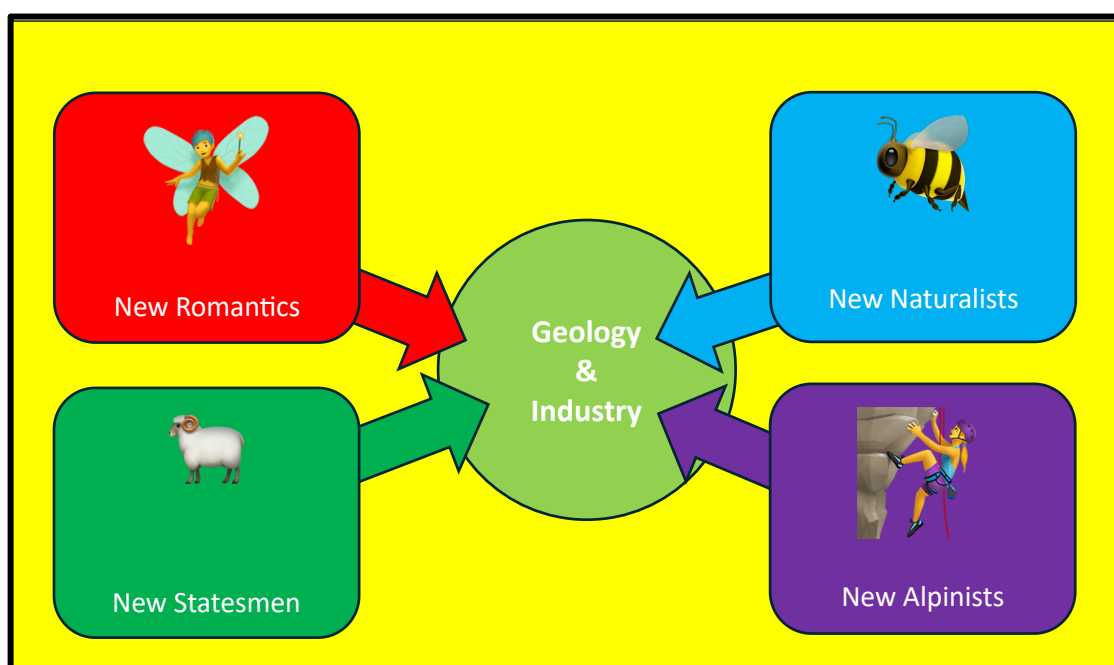


Figure 7.10 Shared values of participants associated with geology and industry

Participants from the New Romantics, New Alpinists and New Statesmen aesthetic orientations valued aesthetically Lake District geology and associated industrial archaeology (Fig. 7.10). As per section 2.3.3, the juxtaposing of industry may be perceived as incompatible with the commonly shared perception of the rural idyll, but such modified natural capital influences the cultural landscape. Participants of the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation with backgrounds in the biological sciences, may neglect that the Lake District played a key role in the development of geological and geomorphological sciences. But conservationists valued aesthetically and understood geomorphological processes and dynamic systems.

7.3.7 Widening Access

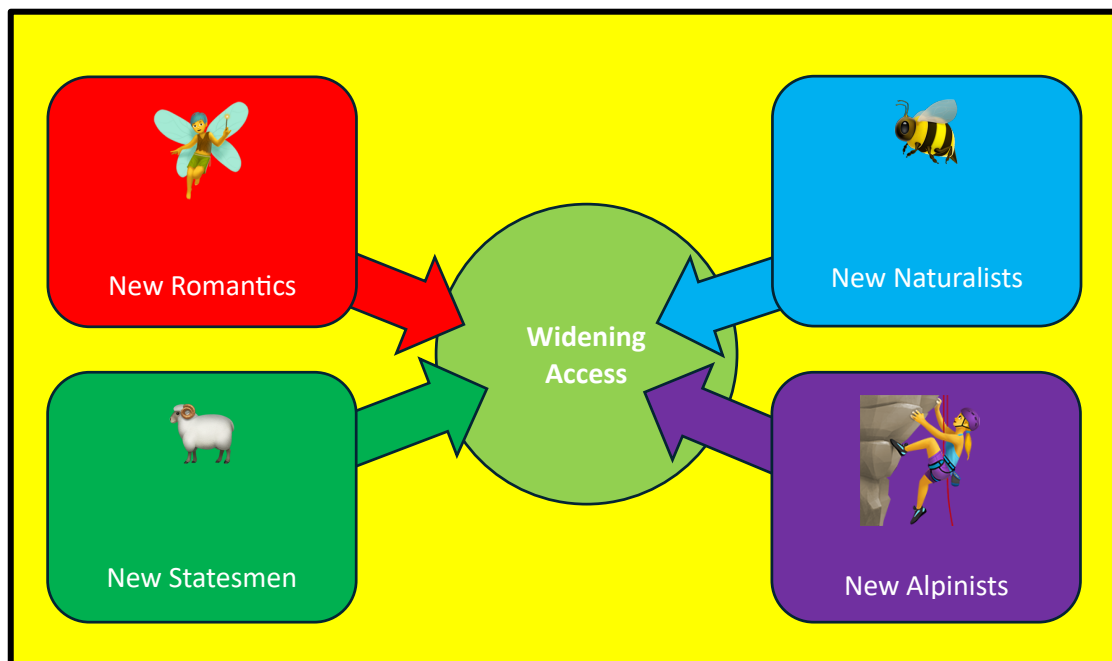


Figure 7.11 Shared values of participants associated with widening access

Most participants of the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation, the outdoor activity leaders and tourism expert, clearly valued visitor diversification. In contrast, participants of the other three aesthetic orientations, the National Trust participants and their fellow conservationists, evidenced no clear desire (Fig. 7.11). The SWOT analysis revealed concerns over visitor numbers and localised damage (p.157), but similar concerns did not negatively influence how participants of the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation valued visitor diversification (p.278).

The National Trust and other conservation organisations aim to widen access (p.109), but people with disabilities, low-income families, young people, and people from BAME backgrounds remain underrepresented among Lake District visitors (Glover, 2019, pp.68-69; Anstee, 2019). Continued underrepresentation questions how well this aim has been shared with the wider leadership and how it relates to their values. One participant in the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation argued that it would benefit natural capital if people were deterred from visiting the Lake District (p.218). However, regardless of social justice, if a significant segment of the population feels

excluded from the Lake District, it is unlikely that they will value it aesthetically or support allocation of funding towards it.

The former Conservative Government's *Landscapes Review* placed significant blame for underrepresentation on National Park Authorities, which it claimed were bloated bodies out of touch with twenty-first century society and that the white, predominantly male and often elderly representatives did not value widening access (Glover, 2019, p.30; Carrington, 2024). Accordingly, during the SWOT analysis exercise the National Trust participants, conservationists and tourism expert raised the weak political leadership of the LDNPA as a negative influence on the National Park. However, most participants were also concerned about the negative influence of financial cuts imposed by the Conservative Government on the LDNPA. Cuts are likely to continue under Labour, which reflects a long-term drift from the bold leadership on National Parks by the 1947 Labour Government, which concerned Chris Smith, former Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport:

"We in the Labour movement must wake up to the fact that working people have needs beyond the purely material"(Smith, C., 1978, p.1).

7.4 Summary

Subjectivity imbues perception of the Lake District, and these participants perceived it as a rural idyll of myth and reality, reflecting their beliefs and values. Accordingly, their aesthetic values could be grouped into four aesthetic orientations, indicating diverse influences, which in turn have real-world influences on the conservation of natural capital (Fig. 7.2). The New Statesmen, New Romantics and New Alpinists aesthetic orientations were strong among participants from the anthropocentric National Trust. Most of these participants valued aesthetically natural capital in the context of the Lake District cultural landscape, largely reflected in a landscape conservation approach. In contrast, the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation was strong among conservationists from other organisations, usually in more eco-centric roles. These participants valued aesthetically three-dimensional natural capital, often small scale and of wild character, mirrored in a nature conservation approach. Except for the hill

farmer who was of the New Statesmen aesthetic orientation, the other stakeholders were of the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation. But all these stakeholders demonstrated aesthetic values and preferences for conservation of natural capital broadly like the National Trust participants. However, despite the outdoor activity leaders being of the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation, they demonstrated quite diverse aesthetic values.

As noted, there were contrasts in how aesthetic value was assigned to natural capital between participants from the anthropocentric National Trust, and conservationists from more eco-centric organisations, or those working within organisations with primary purposes other than conservation (Fig. 7.2). However, there were also differences in how natural capital was valued aesthetically within organisations, as illustrated by the four aesthetic orientations among participants from the National Trust. These different aesthetic orientations significantly influence the conservation of natural capital because the conservation organisations and organisations with a primary purpose other than conservation which participated in the research own or lease over one third of the Lake District (p.14).

Aesthetic values tied to subjective perceptions are quite stable, so the intention has been to identify shared values where organisations may influence their stakeholders regarding conservation of natural capital, but also where appropriate between and within such organisations. Appreciating shared eudaemonic and relational values could form the basis of partnerships to protect and conserve natural capital, focussing initially on areas of interest, concern, and general agreement. Unfortunately, this thesis has revealed that conflict is having a negative influence on the above, possibly influenced by a combination of weak political leadership and aesthetic values. Conflict between organisations involved in conservation and their stakeholders is regrettable but has also been revealed between conservationists in leadership roles. One influence may be that while cultural landscapes across mainland Europe have constantly adapted to the needs of society, an unsustainable model of the Lake District may become fixed in amber. This model is failing to respond adequately to the climate

change emergency and biodiversity crisis and fundamental damage may be being inflicted on natural capital (Cloke, 1993, pp.53-67; Stotten, 2016). The Lake District is a cultural landscape of OUV and the influence of agropastoral agriculture is woven into the three strands of identity, inspiration, and conservation. Consequently, the LDNPA and LDNPP should address OUV in a way that is compatible with meeting the statutory requirements of the Lake District National Park, but also the challenges of the global climate change emergency and biodiversity crisis.

In chapter eight this thesis will be concluded by considering how effectively the research question has been answered and proposing that based on shared values conservationists and their stakeholders should work together to conserve natural capital:

- Are there contrasts in aesthetic valuation of the Lake District National Park, between the leadership of conservation organisations and their stakeholders, if so, does such divergent valuation influence conservation of the National Park's natural capital?

Chapter Eight

8.0 Conclusion

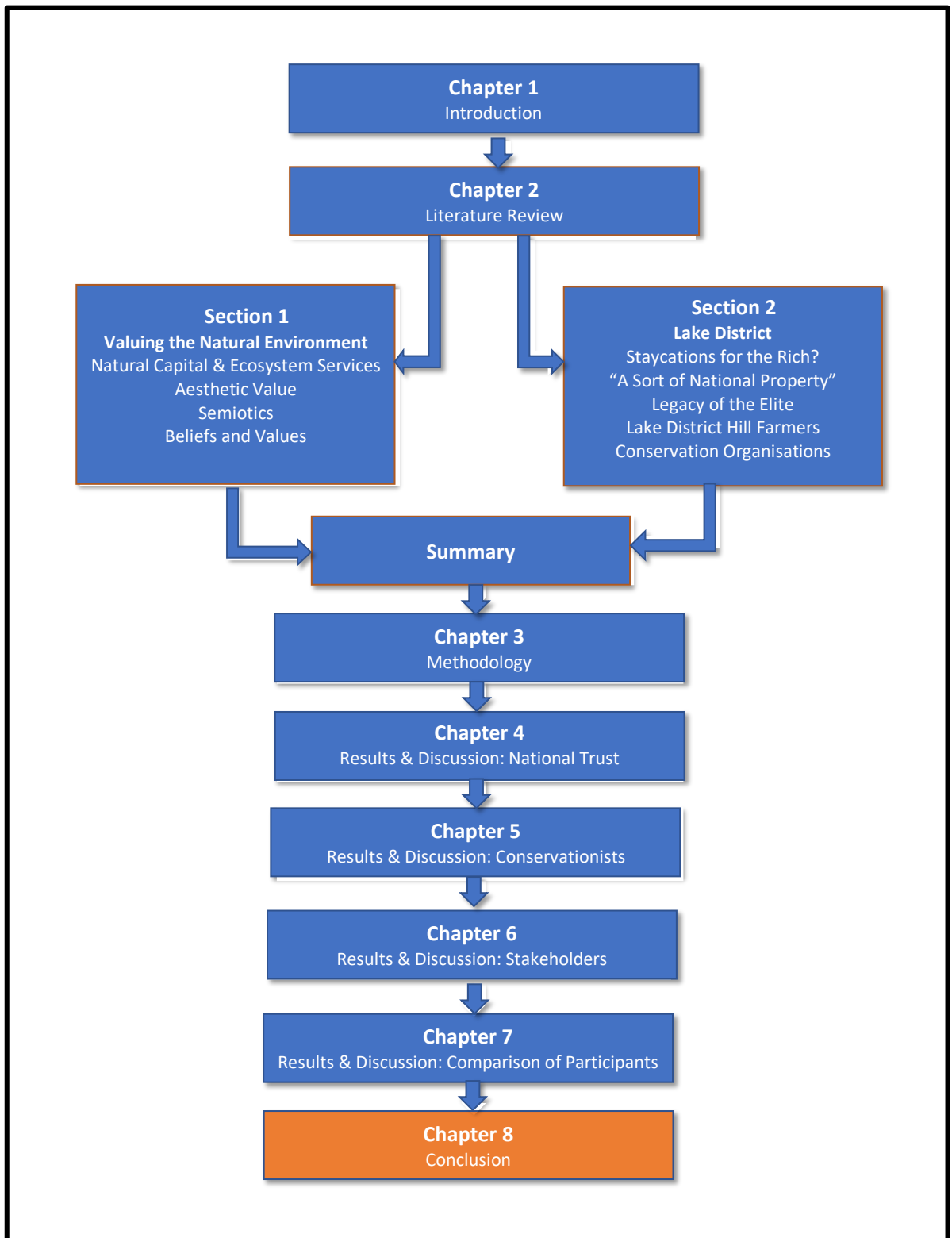


Figure 8.1 Chapter eight in relation to the other thesis chapters

8.1 Introduction

This thesis has successfully answered the research question, aims and objectives. The phenomenological approach, together with its innovative diamond nine method has revealed contrasts in how Lake District natural capital is valued aesthetically between conservationists in leadership and decision-making roles and their stakeholders. But, as per section 7.1, it has also revealed differences between how the National Trust participants and their fellow conservationists value aesthetically natural capital. Consequently, the subjectivity and divergence of aesthetic values that have been revealed are having real-world influences on the conservation of the National Park's natural capital (Fig. 8.1).

8.2 Return to the Research Question, Aims and Objectives

More detailed consideration will now be given to how the thesis answered the research question, aims and objectives. However, it will first be recalled how the leadership of the following value aesthetically the natural capital integral to the Lake District cultural landscape:

- National Trust Lake District Hub,
- conservation organisations,
- conservationists within organisations with a primary purpose other than conservation.

The findings of this thesis are critically important, because the above organisations which participated in this research exert considerable combined influence on the conservation of over one third of Lake District natural capital (p.14). Most of the National Trust participants valued aesthetically natural capital in the context of the cultural landscape, perceived as a rural idyll of “traditional hill farming”, the legacy of the Picturesque and Romantic Movements, and Thoreau inspired wilderness. This was reflected in anthropocentric values and a similarly anthropocentric landscape conservation approach to the conservation of natural capital. In contrast, their colleagues from other conservation organisations, or conservationists within organisations with a primary purpose other than conservation, valued aesthetically

natural capital of wild character, where ecological and geomorphological processes were allowed free reign. They had a stronger perception of a Thoreau inspired wilderness and it was likely that a sense of wildness was a core belief, reflected in their eco-centric aesthetic values and eco-centric nature conservation approach to natural capital.

Detailed preferences for the physical management of natural capital were revealed through the core beliefs, held and relational values of participants, identifying four aesthetic orientations, termed New Romantics, New Statesmen, New Naturalists and New Alpinists. The New Romantics, New Statesmen and New Alpinists aesthetic orientations were strong among the National Trust participants, while all the conservationists were clearly within the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation. This significant contrast in aesthetic valuation of natural capital between two outwardly similar groups of participants is reflected in polarised approaches to its conservation summarised above. However, most of these participants voiced concerns about damage to natural capital through climate change, pollution, alleged overgrazing and visitor pressure. Most of them also voiced concerns that at a time when strong leadership was needed to address these challenges, the LDNPA and the LDNPP demonstrated weak political leadership.

The stakeholders were invited participants from outdoor activity organisations, tourism and agropastoral agriculture. The aesthetic values of these stakeholders were generally closer to those of the anthropocentric National Trust participants than to the eco-centric conservationists (Fig. 7.2). Consequently, their preferences for the conservation of natural capital were closer to the National Trust participants than the conservationists. However, except for the hill farmer, these participants evidenced quite diverse aesthetic values, those of the outdoor activity leaders being more diverse than either the National Trust participants or the conservationists. But only one of these stakeholders mentioned the damage that overgrazing was alleged to be inflicting on natural capital.

Overall, participants perceived the Lake District as a rural idyll, composed of a complex mixture of myth and reality. The National Park reflected their own subjective perceptions, as much as the real geographical space, but such subjective perception does not prevent real threats to natural capital. As per sections 1.3 and 7.4, relentless financial cuts since 2010 may have influenced the alleged weak political leadership of the LDNPA and the LDNPP. This may in turn have influenced the focus of the LDNPA on social and economic functions and World Heritage Site status at the expense of its statutory duties (UK Government, 1995; IUCN National Committee UK Protected Areas Working Group, 2023, p.59). The conflict between some conservation professionals may also be influenced not simply by conflicting aesthetic values, but also by the negative synergy of weak political leadership.

A detailed synopsis is now provided of how the research aims, and objectives were successfully answered:

Possible influences on the aesthetic values of the leadership of the National Trust.

Numerous factors influenced the core beliefs, held, relational and eudaemonic values of the leadership of the National Trust, which in turn influenced their aesthetic values:

- Subjective perception (p.121)
- Organisational culture (pp.170-171)
- Synergistic influence of diverse ecosystem services (p.138)
- Composition of water and vegetation (p.164)
- Composition of iconic locations in the cultural landscape (p.164)
- Agropastoral agriculture in the form of so-called “traditional hill farming” (p.134)
- Picturesque (p.143) and Romantic Movements (p.124)
- Thoreau inspired wilderness aesthetic (p.151)
- Personal connections with the Lake District, dating from childhood (p.149)
- Professional expertise and commitment (p.142).

Whether their aesthetic values, influence their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital.

Participants valued aesthetically clear 'hot spots' for the co-production of cultural services, representative of a unique cultural landscape of palimpsestic richness, bearing traces of the ruins of its earlier form (p.144). This is illustrated by their anthropocentric preferences towards management of the National Park's natural capital, aesthetic value being assigned to areas rich in cultural artefacts and practices e.g., Grasmere, Troutbeck, Borrowdale and Ullswater. There was an enthusiasm for maintaining ash pollards and drystone walls associated with the cultural landscape of agropastoral agriculture most termed "traditional hill farming" (p.134). Most participants also desired more trees (p.132), and those from the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation were enthusiastic about the expansion of montane woodland and temperate rainforest. There was no apparent support for rewilding or clear hostility to the term, which for some participants might be influenced by inaccurate perceptions (p.144). However, most participants welcomed more biodiverse agropastoral agriculture as part of the National Trust's drive towards nature recovery (p.176) (National Trust, 2017, p.10).

What are the influences on the aesthetic values of the leadership of organisations, other than the National Trust, involved in the conservation of the Lake District?

Numerous factors influenced the core beliefs, held, relational and eudaemonic values of the leadership of organisations, other than the National Trust, involved in the conservation of the Lake District which in turn influenced their aesthetic values:

- Subjective perception (p.196)
- Organisational culture (p.221)
- Synergistic influence of diverse ecosystem services (p.207)
- Composition of water and vegetation (p.195)
- Aesthetic engagement at an intimate scale (pp.191-192)
- Perceived chaos of ecological and geomorphological processes (pp.194-195)
- Picturesque (pp.226-227) and Romantic Movements (pp.226-227)
- Thoreau inspired wilderness aesthetic (pp.226-227)

- Hostility to the visual appearance of much of the contemporary Lake District (pp.202-203)
- Professional expertise and commitment (p.219).

Wildness influenced the participants' held values and how they assigned aesthetic value to the natural capital (Brown, T., 1984). However, their aesthetic values may be closer to the untamed nature of Romanticism, than the selective appropriation of Picturesque and Romantic Movement imagery (pp.227-228), which contributes to the distorted perception of the contemporary Lake District cultural landscape (Eddy-Waland, 2022, p.195).

Do the aesthetic values of the leadership of these organisations influence their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital?

The conservationists believed that natural capital in the Lake District was fundamentally damaged, and they were striving to repair it. These participants valued aesthetically complex structures at a small and focussed scale (pp.191-192) and shared a vision of a wilder Lake District, with unfettered ecological and geomorphological processes (pp.194-195). Accordingly, they were intolerant of sheep grazing which was said to cause ecological damage (p.225), wanting to remove this livestock and replace it with species they considered more sustainable (pp.187-188). Consequently, but also linked to the priorities of their employers, there was a desire for more trees, mostly in the form of extensive woodland creation and management (pp.199-200). Enclosed farmland was not valued aesthetically to any extent, but participants valued aesthetically and were enthusiastic about the creation and conservation of farm woodland and hay meadows, relational and eudaemonic values being associated with the latter (p.207).

What are the possible influences on the aesthetic values of the stakeholders of conservation organisations in the Lake District e.g., hill farmers, outdoor activity leaders and the visitor economy?

The main factors influencing the stakeholders' core beliefs, held, relational and eudaemonic values, which in turn influenced their aesthetic values were identified as:

- Subjective perception (p.244)
- Culture and socialisation (p.285)
- Synergistic influence of diverse ecosystem services (p.282)
- Composition of water and vegetation (p.246)
- Aesthetic engagement (pp.281-282)
- Composition of iconic locations in the cultural landscape (Fig. 6.26) and (p.288)
- Agropastoral agriculture in the form of so-called "traditional hill farming" (p.286)
- Picturesque (p.265) and Romantic Movements (p.267)
- Thoreau inspired wilderness aesthetic (p.266)
- Long-term personal connections with the Lake District (p.252)
- Knowledge and expertise (p.288).

The hill farmer was in the New Statesmen aesthetic orientation and their held values stemmed from core beliefs, influencing how they assigned aesthetic value to extensive areas of short sheep grazed vegetation (p.287) (Brown, T., 1984; Segerson, 2003; Seymour, E. *et al.*, 2010; Iniesta-Arandia *et al.*, 2014). Relational and eudaemonic values were associated with the management of the hay meadows which they valued aesthetically (p.264).

The outdoor activity leaders and the tourism expert had diverse aesthetic values, including symbolic species of wildlife (Fig. 6.7). Situated in the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation, their core belief of engaging new people in the Lake District appeared to override concerns about the carrying capacity of the National Park (pp.289-291). All these participants valued aesthetically the influence of agropastoral agriculture on the cultural landscape and natural capital (pp.285-286). To the tourism expert it was

contributing positively to the local produce sector (pp.242-243) and the world class cultural landscape (p.264). Notably, participants valued the integration of ecology and culture (p.252), by conservation and farming of the Herdwick and other native breeds of livestock (pp.285-286).

Do the aesthetic values of the stakeholders of conservation organisations in the Lake District influence their preferences for the management of the National Park's natural capital?

Some forms of natural capital were valued aesthetically by all participants, but physical management could influence the extent to which it was valued (p.251). For example, the sheep grazed areas that characterise the open commons were often perceived as being of remote character, sublime, and awe inspiring (p.286). However, most participants also valued aesthetically vegetation of unmanaged character, in the form of three dimensional, complex structures at a small and focussed scale (p.291). The clear exception was the hill farmer, who may have conflated aesthetic value with the practicalities of shepherding over leggy upland vegetation (p.252). This participant valued aesthetically hay meadows and evidenced relational and eudaemonic values with haymaking (pp.254-255). The diverse aesthetic values of these participants also included water bodies (pp.246-247), woodland (p.249) and enclosed farmland (p.252), often with clear anthropogenic influences.

Identify any contrasts in aesthetic valuation of the Lake District's natural capital between the leadership of conservation organisations and the stakeholders of those organisations.

As per section 2.3.6, this thesis has considered the influence of complex cultural and social factors on the creation of an amorphous Lake District rural idyll. The National Trust participants valued aesthetically the cultural landscape associated with ill-defined agropastoral agriculture termed "traditional hill farming" and traditional industries (p.136), but most were concerned about overgrazing by sheep (p.134). In contrast, the conservationists valued aesthetically unfettered natural processes and

complex structures at a small scale (pp.184-186), only one National Trust participant evidencing similar aesthetic values (p.116).

In contrast to the National Trust participants and conservationists, the hill farmer valued aesthetically the influence of grazing sheep on upland vegetation and did not value aesthetically lightly or ungrazed vegetation (p.287). However, more generally the aesthetic values of the hill farmer were shared by the National Trust participants, outdoor activity leaders and the tourism expert (p.236). Overall, the aesthetic values of stakeholders were closer to those of the National Trust participants than the conservationists, but the outdoor leaders appeared to have more diverse aesthetic values than either of these two groups of participants (pp.257-258).

Identify any shared values where organisations involved in the conservation of the Lake District's natural capital, can work in partnership with stakeholders on its protection, conservation, and enhancement.

Table 8.1 Recommendations Aligned with Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy
Statement of Biodiversity Priorities

Ref No	Recommendation	Priority No	LNRS Priority	Responsible Organisation
8.2.1	<i>Knowledge and expertise have been gained from working with hill farmers at Wild Ennerdale and this learning should be transferred to other sites, there being considerable potential for the integration of conservation with regenerative agriculture.</i>	5 6	Skills, delivery and funding People taking action for nature	National Trust Forestry England United Utilities Natural England

Ref No	Recommendation	Priority No	LNRS Priority	Responsible Organisation
8.2.1	<i>The steering groups of conservation initiatives should be welcoming, diverse and inclusive.</i>	5 6	Skills, delivery and funding People taking action for nature	All
8.2.2	<i>Coordinate a training and development programme for conservation professionals on the ecology and ecosystem services delivered by wetlands.</i>	5 19 20	Skills, delivery and funding Restore natural function / processes Enhance and restore wetland habitats	Cumbria Wildlife Trust
	<i>Establish an extensive programme of wetland restoration around Morecambe Bay.</i>	22 23	Restore and enhance coastal habitats Create space for coastal dynamism	Cumbria Wildlife Trust National RSPB
	<i>Establish a sustainable water management partnership, including representatives from agropastoral agriculture, and the tourism sector.</i>	21	Water quality	United Utilities Cumbria Wildlife Trust National Trust

Ref No	Recommendation	Priority No	LNRS Priority	Responsible Organisation
8.2.3	<i>Farmers and landowners should be engaged through extensive woodland creation, first focussing on the protection and reinstatement of relic temperate rainforest, shelter belts, and hedgerow trees.</i> <i>Volunteers and communities should be engaged in the re-establishment of montane woodland.</i>	8	Sustainable forest management	Forestry England
		9	Create and connect woodland	Woodland Trust
		10	Ancient woodlands and ancient and veteran trees	Cumbria Wildlife Trust National Trust RSPB
		5	Skills, delivery and funding	Forestry England
		6	People taking action for nature	Woodland Trust
		11	Hedgerows and scrub	Cumbria Wildlife Trust
		15	Montane habitats	National Trust
8.2.4	<i>Seek funding towards a programme of environmental education and interpretation to develop the relational values of stakeholders regarding moorland and bog habitats.</i>	5	Skills, delivery and funding	National Trust
		6	People taking action for nature	Cumbria Wildlife Trust RSPB

Ref No	Recommendation	Priority No	LNRS Priority	Responsible Organisation
8.2.4	<i>Coordinate a training and development programme for conservation professionals on the ecology and ecosystem services delivered by moorland, with emphasis on bogs and peatlands.</i>	5	Skills, delivery and funding	Cumbria Wildlife Trust
		13	Restore upland bog habitats	
		14	Enhance and restore heathland habitats	
8.2.5	<i>Conservationists and hill farmers with experience of creating and managing traditional hay meadows, should deliver training for those interested in creating or reinstating these habitats.</i>	5	Skills, delivery and funding	National Trust Cumbria Wildlife Trust RSPB
		6	People taking action for nature	
		16	Conserve and enhance existing wildlife-rich grasslands	
8.2.6	<i>Seek funding towards training and development of staff, together with environmental education and interpretation regarding the role of geology and geomorphology in the development of the Lake District cultural landscape.</i>	5	Skills, delivery and funding	National Trust Cumbria Wildlife Trust
		6	People taking action for nature	

Ref No	Recommendation	Priority No	LNRS Priority	Responsible Organisation
8.2.7	<i>Work with outdoor activity organisations and others, to broaden the Lake District visitor profile and develop their relational values regarding the National Park, including participation as volunteers and as members of governing bodies.</i>	5 6	Skills, delivery and funding People taking action for nature	Forestry England Woodland Trust Cumbria Wildlife Trust National Trust RSPB

8.2.1 Shared Values

Conservationists should work with diverse colleagues and stakeholders, regardless of personal feelings towards them, for they share relational and eudaemonic values providing common ground to work on the conservation of natural capital (Table 8.1). Research has revealed that older people are more likely than younger ones to perceive a need for conservation, but anecdotal evidence from the Lake District indicates that younger hill farmers may be more receptive (Pauly, 1995; Zeller, Froese and Pauly, 2005; Ulman and Pauly, 2016; Soga and Gaston, 2018; Popejoy *et al.*, 2018; Jones, L. *et al.*, 2020; Bateman, A., 2022).

8.2.2 Water

The LNRS has a target of 500 ha of good quality riparian, lake shore, and wetland habitat created by 2035, yet only one participant evidenced valuing aesthetically wetlands (Table 8.1). There must be greater appreciation of the ecology and ecosystem services delivered by wetlands which should be addressed by training and development (Westmorland and Furness Council, 2025, p.71).

Internationally important lowland raised bogs and other wetland sites border the Lake District and this natural capital also has a vital role in addressing climate change. The Morecambe Bay Partnership has done excellent work developing the relational values of stakeholders bordering the Lake District, but the LNRS does not have a shared grand vision for wetland conservation (Table 8.1). An extensive programme of wetland restoration like the Great Fen Project of East Anglia would exceed this target and grip media attention (Morecambe Bay Partnership, 2023; The Wildlife Trusts, 2024).

Regardless of aesthetic value assigned to natural processes, a sustainable approach to the management of water resources has instrumental and economic value. The National Trust Riverlands partnership demonstrates how local knowledge and expertise regarding water management can be valued and achieve tangible benefits for the protection and conservation of natural capital. From the perspective of United Utilities, wilder and more sustainable approaches to water management will have instrumental value by providing tangible and cost-effective benefits for their customers (Table 8.1). Naturalisation of modified channels, natural flow management and the establishment of wide riparian buffer strips would contribute to conserving natural capital, reducing flood risk, and improving drinking water quality (United Utilities, 2021a; Westmorland and Furness Council, 2025, p.68):

8.2.3 Trees and Woodland

Although often located in steep upland valleys, relic woodland can be reinstated as demonstrated by the former North West Water Authority in the West Pennine Moors and South Pennines (Windett, 1986). However, little new woodland has been established in the Lake District in recent years, despite 2% to 3% of the land area having potential for restoration as temperate rainforest (Campaign for National Parks, 2024, p.14; Westmorland and Furness Council, 2025, p.35). There is also great potential for cooperating with farmers and other landowners on the conservation of veteran and ancient trees, but also planting and protecting new hedgerow trees (Table 8.1).

The LNRS target of restoring, enhancing and creating 500 ha of montane habitats by 2035, provides an opportunity to engage volunteers and local communities in the propagation and planting of montane woodland and flora (Table 8.1).

8.2.4 Mountains and Moorlands

The LNRS seeks to have 90% of moorland habitats under appropriate management by 2035 (Westmorland and Furness Council, 2025, p.47), consequently there is a need to positively influence conservation of this natural capital. But environmental education and awareness raising has a low profile in the LNRS, despite the important role that relational and eudaemonic values could play in deepening understanding of this natural capital among diverse stakeholders. Numerous innovative projects elsewhere in the UK have successfully raised awareness of the cultural and biodiversity value of moorland e.g., Moorland Festivals by Kirklees Council, the National Trust and Peak District National Park, which integrated arts, environmental education, environmental interpretation and practical conservation (Mattijssen *et al.*, 2020). However, there also needs to be wider understanding of this natural capital by professional conservationists and stakeholders engaged in agropastoral agriculture (Table 8.1).

8.2.5 Farmland

The LNRS aims to create or restore 2,850 ha of wildlife-rich meadows by 2035 and conservationists are most likely to achieve this through working with farmers who share some of their values regarding hay meadows (Westmorland and Furness Council, 2025, p.59). Farmers unfamiliar with hay meadow creation and management are more likely to be receptive to the knowledge of colleagues with proven experience of recreating and managing these habitats (Table 8.1).

8.2.6 Geology and Industry

Geology and geomorphology has played a key role in the evolution of the Lake District cultural landscape, while the influence of the climate change emergency on geomorphological processes poses challenges for landowners (Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre, 2025). Interpretation and conservation of this natural capital is

surprisingly neglected and consequently awareness raising of its role in the cultural landscape should be given a higher priority (Table 8.1).

8.2.7 Widening Access

As per section 2.3.1, there are no fundamental reasons why anyone should not value aesthetically the Lake District, but if underrepresented groups feel excluded from it, they may believe that it is not for them and thus be influenced not to value it aesthetically. A wealth of information is available about widening access by underrepresented groups and in 2024 the LDNPA commissioned artists from BAME backgrounds to help address this matter, but this should be extended to include people with disabilities, low income families and young people (Table 8.1).

8.3 Relevance of this Research

Prior to this research there was no evidence of the contrasts in aesthetic valuation of the Lake District National Park, between the leadership of conservation organisations and their stakeholders. There was also no evidence that the aesthetic values of stakeholders were closer to those of participants in leadership roles from the National Trust Lake District hub, than to those of conservationists in leadership roles employed by other conservation organisations, or by organisations with a primary purpose other than conservation. These insights were achieved by an innovative diamond nine method and triangulation by SWOT analysis.

This research also revealed that preferences for the physical management of natural capital by the leadership of conservation organisations and their stakeholders could be made known through their core beliefs, held and relational values. These could in turn be grouped as four aesthetic orientations termed New Statesmen, New Romantics, New Alpinists and New Naturalists. The research revealed how the New Statesmen, New Romantics and New Alpinists aesthetic orientations were strong among the National Trust participants. Accordingly, most of these participants valued aesthetically natural capital in the context of the cultural landscape, largely reflected in anthropocentric values and a similarly anthropocentric landscape conservation

approach to the conservation of natural capital. In contrast, the New Naturalists aesthetic orientation was strong among the leadership of other conservation organisations, or conservationists within organisations with a primary purpose other than conservation, reflected in their eco-centric values and nature conservation approach to the conservation of natural capital. Except for the hill farmer, strongly in the New Statesmen aesthetic orientation, the other stakeholders were in the New Alpinists aesthetic orientation. The aesthetic values of all these stakeholders were closer to those of the National Trust participants, than to those of the conservationists, although the outdoor activity leaders had particularly diverse aesthetic values.

As per section 8.2, this research has revealed how contrasting aesthetic valuation of natural capital by two outwardly similar groups of participants is reflected in polarised approaches to its conservation. Such real-world, every day, practical influences are extremely significant, as together these organisations own or lease over one third of the Lake District (p.14).

In addition, this research has revealed allegations of weak political leadership on the part of the LDNPA, which may sometimes be failing to address OUV of the World Heritage Site in a way that is compatible with the statutory duties of the National Park. This alleged weak political leadership, together with contrasts in how natural capital is valued aesthetically may be influencing conflict, not only between organisations involved in conservation and their stakeholders but is also between professional conservationists in leadership roles. Consequences include wasted resources and damage to the conservation of natural capital.

Finally, prior to this research, there was no evidence of how little aesthetic value appears to be assigned to Lake District natural capital in the form of bogs, peatlands, wetlands and the coast (p.308).

8.4 Opportunities for further Research

The OUV of the World Heritage Site should be met in a way that is compatible with all the statutory duties of the National Park. In view of the allegations of weak political leadership on the part of the LDNPA and the LDNPP an independent leadership review should be undertaken to ensure that the above is the case.

The results from this research should inform research with a larger pool of participants, to gain broader insight into how conservationists and their stakeholders assign aesthetic value to different forms of natural capital.

Comparative information should be obtained by transferring the diamond nine ranking method and aesthetic orientations model to other UK National Parks.

Research should be undertaken to determine how people perceive bogs and wetlands and whether this impacts on how these habitats are valued aesthetically and consequently influences conservation of this natural capital.

Research should be carried out to gain accurate data on the number of sheep required to maintain hefting on the open commons, as current arguments in support of this practice appear to be based on little more than hearsay.

8.5 Limitations of this Research

The results from this research should be applied to other National Parks with caution, but transferring the diamond nine ranking method and aesthetic orientations model could facilitate valuable research.

The phenomenological approach of this research was a limitation, because phenomenological analysis is qualitative and engages a small pool of expert participants, but this reflected the low number of potential participants in appropriate roles from which to recruit. Not all who were approached, or in one instance 'volunteered' by their line manager, agreed to participate.

The insertion of photographs into semi-structured in-depth interviews can prompt deep and meaningful conversations (p.88), but photo elicitation is also a method which increases complexity, which can act as a barrier to participation. For example, it is more onerous and time consuming for participants to create and/or select suitable photographs than meet face to face for a semi-structured in-depth interview.

Diamond nine ranking the content of the photographs further increasing complexity and creates an additional barrier for some potential participants. However, the diamond nine ranking method helped to facilitate meaningful conversations and to determine why participants valued aesthetically one object, which was not necessarily natural capital, more than another. It certainly reduced the confusion sometimes associated with ranking objects, words or terms on a simple numerical scale. But in an interview of around one hour, it is impossible to fully understand the aesthetic values of participants.

The impact of COVID-19 on this research was unforeseen and influenced adversely the recruitment and retention of participants. Not everyone is comfortable being interviewed and being interviewed online remotely posed further barriers for recruitment. Broadband coverage has improved in the National Park since the pandemic but poor connectivity contributed to problems including repeated failure of participant's routers which damaged rapport (pp.103-105).

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Appendices

Appendix 1



' Aesthetic Value and Stakeholder Engagement: A Challenge for Conservation'

Participant Information Sheet

About the study

This pilot study is part of a broader PhD research project that aims to investigate whether there are differences in how leadership of conservation management organisations and a variety of interest groups value the beauty of the Lake District National Park. The purpose is to find out if there are any such differences, do they have any influence on work to protect and conserve the actively farmed landscape and places for wildlife in the National Park?

Some questions you may have about the research project:

Why have you asked me to take part and what will I be required to do?

You have been asked to take part because your relevant knowledge, experience and/or day to day work could make a valuable contribution to this research. The researcher would like you to take nine photographs, each photograph showing just one aspect of the landscape that you value and find most beautiful in the National Park. The researcher would then like to meet with you to discuss, what you find beautiful about these landscape features and whether you value some more than others.

Photographs

Each photograph you take should show just one aspect of the landscape, that you value and find most beautiful in the National Park. There's no need for fancy cameras, the camera in a mobile phone or one of those recyclable film cameras will be fine. No special photographic skills are required and there are no prizes for the most 'arty' photograph (not even a Twix or a Mars bar!),

Photographic images taken by using the camera on a mobile phone or by a small digital camera, usually look great on a small screen. If, however, these images are shown on a large screen or printed, they are often blurred, which is due to camera shake. We'll be printing copies of your photographs, so to avoid this common problem, you need to keep the camera as still as possible when taking photographs. This is particularly the case, during dull winter weather, when there isn't as much natural light as during the summer months. It's incredibly easy to reduce or avoid the problem of camera shake, simply hold your mobile phone or camera still on part of your car, quad bike, Land Rover or any convenient gate or drystone wall. Alternatively – hold it firmly against the side of a tree or a building. You'll probably be surprised by how sharp most of the photographs are compared with those taken unsupported.

Once you've taken your photographs and have selected nine, copies can be printed from the digital files. If you're using a recyclable film camera, the entire camera including film, will simply be sent off to the developer.

What if I do not wish to take part or change my mind during the study?

Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without having to provide a reason for doing so. Withdrawal from the study will automatically include removal of all information and deletion of any photos shared with the researcher.

What happens to the research data?

You will retain full copyright of your photographs and the copies will be held securely. Your interview will be electronically recorded and then transcribed, by the researcher, onto a computer, recordings will be destroyed at the end of the research project. To ensure anonymity transcription will use pseudonyms for any details that could identify you. Participants should be aware that in situations of low interviewee numbers, where they are also drawn from a relatively small area, the use of pseudonyms may not guarantee anonymity. Prior to any use of your interview data you will be provided with a copy of the transcribed document and given the opportunity to review its content. Your anonymised responses will then be analysed and incorporated in to a final research report. You will have full editing rights to your interview data at all times throughout the research and publication process.

How will the research be reported?

The results of this study will be made available to organisational leadership, in addition to forming part of a PhD and being published in an academic journal. A copy of any completed document containing both photographs and comments connected to your interview will be made available to you prior to any publication.

How can I find out more information?

Please contact the researcher directly; Neil Windett, Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas, University of Cumbria, Lake District Campus, Ambleside, Cumbria, LA22 9BB. Email: S1513814@uni.cumbria.ac.uk

What if I want to complain about the research?

Initially you should contact the researcher directly. However, if you are not satisfied or wish to make a more formal complaint you should contact Diane Cox, Director of Research Office, University of Cumbria, Bowerham Road, Lancaster, LA1 3JD. diane.cox@cumbria.ac.uk

Ref: Participants Information Sheet (Revised) - Neil Windett 06 11 2017

Appendix 2

'Aesthetic Value and Stakeholder Engagement: A Challenge for Conservation'

Participant Consent Form

Please answer the following questions by circling your responses:

Have you read and understood the information sheet about this study? YES NO

Have you been able to ask questions and been provided with enough information? YES NO

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time, and without having to give a reason for withdrawal? Withdrawal from the study will automatically include removal of all the information and deletion of any photos you have shared with the researcher. YES NO

Are you willing for copies of any photographs you make within the context of this study to be used as part of the study? YES NO

It is normal practice to make electronic audio recordings of research interviews of this type, are you willing for the interview to be recorded and used as part of this study? YES NO

Your responses will be made anonymous. Do you give permission for the researcher to analyze and quote your anonymous responses? YES NO

Please sign here if you wish to take part in the research and feel you have had enough information about what is involved:

Signature of participant:..... **Date:**.....

Name (block letters):.....

Signature of investigator:..... **Date:**.....

Name (block letters):.....

In addition to allowing copies of any photographs you make to be used within the context of this study, please confirm that you are also happy for them to be used in wider dissemination e.g. conference presentations and published research papers? YES NO

Signature of participant:..... **Date:**.....

Name (block letters):.....

Signature of investigator:..... **Date:**.....

Name (block letters):.....

Ref: Consent Form Aesthetic Value 06 11 2017.doc

Appendix 3

Photo Elicitation Interview Script and Questionnaire

Hi – My name's Neil Windett, I'm from the University of Cumbria and I'm doing research towards a PhD. I'm interested in what we can learn about how people from different backgrounds value the beauty of the countryside and how that may influence efforts to protect and conserve the countryside. As it's an academic study, the term that I'm using is 'value aesthetically the natural environment'. There are no trick questions and no right or wrong answers.

Firstly I realise that you're busy and I should, therefore, like to thank you for giving up some of your time in order to help with this research.

Thank you, for completing the participant consent form, this is standard practice in academic research. Your participation is voluntary and you can pull out of the research at any time.

1. Before we go any further, have you any questions about the research, which you would like to ask me?

As stated on the consent form, it's normal practice to make electronic audio recordings of research interviews of this type. I will also make handwritten notes, as a backup, during the course of the interview. Would it be OK with you if I now switch on the audiocassette recorder?

2. Could you please tell me a little bit about yourself and what you do?

3. How do the decisions you make impact on or influence other people?

You will have photographed objects or features that you find beautiful (value aesthetically) in the countryside (natural environment) of the Lake District. For the purpose of this research, photos of objects or features that you value aesthetically, should have been edited down to nine.

What you now need to do is to rank your nine photographs in the diamond shaped template provided.

How you value aesthetically the objects and features is a purely personal matter. It's fine for there to be little difference in how you value objects and features placed at the

top of the diamond, compared with what you have placed at the bottom. It's equally acceptable to value aesthetically what you have placed at the top highly indeed, but to scarcely value what you have placed at the bottom.

A1 – Photograph placed at the top of the diamond, should show the objects or features that you value most aesthetically, out of all your nine photographs.

E1 – Photograph placed at the bottom of the diamond, should show the objects or features that you value least aesthetically, out of all your nine photographs.

B1 and B2 – Photographs placed just below the top of the diamond, should show objects or features that you value less than A1 aesthetically, but more than the other 6 objects and features lower down the diamond.

D1 and D2 – Photographs placed just above the bottom of the diamond, should show objects or features that you value more than E1 aesthetically, but don't value as much as the other 6 objects and features higher up the diamond.

C1, C2 and C3 – Photographs placed in the middle of the diamond, should show objects or features that are 'neither here nor there' with regard to how you value them aesthetically in relation to the three photographs above and the three photographs below.

5. What is it about the objects or features in the photograph placed in A1 at the top of the diamond, that makes you value them most aesthetically out of all the nine photographs?

A1

4. *What is it about the objects or features in the photograph placed in E1 at the bottom of the diamond, that makes you value them least aesthetically out of all the nine photographs?*

E1

6. *What is it about the objects or features in the two photographs placed just below the top of the diamond in B1 and B2, that makes you value them aesthetically more than the other 6, but less than the one in A1 at the top?*

B1

B2

7. *What is it about the objects or features in the two photographs placed just above the bottom of the diamond in D1 and D2, that makes you value them aesthetically more than the objects or features in E1 below, but not so much as the other six?*

D1

D2

8. *What is it about the objects or features in the three photographs in the middle of the diamond in C1, C2 and C3 that are 'neither here nor there' with regard to how you value them aesthetically?*

C1

C2

C3

I should now like to move on and ask you a few general questions leading on from how you value aesthetically the countryside of the Lake District: (If any of the SWOT categories confuse interviewees, suggest a answer to them, the same answer to be used for all e.g. a weakness - fragile easily erodible peat soils.

9. *In what ways are the objects and features that you value aesthetically in this research exercise, a benefit or strength, inherent (internal) to the Lake District? N.B. Strengths can in some contexts also be weaknesses.*

10. *What opportunities (external factors) do you think there are to help protect and conserve what you value aesthetically about the countryside in the Lake District?*

11. *What do you see as the biggest weaknesses (largely internal and not to be confused with threats) in the Lake District, which might impact badly on what you value aesthetically about its countryside? N.B. Weaknesses can in some contexts also be strengths.*

12. *What do you see as the biggest threats (largely external and not to be confused with weaknesses) to what you value aesthetically about the countryside in the Lake District?*

13. *How do the decisions you make impact on or influence objects and features that you value aesthetically in this research exercise?*

14. *Before we finish the interview. Are there any further questions you would like to ask me?*

For all respondents - Number the individual photographs A1, B1 as appropriate and place in an envelope clearly labelled with the name of the respondent.

I am now going to switch off the audio recording device.

Many thanks for taking part in this interview. I will transcribe the interview and you will then have the opportunity to comment on or ask for any of the content to be deleted. You're also, able to pull out of the research; the tapes and any transcripts will be destroyed.

Neil Windett Ref: Interview Questionnaire Draft 13 02 18.docx

Ref: PhD Thesis 2025 Draft 08

