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The politics of the rural and relational values: Contested discourses of rural change and landscape futures in west wales

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ABSTRACT

Across Europe, rural landscapes and communities are changing, following local, national and global pressures. The future physical makeup of these landscapes, the species, landforms and land uses that are present, and the relationship between these landscapes and local communities, is uncertain. At the same time, rural politics has moved from debates about agricultural production to broader considerations of ways of life, and who and what is appropriate in the countryside. As different visions for the physical makeup of landscapes are being proposed and negotiated, it is worth understanding how they fit into broader rural politics, and the values that underpin them, particularly relational landscape values. The purpose of this work is to understand contests over the future of landscapes in west Wales, with particular focus on the relational values that underpin different visions for the landscape. We use image based Q methodology to analyse different visions. We find two distinct visions which we name socio-ecological rebalancing and maintaining heritage farming landscapes. We find that relational and eudemonic values underpin these visions. Despite claims by participants and stakeholders to speak for rural communities, we find important difference within rural communities. We find that disagreements on the environmental and social future of the landscape are based on shared facts but divergent values and relationships with the landscape. These findings have important implications for the future of contested projects aimed at transforming the landscape of this region, and relevance for wider European landscape change. Our conceptual approach, which combines a focus on the politics of the rural with relational values, and our methodological approach, of image based Q methodology, have great potential for understanding debates over the future of rural landscapes.

1. Introduction

Rural landscapes, meaning both their physical form and their economic, cultural and political characteristics, have changed significantly in recent decades. This is a result of economic, political, cultural and social trends occurring at local, national and global scales (Woods, 2006, 2007). Although the trends and impacts are highly variable depending on location, Europe has seen rural depopulation as farming in many marginal areas becomes increasingly uneconomical changing patterns of agricultural production with moves from subsidies for production towards payments for public goods, the rise of multifunctional landscapes and rural economies which are based on much more than agricultural production (Halfacree, 2006; Lasanta et al., 2017). New crops and farming practices have altered the material characteristics of the landscape and the abandonment of some farmland has resulted in scrub and forest emerging on previously pastoral landscapes in a process often described as 'rewilding' (Navarro and Pereira, 2015). This is often seen alongside the expansion of recreational and conservation landscapes as a response to the changing qualities of previously agricultural land and opportunities arising. The actors involved in rural politics, and the subjects, forums, and means of rural political contests have fundamentally shifted (Woods, 2007, 2009).

Rural landscapes and politics will continue to change in future. Such change is uncertain, but it will be contested. In any rural landscape, there will be multiple visions, from multiple stakeholders, for what the landscape should look like in future, and there will be a mix of

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complementarity, coexistence and clashes between these visions. Within each vision there will be different value framings and discourses underpinning arguments about why that vision is 'correct' for that place, containing particular ideas of how that landscape should be valued, and how humans should relate to and interact with that environment.

This research looks at contested visions for the future of the Cambrian Mountains in west Wales, UK (see Fig. 1), particularly on the values and relationships that underpin these visions. It asks a) what are the different visions for the future of this landscape, b) how can these visions be understood in terms of wider trends in rural landscapes, and c) what are the underlying values within each vision. It does so through a relatively novel method, image-based Q methodology. Our work is based on ideas of the politics of the rural, as outlined in the following section. We seek to extend this by incorporating ideas of relational values, to give a deeper understanding of what underpins people's attitudes, preferences and actions towards the landscape.

1.1. The politics of the rural, and questions of value

In recent years, there have been significant changes in both the nature of rural politics and the way it has been analysed, particularly in rural studies and human geography. There has been a shift away from debating the countryside in terms of old 'rural politics', which concerned primary industries, such as agriculture and forestry, and their governance, and which largely ignored broader social concerns. Instead, there has been a shift towards a broader 'politics of the rural', in which "the meaning and regulation of rurality itself is the primary focus of conflict and debate" (Woods, 2006). Whilst rural politics was more concerned with agricultural and use policy, the politics of the rural is more concerned with broader ways of life, public services, political representation, and the characteristics of what constitutes appropriate and high quality rural economy, community and culture (Op cit). Rather than understanding there to be one singular countryside in one area, the politics of the rural explores the multiple conflicting visions of what the countryside should look like, who or what it should be for, and the values that underpin it (Woods, 2006; Halfacree, 2006). These are struggles within the countryside as much as they are struggles between rural areas and the urban metropole. The politics of the rural goes beyond concepts relating to agricultural production, and focuses on social and cultural concepts, such as rootedness and belonging, tradition and the rights of rural places to maintain their character in the face of threats and interference. Above all, it is about attempts by different actors to assert their particular vision of what constitutes an appropriate rural identity (Woods, 2006).

The turn towards the 'politics of the rural' can be attributed to four major interlinking trends, the local and rural manifestation of wider hallmarks of globalisation, which have had significant impact on rural life and politics (Woods, 2007). Firstly, the economic importance of agriculture has declined, relative to the rising importance of other economic activities such as tourism, which entail a different way of valuing nature and extracting value from it. There has been a change in the ways in which value is derived from landscapes and the natural environment, away from traditional agriculture producing food and fibre, and towards other forms of value such as payments for ecosystem services, amenities, recreation and tourism (Wilson, 2009). Correspondingly, the purpose of the landscape has changed, and with this, new visions for how communities should relate to their environment have emerged. For example, Kitchen and Marsden (2009, p275) explore

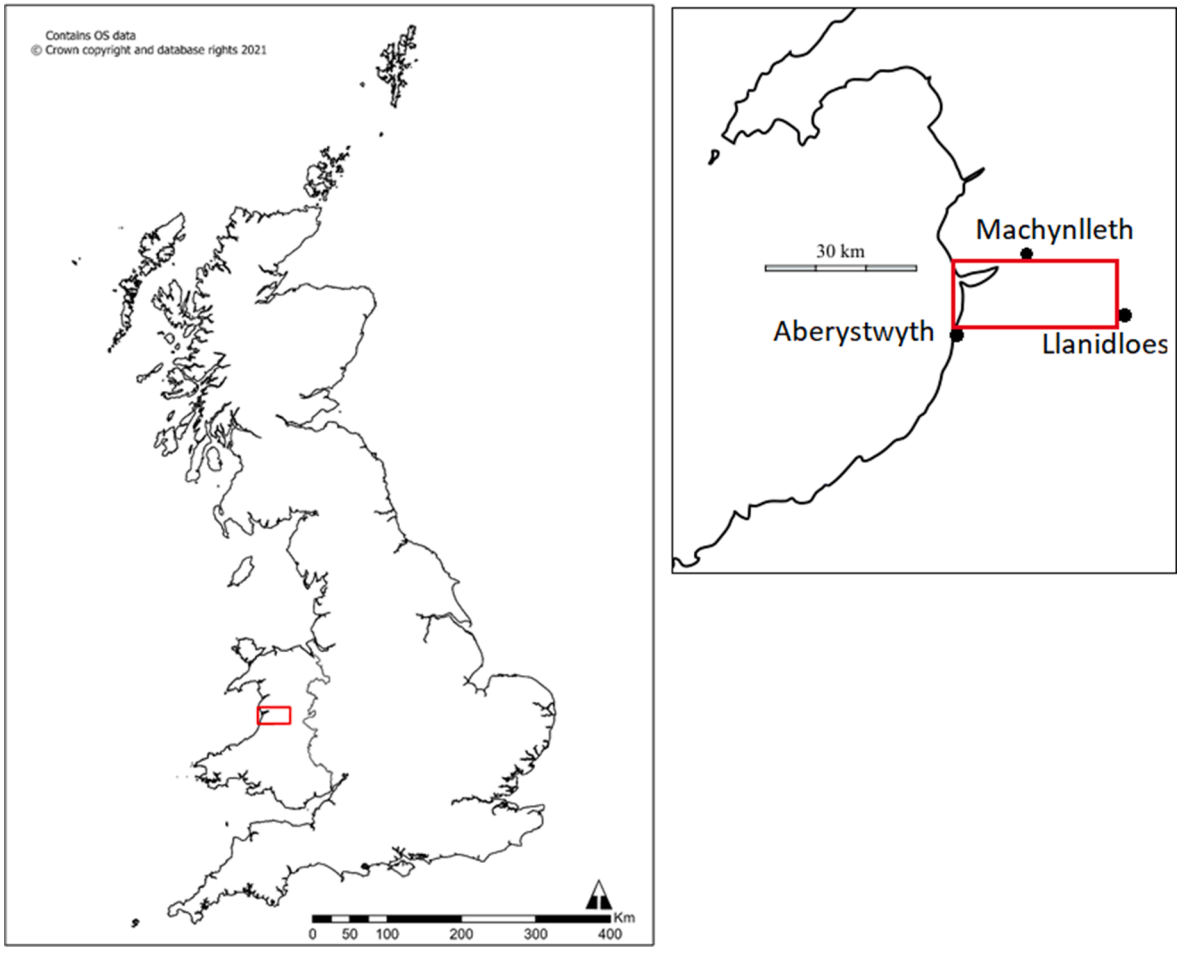

Fig. 1. Showing location of field site (box) within the UK, and the local context.

the eco-economy, understood as locally grounded "complex networks or webs of new viable businesses and economic activities that utilise the varied and differentiated forms of environmental resources in more sustainable ways", relying on new ways of deriving value from nature, such as new forms of farming, community wind farms, and ecotourism – including initiatives associated with nature conservation and recreational landscapes. The multifunctionality of upland landscapes in Europe has been recognised within policy for decades, with incentives to diversify income, although this has focused on landscapes dominated by traditional agriculture rather than other landscapes such as wilderness or conservation spaces (Barnaud and Couix, 2020).

Secondly, public concern about the environmental impacts of farming and about conditions of food production, such as welfare of farmed animals, has led to changes in government policies and regulations (Wynne-Jones, 2013).

Thirdly, neoliberalism has emphasised reductions in rural subsidies, as part of wider laissez faire economics and a slimmed down state. One consequence of this is that reductions in subsidies, combined with reductions in the price of agricultural products, has made agriculture unviable in marginal areas, resulting in widespread land abandonment (Beilin et al., 2014; Benayas et al., 2007). This can impact upon landscapes, as forests and scrubland replace maintained agricultural systems, and accompanying changes in biodiversity as species that thrived in traditional agriculture decline, and as forest and scrub species increase. It can also impact upon the cultural values that have been created by traditional agriculture practices in relationship with their associated landscapes. Whilst phenomena of globalisation may drive land abandonment, the impacts can be reshaped by national and local factors such as political interventions, economic policies and cultural trends (Beilin et al., 2014; Halfacree, 2006). In particular, policies to prevent or reverse land abandonment have been based on, and aimed to reinforce, the cultural value of these landscapes and their associated cultural identities, such as through subsidies, land stewardship programmes, and agri-tourism (Beilin et al., 2014; Barnaud and Couix, 2020). Land abandonment has also created spaces for conservation approaches which emphasise the benefits of lower levels of human intervention in the landscape, particularly rewilding (DeSilvey and Bartolini, 2019, Navarro and Pereira, 2015), often drawing on an explicit critique of the environmental impacts of traditional agriculture. Rewilding is a loose paradigm in conservation that emphasises lower levels of human management, and restoring and granting greater autonomy to natural ecological processes (Holmes et al., 2020). As well as 'passive' rewilding approaches, in which land abandonment and reductions in farming intensity are celebrated or encouraged, 'active' rewilding approaches involve intervening to bring back missing ecosystem processes, such as reintroducing locally extinct species for their role in performing ecosystem functions such as grazing and predation. Such approaches have been critiqued for ignoring the relationships that local communities have with their landscapes, and the values that underpin it (Convery and Dutson, 2008, Vasile, 2018), though rewilding advocates argue that rewilding can create new relationships or revive older ones (Holmes et al., 2020, see also Drenthen, 2012). Whether this happens, and if so how, remains unclear. A key tension in this literature is whether rewilding visions are 'outsider' impositions largely contested from the 'local / insider' perspective. Whilst some research indicates that advocates can be locally embedded (Wynne-Jones et al., 2018), it is not clear how diverse the opinion of affected communities is, as analyses have largely focused on the perspectives of farming stakeholders within those communities.

Fourthly, as a result of these trends, the demography of rural populations is changing, with two main trends. Land abandonment has led to depopulation in the areas affected, particularly of younger generations (Beilin et al., 2014; Benayas et al., 2007). At the same time as depopulation in some areas, there have also been new incoming populations and activities in others. Amenity migrants are moving to rural areas, driven by a search for an alternative and better quality of life, based on a recalibrated work life balance and a concept of a rural idyll (Bender and Kanitscheider, 2012, Cortes-Vazquez, 2017). This is a pattern increasingly observed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (Weeden et al., 2022). Such amenity lifestyles are produced by certain kinds of economic, cultural and social capital, particularly those associated with idyllic rural landscapes and their communities. Similarly, at various points in time and places in Western Europe, 'back to the land' movements have aimed to create alternative and radical communities. These are about both landscape and community, creating alternative social and economic arrangements in relation to alternative ways of producing food and living from the landscape, underpinned by a desire to be closer to the land and nature (Halfacree, 2006, Chan et al., 2016). An important outcome of these population changes (and associated lifestyle and value shifts) is a contestation of the purpose and form of rural landscapes by actors rooted *within* rural spaces. This complicates discussions of justice in relation to the impacts of landscape change, as such changes cannot simply be characterised as an external imposition. Nonetheless, a locals (insiders) versus incomers (outsiders) dynamic has been prevalent in such debates (Woods, 2003; Halfacree, 2006; Wynne-Jones et al., 2018).

Whilst these changes are related to long term and global trends, the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union has the potential to alter the nature and pace of these changes within the UK. It has the potential to radically rework rural economies and societies, particularly through changes in subsidies and regulations. For example, former EU farm subsidies will now be replaced with new schemes that emphasize the delivery of environmental public goods as a means to address the climate and biodiversity crises, representing an opportunity for accelerating shifts towards post-productive landscapes (Defra, 2021; Welsh Government, 2020). As many farm businesses in marginal upland areas are not financially viable without subsidy support, significant changes are likely to result from this policy shift as farmers either adopt environmental measures or risk going out of business (Dwyer, 2018). As the above discussion outlines, changes in the farming economy have wider ramifications for rural communities. As a consequence, the physical, economic and social makeup and meaning of the UK's rural areas is likely to see significant change in coming years.

These four trends and associated changes are doing more than producing new communities and new economic activities, through different land uses and management practices they will each produce their own physical manifestation on the landscape. The physical makeup and appearance of the landscapes, the species, uses and ecological processes present, will differ under different uses. These landscapes are part of the politics of the rural, particularly the way in which this makeup and appearance is contested, what is considered appropriate and desirable, or not, and by whom. As we argue below, the relationship that individuals and communities have to their landscapes are particularly important in the politics of the rural, by informing the values and visions different actors hold and try to assert. This is both with regards to how people *do* relate to the landscape, and normative arguments about how people *should* relate to the landscape.

1.2. Relational and eudemonic values

Whilst the geography literature has long explored such connections between economies, activities and landscapes, recent work drawing on ecological economics as well as relational ontologies has examined the values that are placed on nature and on rural landscapes, particularly through the relationships that individuals and communities have with their surrounding natural environment (Chapman et al., 2019). As a concept 'relational values' is still novel, but builds on deeper roots within the social sciences and humanities to understand the particular processes at work in terms of what is valued and why, and how these values feature in contestation (Chan et al., 2018). Specifically, relational values are those that come from the relationships and responsibilities that people have with other people, and in this case, with other things,

be it species, places or ecosystems. They can be both individual (what this bit of nature means to me, in many ways) and collective (what my society's relationship with this bit of nature means to my society) (Chan et al., 2012, 2016). These relationships can draw upon multiple discourses – for example, individuals might subscribe simultaneously to multiple value framings in their relationship with pastoral landscapes (biodiversity, historical heritage, public safety), and incorporate new discourses and ideas over time (Barnaud and Couix, 2020). They are often fine-grained and place specific – whilst relational values with nature can be about the non-human world more generally, they are often about particular things in particular places. For example, in farming landscapes, livestock breeds and finely detailed farming practices are given particular value because of their connection to a place, in a way that is legible and valued by local farmers but not necessarily by outsiders (Chapman et al., 2019).

An important but often overlooked subset of relational values are eudemonic values, which relate to ideas of how to live a complete and meaningful life (Knippenberg et al., 2018). Rather than being about immediate benefits from nature, eudemonic values are found in longer term, reflective, connected, relationships with nature, oriented towards a morally correct life worth living (van den Born et al., 2018). The values of a group or individual are often not isolated aesthetic preferences, but linked to their identities and eudemonic values, and the correct relationship with the landscape. For example, a common theme in farmers' relationship with the landscape is that of the 'tidy' farm, whereby the ability to manage the landscape in a particular way, producing certain patterns of vegetation, demonstrated care, competence, knowledge and dedication on the part of a 'good' farmer who produces a landscape that looks as it should (Chapman et al., 2019). Similarly, the notion of 'stewardship' of the environment or landscape is used to signify a valued reciprocal relationship between humans and the non-human world, a relational value based on care for, knowledge of, and agency towards the environment (West et al., 2018). Analysing relational values makes the relationships between actors, communities and landscapes explicit, and allows them to be analysed in detail.

Whilst relational values have been relatively neglected within environmental policy (Chan et al., 2018), they are very important for how people view, value and interact with nature. Relational and eudemonic values can be the most frequently cited values for nature in surveys on how the public value nature, more so than the intrinsic (the inherent value of nature in and for itself) and instrumental values (nature's value for its contribution to people) which more frequently form the basis for environmental policy (Chan et al., 2012; Knippenberg et al., 2018). Relational and eudemonic values can strongly influence individual and collective identities and actions, such as through ideas of natural heritage, social responsibility and stewardship of landscapes and nature, often drawing strongly on the historically created relationships between communities and their surrounding natural environment (Chan et al., 2016, van den Born et al., 2018; Bremer et al., 2018). The success or failure of projects to manage rural landscapes can depend not just on economic values and incentive payments, but on how well they align to the relational and eudemonic values of landowners and land managers (e.g. Chapman et al., 2019; Bremer et al., 2018). For example, farmers often consider farming as a lifestyle, identity and stewardship role rather than just a job, and are motivated by a strong sense of what makes a good farmer, and a clear idea of how this translates into the physical farm landscape. Interventions that do not align with these values can be seen as threatening them, which can doom such interventions to failure through opposition and non-participation (Chapman et al., 2019). Viewed through this perspective, opposition to change is not a matter of parochialism or 'NIMBYism', but a defence of the relationships that exist locally between people and landscape, and attachment to place (see Devine-Wright, 2005).

Understanding relational values is important for understanding the politics of the rural because, as a result of their role in shaping attitudes and behaviour, they can be at the heart of conflicts over rural change. Different rural stakeholders may hold different relational values to differing landforms and land use patterns, and this can be a source of conflict, for example, between those who favour pastoral upland landscapes and their associated histories and values related to grazing, grassland landscapes, food production and biodiversity, and those who favour wooded, or 'rewilded', upland landscapes based on different histories and values (Barnaud and Couix, 2020; Wynne-Jones et al., 2018). Similarly, conflicts between farmers and others who favour the 'tidy' landscapes produced by 'good' farmers as custodians of heritage, and those conservationists who favour nature-led wild landscapes are about the underlying values, and different relationships with nature. Conflict is, therefore, not just about demographic, employment or cultural differences, but how these are associated with particular relationships with the land. In turn, policies around creating or preserving landscapes can favour different people and relationships, depending on which landforms (and by association the relations and values) they promote (Barnaud and Couix, 2020; Ellis et al., 2019).

To resolve this, we may need to replace programmes which value nature in one way with systems that allow multiple, competing ways of valuing (and hence relating to) nature, and which are explicit about identifying and addressing trade-offs and power relations (Ellis et al., 2019; Bremer et al., 2018; Berbés-Blázquez et al., 2016). Resolving competing views is nonetheless challenging, as they are based on different values rather than different facts. Research should consider that these same power relations can suppress certain ways of valuing nature – for example, where a certain view of the 'proper' landscape becomes hegemonic, and dissenters feel unable to openly express alternative preferences and values. This is a point that Barnaud and Couix, (2020) observe in relation to the persisting dominance of agricultural framings despite the various challenges to farming that we have discussed here.

Relational values are demonstrably important in how people view, value and behave towards the environment and nature. By looking at the politics of the rural through the lens of relational and eudemonic values, we can understand people's relationship with the environment and landscapes, and how their values arise from these relations. It allows us to understand how these values are constituted and why they are occurring, through ways of being and interacting, not just as a consequence of a fixed role, situation, or social group. It also shows how these relationships and values translate into political contests and struggles, particularly over questions of the 'proper' and legitimate form of the rural landscape, in both its cultural and physical sense. Equally, this approach reveals how particular relationships, and relational understandings, are embedded in longstanding livelihoods and ways of life, meaning that conflict is often aligned with social difference but giving us clearer insight into why that occurs.

The following section outlines our study of the politics of the rural and relational values in conflicts over the future of landscapes in west Wales.

2. Methodology

We based our study in the Cambrian mountains of west Wales, UK, an ideal location for exploring future landscape change, as it is dominated by upland rural landscapes which, like many in Europe, are facing economic challenges and potential significant changes in land uses, particularly from changing subsidy regimes (Beilin et al., 2014; Merckx and Pereira, 2015). It may experience further radical shifts from the UK leaving the EU, as outlined above (Dwyer, 2018).

This area is also the location of the Summit2Sea landscape-scale ecological restoration and economic redevelopment project (www.summit2sea.wales), which was being planned at the time of our fieldwork (July-September 2018) and publicly announced shortly afterwards. Initial public announcements included some framing related to rewilding, though this has since been dropped following concerns amongst the local community. Whilst there has been some previous

study of rewilding conflicts here (Wynne-Jones et al., 2018), there has been limited assessment the diversity of views wihtin local communities, as noted in section 1.

The field site encompasses the area between the three market towns of Aberystwyth, Machynlleth and Llanidloes. Beyond these, this is an area of low population density, where the economy is dominated by farming, forestry and rural tourism. Land is predominately marginal livestock grazing, with very limited areas of more productive lowlands in valley bottoms and the coastal strip. There are many environmental designations in the area, including the UNESCO Dyfi Biosphere Reserve, National Nature Reserves, a Ramsar wetland site, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Special Areas of Conservation. Land tenure encompasses a mix of public ownership, by Natural Resources Wales; charitable bodies (including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Woodland Trust); Crown Estate and commons; and private farm and forestry ownership. Whilst there are significant challenges from population decline and ageing within the overall region, particularly the more remote areas, there has also been notable investment and innovation, for example through the EcoDyfi and Pentir Pumlumon community development initiatives. The University in Aberystwyth and 'Centre for Alternative Technology', (an eco-centre, established in 1973 to promote sustainable living), and their spin-off 'eco-economy' businesses, have also generated an influx of younger migrants, creating a more heterogeneous community.

To explore the discourses around landscape change, we used Q methodology, a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach to identifying and analysing discourses, which has been used widely in geography and conservation research (Sneegas, 2019; Zabala et al., 2018 – see Watts and Stenner, 2005 for a detailed guide to the method). Q is useful for identifying respondent's worldviews and the values that underpin them, with great potential for exploring socio-cultural and historical contexts of people's relationships with nature (Berbés-Blázquez et al., 2016). Q identifies particular subjective positions amongst the study population, assuming that whilst there are as many viewpoints as there are members of the population, these cluster around certain worldviews. Whilst these positions may not correspond perfectly with the views of any respondent, collectively they capture the variation and distribution of opinion. In Q methodology, participants order approximately 35–50 short statements on a topic from highest to lowest level of agreement, producing quantitative data, whilst explaining their views, producing qualitative data. The positions are identified and explained through statistical analysis of the ordering and qualitative analysis of participants' views. It is a useful technique for exploring in detail what views exist, but not their distribution within a population.

Whilst most Q studies use short text statements to identify discourses, here we follow Milcu et al (2014), and use a selection of images to explore subjective positions around landscape change. We used images because we were interested in land uses and landforms, which were more easily captured in images than in short statements, and because we expected participants to react more easily to images. Furthermore, the visual medium is central to how people interact with their surroundings, although our methodology is less adept at capturing the influence of other senses, and of the embodied experiences of living in and working and interacting with these environments. Our method thus allowed us to explore attitudes and relationships to individual bits of nature through the positioning and discussion of individual images, but also holistic worldviews by looking at the overall placement and discourse of the respondents. Additionally, approximately half of the local population speak Welsh, and many key cultural expressions of landscape and identity translate poorly into English (Wynne-Jones et al., 2018), and images can avoid some limitations of translated statements.

In our study, we strove to capture landscape elements - key land uses, land forms (different kinds of vegetation and ecosystem), anthropogenic landscape structures, and key species. This included current and potential future landscape elements which were either desired or unwanted by different interest groups. To do this, we firstly read publications produced by different groups expressing explicit or implicit opinions on what should or should not be contained within local landscapes, including farming groups and business, environmental organisations, local rural business (e.g. shooting, tourism, forestry, outdoor pursuits), cultural heritage organisations, and local and national government reports. We also explored media reports and books relating to rural change in the Cambrian region, and identified direct quotations from local actors expressing an opinion on landscape change. This encompassed 122 distinct sources. From this, we drew up an initial list of 134 potential images to include in our study, which captured current, desired or unwanted landscape elements. We reduced this following standard Q methodology approaches (Watts and Stenner, 2005). We removed images that were similar, or those which were not considered important to the landscape visions embodied in the sources. We aimed to have a sample of a manageable size which captured a diverse set of landscape elements, capturing key desired and undesired land uses, landforms, landscape structures, and species. After several iterations reducing the sample, this resulted in 38 images (see supporting information SI1), which were printed out for the survey. In selecting images, we aimed to capture a version of that landscape element that was as clear as possible. For example, we cropped photos to remove any other features that might distract from the particular landscape element in question, and we aimed for consistency of composition. Where images related to elements that were currently present, we used images taken within the field site, aiming to select 'typical' expressions of that element in the region (for example, livestock breeds considered common and 'native' to that area). These images are not 'neutral', just as text-based Q statements are not. The lighting, composition and other factors can affect responses in the same way as the precise wording and grammar of textual Q statements. Indeed, Q-methodology, with its focus on exploring subjectivity, is adept at capturing how respondents are interpreting each image. Although images were locally sourced, this does not negate the influence of how this landscape is represented in media, and how ideas and images about this field site travel. Acknowledging the representational impact of these images was therefore a noted part of our analysis alongside the insights on relational values drawn out.

To be eligible for our survey, participants must be able to express an opinion on a desirable future for the Cambrian Mountains. We identified participants who were living within the area, sampling purposefully to achieve a broad spread of views, and a broad and relatively balanced demographic (see Fig. 2). We firstly identified key sectors (e.g. tourism operators, farmers) and approached suitable respondents. We supplemented this by asking respondents to identify others who may have views on the survey topic, including those which clashed with their own. Our sample of 63 participants is relatively large for Q methodology.

Following a common protocol, participants laid out the images out onto a grid (see supporting information SI2), in relative order from things they would most to least like to see. To better understand participants' reasoning for their preferences and the underlying values, we encouraged them to provide a running commentary on the placement process. After the sort was completed, we asked participants to explain the overall distribution, and their views on the four highest and four lowest ranked images, and any other notable images, and asked them if any other important landscape features were absent. All interviews were conducted in English, as only half the team spoke Welsh. Interviews took place in participants' workplaces, homes, or in 'neutral' sites such as cafés. This qualitative information was recorded in field notebooks, and subsequently coded inductively to identify key themes that explained how participants had interpreted the images, and the rationale for their placement on the grid. The sort and interview combined lasted between 45 and 90 minutes per participant, typical of Q methdology. We found that respondents were typically very enthusiastic during the Q, and were keen to recommend others to participate in the study, because they were keen to share their views on what they considered an important topic, and because the interactive nature of Q was an enjoyable experience.

Male	31
Female	32
Farmers/ farming related	10
Non-farming primary industry	1
Conservation	7
Tourism/ recreation	8
Infrastructure/ transport sector	6
Retail	4
Rural crafts	3
Service sector	9
Retired/student	7
Other	8

Fig. 2. Demographic characteristics of research participants, by gender, and by primary occupation. Note that some individuals work across multiple sectors (for example, a farmer who also works in tourism by hosting bed and breakfast guests) but they are described here by primary occupation.

3. Results

We analysed the quantitative data using Ken-Q, using centroid analysis. We rotated two factors (see Fig. 3) based on Eigenvalues, scree plots, and our interpretation of the qualitative data, following standard Q-method criteria (Watts and Stenner, 2005). We decided on two factors, as addition factors were below an 'elbow' in the scree plot, and had eigenvalues of < 1. Together, the factors explained 53% of the variation, with eigenvalues of 23.5 and 8.9. We flagged respondents' Q sorts to these factors using Varimax analysis. Of the 63 participants, 37 loaded onto the first factor, meaning that their responses were close to this factor to a statistically significant degree, 25 on the second. 1 did not load onto either factor. We analysed the qualitative data from respondents loading onto each factor, identifying key themes that explained the placement of statements within the relevant factor. Both factors were coherent across the qualitative and quantitative data, meaning that the qualitative data supported the description of both factors produced by the statistical analysis. (SEE Fig. 4.).

The factors are described below. Where we refer to a particular image, we list in brackets the image number and the normalised Q-score for that image for that factor. We include qualitative data for respondents who loaded onto that factor.

3.1. Factor 1: Socio-ecological rebalancing

This factor was defined by its opposition to perceived industrial monocultures of all kinds (farming, quarrying, forestry) because of the associated political economy, and its impacts on biodiversity. It demonstrated a strong emotional connection to wildlife, and saw a connection between landscape form and the politics of distribution. It favoured a transformation of the rural economy towards something perceived as more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. As such, we call it socio-ecological rebalancing.

This factor was relatively less in favour of sheep (11, −1) and sheep farming (25, −1), cows (24, −1) and relatively neutral on their resulting landscapes (9, 0). Respondents considered that whilst sheep were iconic to the area ("tourists expect to see them"), they were a harmful monoculture that dominated landscapes, and produced "barren", "green desert" landscapes, and they should be reduced – one noted "there's place for them but I want 90% less". One respondent described sheep as "maggots on the landscape". Sheep grazing was seen as creating extensive monocultures, preventing a more diverse "natural" ecosystem from emerging. Some respondents critiqued the fact that such damaging activities were dependent on public subsidies (now set to change). Similarly, large arable fields (20, −3), and conifer plantations (13, −2) and logging (18, −4) were critiqued as "industrial", "sterile" "ecological deserts", harmful to biodiversity and soil health, which dominated landscapes and whose economic benefits did not flow to local people. The only non-domesticated animal with a negative Q-score was red grouse (29, −1) because of the negative impacts of land management practices aimed at maximising grouse numbers, particularly moorland burning, because sport hunting was for "toffs [derogatory term for wealthy elites] that come from elsewhere", and for animal welfare reasons.

Instead, respondents preferred a resource use and farming economy with greater diversity, and which emphasised ecological sustainability, local benefits, and craftspersonship. Respondents favoured coppiced woodland (2, +3) and wild mushrooms (27, +1) as examples of small scale, sustainable, skilled land uses. Even though the associated sheep-farming was viewed negatively, this factor had relatively positive views of drystone walls (5, +1) as an example of local craft and heritage. Mountain biking (1, 0), camping (23, +1) and hiking (14, +1) were viewed as benign or positive additions, providing low impact recreation benefiting local economies, in contrast to more destructive 4*4 offroad driving (3, −2). Derelict farms (4, −2) were interpreted as symbols of collapsed smallholder farms due to intensive agriculture.

There were positive views of environments such as flower meadows (19, +4) and lakes (36, +2), and locally extant wild species such as red squirrel (31, +3), butterflies (26, +3) and particularly bees (38, +5) as general symbols of healthy biodiverse environments. Red Kite (16, +2) were viewed similarly, but many respondents noted that they were a local conservation "icon" following a decades-long high-profile conservation project.

This factor strongly favoured restoring lost or suppressed ecosystems and species, as part of a more balanced, more correct relationship between people and nature. There were strongly positive views of oak woodland (12, +5) as a prime example of a biodiverse ecosystem, providing wider benefits such as habitats, protecting soil and supporting human wellbeing, and which had been replaced by industrial farming. These woods were seen as the local ecosystem "as nature intended", "real trees". The factor had positive views of lynx (28, +2), boar (22, +2) and beaver (7, +4) as examples of essential, "natural", "native" but missing biodiversity, whose reintroduction would support broader biodiversity, creating a more "balanced nature". They were a "litmus test for the state of the environment". They were also considered more "exciting" than domestic and extant species. Respondents recognised that each could be potentially disruptive, but this was viewed in a positive sense of changing the landscape for better, for example, beavers as "natural engineers" that would rework rivers and reduce flooding. There was a desire to see "animal-managed" woodlands, as part of a broader critique of the excess of human intervention within the landscape. Whilst we were careful to avoid introducing the concept of rewilding whilst conducting the surveys, a good number of respondents independently mentioned it as a positive concept which explained their desire to see these species and to see the landscape changed away from monocultures to something more diverse.

3.2. Factor 2: Managing farming heritage landscapes

This factor was defined by its strongly positive views of traditional farming, its heritage, economic contribution, and the role of farmers in producing, stewarding and controlling the resultant tidy landscapes. It had strongly negative views of threats to this coming from outsiders, including from rewilding.

Image		Factor 1		Factor 2		Consensus/ Distinguishing
		Norm	Z-score	Norm	Z-score	
7	Beaver (Castor Fiber)	4	1.37	-3	-1.41	D
28	Lynx (Lynx Lynx)	2	0.89	-5	-1.89	D
11	Sheep on upland grassland	-1	-0.68	5	1.82	D
22	Wild boar (Sus Scrofa)	2	0.97	-4	-1.42	D
25	Farmers with sheep	-1	-0.55	5	1.56	D
20	Field with straw bales	-3	-1.23	2	0.75	D
24	Cow	-1	-0.32	4	1.34	D
34	Traditional farm buildings	-1	-0.39	4	1.25	D
9	Grazed upland grassland	0	-0.23	3	1.1	D
33	Shooting activity	-5	-1.67	-1	-0.49	D
23	Wild camping	1	0.36	-2	-0.7	D
2	Coppiced woodland	3	1.13	0	0.09	D
27	Foraged mushrooms	1	0.54	-1	-0.35	D
18	Logging activity	-4	-1.34	-1	-0.49	D
29	Red Grouse (Lagopus lagopus)	-1	-0.44	0	0.29	D
12	Oak woodland	5	1.81	3	1.09	D
19	Lowland flower meadow	4	1.35	1	0.69	D
6	Heather moorland	0	0.32	2	0.93	D
1	Mountain biking	0	0.18	-1	-0.37	D
38	Bumblebee (Bombus sp.)	5	1.57	3	1.03	D
15	Slate quarry	-5	-1.9	-3	-1.36	D
31	Red squirrel (Sciurus Vulgaris)	3	1.2	1	0.72	D
36	Upland lake	2	0.93	1	0.48	D
26	Butterfly (Euphydryas aurinia)	3	1.17	1	0.74	D
5	Drystone wall	1	0.44	2	0.85	D
32	Hydroelectric dam	-2	-0.72	0	-0.3	D
14	Hiker on moorland	1	0.38	0	-0.02	D
30	Wind turbines in moorland	0	0	-1	-0.39	D
3	Recreational 4*4 offroad driving	-2	-1.12	-5	-1.5	D
21	Birdwatching	0	0.12	0	-0.13	C
17	Electricity pylons in moorland	-3	-1.26	-4	-1.49	C
13	Conifer plantation	-2	-0.87	-2	-0.68	C
8	Fly fishing	0	-0.11	0	0.07	C
16	Red kite (Milvus Milvus)	2	0.97	2	0.87	C
35	Newbuild house	-3	-1.24	-2	-1.18	C
10	Blanket bog	1	0.44	1	0.5	C
37	Static caravan park	-4	-1.27	-3	-1.25	C
4	Derelict farmhouse	-2	-0.81	-2	-0.78	C

Fig. 3. This lists the normalised Q-scores (denoting where a respondent who aligned perfectly to that factor would have placed each image) and z-scores for each image for each factor. It lists which images were distinguishing statements at $p < 0.01$, where a respondents' placement of that image is statistically significant in aligning them into either of the factors, or consensus statements at $p < 0.01$, where there is a statistically significant similarity in the placement of that image across both factors. Statements are ordered from those with least to most consensus across the two factors.

This factor had an extremely positive vision of traditional farming, with grazing sheep (11, +5), farmers with sheep (25, +5), cows (24, +4) and traditional farm buildings (34, +4) the most positively viewed images. This was based on the place of farming in local economies and livelihoods - "farming is fundamental to the economy" – and sense of place - "Wales is farming", "wouldn't be Wales without the sheep". Although the sheep and cow images were taken in west Wales, a number of respondents moderated their views of these images to being slightly less positive than they might otherwise be, because they considered them not to be purebred stock from traditional local breeds. A very

Fig. 4. This shows the most and least favoured images for each factor, by lowest and highest z-score. Clockwise from top left; Image 15: Slate quarry (least favoured for factor 1), Image 12: Oak woodland (most favoured for factor 1), Image 11: Sheep on upland grassland (most favoured for factor 2), Image 28: Lynx (least favoured for factor 2).

positive view of traditional farming underpinned favourable views of other images, on the basis that "the other images would fail without farming", and "farmers hold the key to all the images on the board. Farmers have always maintained the landscape, we are the land managers". Respondents made references to millennia of farming that had created valued human artefacts such as buildings, walls and paths, and ecosystems, such as grazed moorland. Drystone walls (5, +2) were locally important examples of craft and long-term human investment in the landscape. Upland grassland (9, +3) was valued as a traditional anthropogenic landscape which supported valued biodiversity, particularly birds, and provided ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration. Various respondents commented that the landscape in image 9 was healthy, neither overgrazed nor undergrazed, which could lead to scrub encroachment and wildfire, and that it had been carefully managed by sheep farmers. Images of arable farming (20, +2) were positively viewed, but less so because they were considered less emblematic of the area. Farming, done correctly, was seen as lying at the heart of a healthy economy and environment, and essential to local sense of place.

There were relatively negative views of conifer plantations (13, −2) and logging activities (18, −1). Whilst there was some sentiment that conifers were just another crop, supporting jobs and providing an income from the landscape, there was opposition to their extent and the way it replaced other systems, displacing small family farms. Respondents noted that they were "ambivalent", "not too keen", "not mad keen" on forestry, making it at best tolerated, in contrast to the clear expressions of enthusiasm for livestock farming.

There were relatively positive views of extant biodiversity. There was a desire to increase rare but environmentally essential native broadleaf forest (12, +3), even though it was economically unproductive. This was rated higher than coppice (2, 0). There were positive views of red squirrels (31, +1), with respondents noting that they need protection from invasive grey squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*), and of red kite (16, +2), which was viewed as a charismatic local symbol, and whilst previously rare, were now abundant. Bees (38, +3) and butterflies (26, +1) were seen as essential pollinators worthy of protection.

The factor was relatively negative towards camping (23, −2) because it was associated with litter, wildfires and damage, and relatively neutral on mountain biking (1, −1) and hikers (14, 0), as whilst these were seen as potentially contributing to local economy, some respondents saw anti-social biking and walking as a danger to livestock and a major inconvenience to farmers. There was stronger opposition to 4*4 offroad driving (3, −5), who were seen as outsiders who destroyed bridlepaths and the wider landscape. This is part of a wider view on landscape tidiness and exogenous threats to it. Similar to factor 1, the relatively negative views towards new housing (35, −2) was because, although respondents identified a need for more rural housing, the house in the image was seen as unsightly and out-of-place.

This factor had strong negative views on what were described as "barmy" [crazy] potential species reintroductions such as lynx (28, −5), beaver (7, −3) and boar (22, −4). Lynx and boar were viewed as a danger to the public as well as to livestock, particularly lynx predating on lambs. Respondents mentioned a previous "episode of lynx-mania" when a female lynx escaped from nearby Borth Zoo, and was shot dead by an approved marksperson a few weeks later (BBC News, 10th November 2017). Several respondents erroneously claimed that this lynx had killed up to 10 sheep during this escapade. Boar were viewed as "scary" and "dangerous" to humans, and hugely messy through rutting and turning over soil, and making forest management difficult. Like 4*4 offroad driving, such creation of mud, ruts and mess was a threat to tidy landscapes. Several respondents noted that they had seen boar impacts on forests elsewhere. Some argued that beaver would damage watercourses, causing problems in drought and flood situations, and potentially eat fish (beavers are in fact hervibores). Species introductions were seen as a threat to management regimes, generating uncertain outcomes (boar were "too wild"), and making the landscape more difficult to manage – one respondent stated that boar would "increase rapidly, and go out of control eventually. They've got herds of them in the Forest of Dean and they've got them increasing there, they can be dangerous". Related concerns were raised about biosecurity implications of reintroductions. Underpinning all this opposition was a strong sense that reintroductions were unnecessary, with no respondents mentioning any benefit from having them (tourists would be "put off" rather than attracted to the area following any reintroduction). The species themselves were seen as "not native", and that "this isn't their natural habitat". One respondent noted that beavers might have existed in the

area in the past but "once it is gone, it's gone", and another that "we don't have the wilderness like Italy, Scandinavia do. It's all good until you have to pay the bill. I've seen what a lynx has done to a farmer, mental health and everything", although there were not the same attitudes to species which have become locally extinct in recent history, such as red squirrel, or those which had been extirpated in recent history and reintroduced, such as red kite. As a sign of opposition, multiple respondents stated that they would shoot these species should they be reintroduced.

As with factor 1, respondents brought up the concept of rewilding, although we did not introduce it during surveys. Rewilding was viewed negatively, as a threat to unique Welsh traditional landscapes and associated biodiversity, brought in by outsiders who don't understand the area. As a result, "rewilders go silent" on issues of Welsh language, culture and local economic issues. There was criticism of the academic understanding of landscape held by rewilders who haven't worked the land, in contrast to the "common sense" knowledge of farmers, grounded in their experiences and relationship with the land.

4. Discussion

Our research demonstrates the different visions that exist for this landscape, how they can be understood in relation to wider rural changes, and what values, and forms of value, underpin these visions. Our methodology was very effective in allowing people to easily express a holistic vision for the landscape overall, detail on particular images, and also to share the values and ideas that underpinned these without prompting. We strongly endorse image based Q methodology as a tool for understanding landscape preferences and underlying values. Below we discuss three broad areas: the visions present and their underlying values, areas of agreement and disagreement, and how this fits into the broader context of rural change and politics.

4.1. Visions and values

Two distinct factors were identified, with distinct preferences for the future of this landscape, and each with their own informing values. The socio-ecological rebalancing factor wanted a move away from livestock farming monocultures, their associated landscapes, economic structures and social and cultural hegemony. It favoured moves towards a more 'balanced' and fairer economy based on craft and more sensitive production, which would allow autonomous nature to flourish. It saw relatively strong intrinsic value in nature, particularly its attitude towards extant and locally extinct fauna, and their impacts on the environment, which were considered to have a right to exist in that place. Here there are strong relational and eudemonic values like the creation of a sustainable and diverse natural environment and economy, the benefits of being immersed in a diverse nature, and the strong sense of place and the economic, cultural, social and spiritual linkages between the particular local ecology and local communities.

The managing farming heritage landscapes factor values traditional sheep farming as the cornerstone of local identity, culture, economy and biodiversity, which should be retained in the face of diverse external threats. Nature is valued both instrumentally by underpinning the farming economy, but also intrinsically, both in terms of the biodiversity in anthropogenic pastoral landscapes and more autonomous native species and woodlands. Some species did not possess this same intrinsic value because they were harmful, and because they were considered to have been locally extinct for sufficient time to be no longer considered as native and belonging to Wales. There were strong relational and eudemonic values grounded in the traditional Welsh farming landscape, economy and culture as definitively Welsh, the product of centuries of stewardship, reflecting local care, knowledge and agency in creating these landscapes. Opposition to change was rooted in people's attachment to place, and how potential changes would disrupt the relationships that exist locally between individuals and communities and the local environment, rather than narrow self-interest. Whilst Q-method does not sample representatively, and thus although all farmers in our sample loaded onto the managing farming heritage landscapes factor we cannot claim that all farmers in the region would do so, farming work is clearly linked to these eudemonic values.

For both factors, respondents noted how work and life experiences, particularly correctly performed, locally grounded jobs, and the relationships with landscapes that emerge from these, are at the heart of how they value landscapes. Relational values of stewardship of a tidy, controlled, managed and traditional farm landscape, so important to farming communities in other studies (Chapman et al., 2019), were of critical importance to the managing heritage farming landscapes factor in our study. Our study supports the idea that relational and eudemonic values, particularly those grounded in work, are central to how people value nature, and to rural conflicts.

In addition to relations, representations of how rural Wales is viewed, defined, and ideas about what it should look like, are important in these factors. Representation works very differently across the two factors. For some respondents loading onto the maintaining heritage landscapes, the discourses of tradition, heritage, and tidy, managed landscapes, were central to their arguments about how rural wales should look. This was encapsulated in responses such as that it " wouldn't be Wales without the sheep", and "this landscape needs to be managed". Whilst these participants were all locals, these ideas also reflect how this landscape is desired to be from a distance, strongly resembling the tourism and cultural heritage related media which we consulted when selecting potential images for the study. For the socio-ecological rebalancing factor, respondents noted the strength of such representations, but viewed them as a barrier to change by reifying certain ideas, land uses and expectations. For example, one noted that because "tourists expect to see [sheep]", this created a "barrier" to alternatives given the economic and discursive power of tourism. There were some positive references to the aesthetic beauty of woodlands, animals, drystone walls, and to the ugliness of inappropriate developments, particularly quarries.

Whilst some actors may wish to speak for the local community, and claim certain values and views as being those of the community, and others as belonging to outsiders, it also clear that there is significant division *within* the local community about the desired future for the local landscape, and how it should be valued. There is no singular local vision or community view, yet strategic claims are made about which views, values and forms of nature are local and which are from outside, echoing the analysis of Wynne-Jones et al. (2018).

Such divisions are not about facts, but about values. For example, there is consensus that the sheep farming landscape has been created by centuries of traditional farming practices (a view supported by palaeoecology - see Stevenson and Thompson, 1993), and that sheep farming is culturally, economically and ecologically dominant. There is also consensus that boar and beaver had been historically present but absent for centuries due to human activity, and that their reintroduction would disrupt the local ecosystems in potentially unpredictable ways. It is a matter of values whether these ovinogenic ecosystems were considered either as desirable, traditional, and sustainable emblems of the area and foundations for local ways of life (managing farming heritage landscapes factor), or as wrecked systems long stripped of their natural biodiversity ripe for critique (socio-ecological rebalancing factor). Similarly, beaver and boar would either be welcome native engineers restoring systems to their proper state (socio-ecological rebalancing factor), or disruptive invaders whose absence meant they no longer belonged, and who would cause havoc and be impossible to control (managing farming heritage landscapes factor). These values are not just instrumental and intrinsic, but they have a strong relational and eudemonic character – there is a strong sense in both factors of what these landscapes mean to individuals and communities as a result of their lived engagements and relations, and their perceived role in a good and appropriate life. Such values-based divisions are more challenging to address within environmental

policy (Ellis et al., 2019).

4.2. Division and agreement

The most divisive images related to traditional farming landscapes and locally extinct species. Sheep farming is well established in Welsh culture, identity, economy and landscapes(see Yarwood and Evans, 2006), but is also critiqued for its dependence on subsidies and environmental impact, including by formerly local writers (Monbiot, 2013). Divisions over species reintroductions mirror experiences elsewhere (Arts et al., 2012, Ericsson et al., 2018), driven not just by their immediate economic impact or risk to humans, but also because they are powerful social, cultural and political symbols for both proponents and opponents (Pooley et al., 2017). These divisions are often framed as insider/outsider conflicts between urban metropolitan elites and marginalised rural communities (Holmes, 2007; von Essen et al., 2014), although here we see both strong local support and opposition.

Whilst our findings challenge the insider/outsider distinction made in analyses of human-wildlife relations, it is consistent with other studies of landscape preferences in the region, notably around conflicts over wind turbines, where there is both support and opposition from within communities, and where both opponents and supporters can claim to speak for 'the community' (e.g. Woods, 2003; Mason and Milbourne, 2014). This reflects the increasingly heterogeneous nature of rural communities, and the multiple positions that rural occupants now hold in terms of their background, sympathies and ongoing behaviours, but shows that claims of a 'local' and cohesive 'community' position are still powerful – and thus continue to be invoked. As Wynne-Jones et al. (2018) argue, the construction of an authentic and legitimate position in land use debates is often framed in terms of such 'insider' positioning. Here different groups within a community can be cast as outsiders, particularly those deemed to be 'incomers' (even when they are long-term residents).

Within the literature on 'the politics of the rural' more broadly, 'outsider' threats have been important prompts to political mobilisation (Woods, 2006; Mason and Milbourne, 2014), particularly in terms of corporate influences and pressures of globalisation. This concurs with some areas of agreement across the factors observed here. Specifically, there was agreement over the rejection large infrastructure (dams, quarries) and inappropriate developments and activities (caravan parks, houses, offroad driving). These were rejected because they were large in scale, unsympathetic to local needs and traditions, and because many of the benefits would flow to outsiders. A rejection of overly powerful outsiders imposing their interests on the landscape was widespread in the sample, but who such outsiders were considered to be was different across the factors. Respondents loading onto the socio-ecological rebalancing factor considered outsiders as the principle proponents and beneficiaries of dams, quarries, forestry plantations and shooting, and that these inhibited moves towards a more sustainable landscape. Respondents loading onto the managing farming heritage landscapes shared this view, but also included environmentalists and rewilding advocates as overly powerful outsiders. Some compared rewilding to colonialism and to controversial dams created to provide water to English cities (see Atkins, 2018). This connects to wider invocations of colonialism in the Welsh context, which adds an important nuance and historical reference point to the politics of the rural observed here (Mason and Milbourne, 2014). Yet, it should be noted that many respondents associated with rebalancing factor were both local and enthusiastic about rewilding, affirming our broader argument that contestation is clearly occurring *within* communities, not solely between communities and outside influences. The managing farming heritage landscapes was also concerned with tourists' impacts, a more quotidian and longstanding threat from outside.

Together, these points of disagreement and agreement reflect particular socio-cultural and political legacies within the region and the deep intertwining of landscapes and nature with these politics. By approaching these questions through the lens of relational values we draw attention to the ongoing ways of relating (in both discursive and practical terms) that continue to reproduce the values driving the differences observed here.

4.3. Rural politics and change

The findings clearly align to the 'politics of the rural', rather than 'rural politics'. Whilst farming was clearly a central theme throughout the data, the issues raised when discussing the landscape were far from limited to questions of agricultural production and related economies. This included consideration of social issues, the quality and nature of rural life, questions of community, values and belonging, and who gets to decide the future of the landscape, and how people should relate to the landscape. Different actors claimed to speak on behalf of rural communities and the countryside, to assert their vision of what counts as appropriate, representative, traditional, and belonging, in contrast to those brought by outsiders. The managing farming heritage landscapes factor is particularly assertive in making claims that the local people (which they delimit to farmers) must decide the landscape's future, based on values of tradition and stewardship. The socio-ecological rebalancing factor was also critical of outsiders, albeit to a lesser extent, and emphasised a more inclusive and just balance of power within the community, more attentive to injustices and accommodating a greater variety of rural enterprises and land uses. Despite such claims to speak for a singular community, implicitly united and homogenous, the differing visions revealed important differences and disagreements within rural communities.

It is important to consider the power of each vision, how they shapes policies and the physical landscape, and how this might be changing. The power of farming heritage based discourses in influencing policy, and in some cases excluding alternative visions from being expressed, is documented elsewhere in the literature (Beilin et al., 2014; Barnaud and Couix, 2020). Farmers also control considerable amounts of land, but are becoming increasingly socioeconomically vulnerable, and see themselves as marginalised by the conservation agenda which is aligned to government and urban elites. Rewilding discourses in particular are becoming increasingly prominent, with the creation of dedicated rewilding NGOs, such as Rewilding Britain who have been active in the field site, and ministerial endorsements of the principles of rewilding. There is a need to develop an approach which can explore how different visions, sometimes overlapping, sometimes clashing, can be accommodated in the same spaces, acknowledging the different forms of power that underpins them.

Our research found that the issue of conservation, particularly rewilding, divides opinion. Rewilding as an approach is expanding, with several landscape scale rewilding projects underway within the UK. Many respondents, including both opponents and proponents of rewilding, raised the topic without prompting. The socio-ecological rebalancing paradigm, with its critique of the environmental impacts of what it sees as monocultures of traditional sheep farming and its enthusiasm for restoring species and ecosystems, is aligned to this paradigm, whereas the managing farming heritage landscapes, which has the inverse opinion, is opposed. Since the fieldwork was conducted, the Summit2Sea project has suffered significant setbacks because of local opposition, and several partners have withdrawn. This included Rewilding Britain, who withdrew when their presence and ideas became too controversial, and a local development trust (Ecodyfi), who withdrew because of concerns about the lack of social, cultural and economic focus within the project. The Summit2Sea project has subsequently reframed its ideas, dropping all mentions of rewilding, and prioritised local livelihoods, economies, culture and language.

Despite opposition, our research has shown that there is support for rewilding amongst local people, and the experience of another ecological restoration project in the area demonstrates that, with compromises and reflection from all parties, such projects can succeed (Wynne-Jones,

Strouts and Holmes, 2018). In that case, adjusting the project to acknowledge local values and relations with the land, and emphasising these connections such as through use of Welsh language and heritage concepts, was important for its success. Further, whilst other studies have identified tensions between the value framings of members of local communities and the goals of rewilding, proponents of rewilding argue that rewilded landscapes can refresh or create new ways in which local communities can relate to nature (Holmes et al., 2020). As one respondent aligning to the socio-ecological rebalancing factor explained "The [beaver, lynx and red squirrel] represent the reintroduction of species, which is good again for biodiversity and also for cultural heritage…. I guess it's similar to losing a language or a musical tradition: the loss of species is a loss of relationship".

The methodology and findings presented here allow us to identify where consensus may be found, and tensions resolved, over rewilding. Following the general principle that opposition makes conservation more difficult (Holmes, 2013), rewilding is more likely to succeed if it has local support, which may only come if the landscapes and ecological processes it produces can become part of local people's relationships with their environment. In this Welsh case, heritage and tradition were central to these relationships, but there is considerable difference between the two factors. For the managing farming heritage landscapes factor, heritage was very important, and equated with extensive sheep farming and the landscape, cultural artefacts (e.g. drystone walls), language and community it produced. This aligns strongly with the hegemonic way in which this landscape is represented in media. For the socio-ecological rebalancing factor, heritage was mentioned but less frequently, and was oriented around traditional crafts such as coppicing, drystone walls, traditional farming buildings, whilst, in an apparent contradiction, critiquing the farming system that created some of these. Both factors also saw heritage value in local species such as butterflies and bees, and ecosystems such as oak forests. Rewilding may succeed if it focuses on these areas of consensus, and recognises and refocuses the relationships that people have with their environment. As a successful example, DeSilvey and Bartolini's (2018) research on rewilding in Portugal shows how rewilding advocates referenced local Palaeolithic cave paintings to emphasise the localness of rewilded horses, and therefore the relationships that people should have with them, and the landscape they produced. Rather than erasing human history, this was an attempt to refocus ideas of heritage and human-environment relationships onto co-habitation with wildness, alongside some maintenance of existing relationships and land uses.

Notably, both factors intersect with issues of rural decline, land abandonment and depopulation, but in different ways. These are crucial issues in the study site, given both long term pressures and the potential for significant change in agricultural subsidies and regulation following the UK's exit from the EU, as outlined earlier. Both factors showed concern for rural decline, as reflected in negative views of abandoned farmland, but differed in ideas about future directions. This reflects broader tensions across Europe over agricultural futures, particularly about struggles between celebrating and maintaining traditional farming and associated communities and landscapes, against moves towards post-productivist land uses, including broader eco-economies and more land sparing relative to sharing (Kitchen and Marsden, 2009; Milcu et al., 2014). Such tensions may become particularly acute in Wales and the rest of the UK, as discussions evolve over the future of the UK's rural areas after leaving the EU. The maintaining farming heritage landscapes factor was clear in seeing a future based on maintaining the cultural, economic and ecological status of traditional agricultural production against outside threats. It best aligns with previous EU policies of strong protections and subsidies for extensive agriculture, particularly of otherwise uneconomic livestock farming, which we are now moving away from in the UK. The socio-ecological rebalancing factor embraced moves towards broader eco-economies (Kitchen and Marsden, 2009) in particular, looking at other ways to make money from, whilst also in its view enhancing, the natural environment, whilst considering social justice factors. Land abandonment that might result from farming becoming unviable in marginal areas as a result of changing agricultural policy would, in some ways, be welcomed by this factor as opening up new opportunities for nature, and potentially new enterprises, a view present elsewhere in Europe (e.g. Ceauşu et al., 2015).

However, whilst the broader literature emphasises divisions between insiders advocating heritage landscapes and outsiders pushing for change, in our case we see division amongst insiders, and enthusiasm for change within the community. Our work adds nuance and detail to the more binary portrayal of insider/outsider divisions in discussions of rural landscape futures. By exploring the basis of such divisions through the framework of relational values we can push beyond fixed notions of social difference to better understand the ongoing practices and relationships which underpin and maintain the distinctions observed here. But equally, though our use of Q methodology we can better understand the areas of alignment and overlap in stakeholder's perspectives and priorities.

5. Conclusion

Rural landscapes, societies and politics evolve, and there is a need to understand the desires of rural residents and others towards potential pathways of change, and the landscape values that underpin these. Our work in Wales shows that image based Q methodology can identify key discourses relating to desired futures, areas of consensus and disagreement, and the values that underpin these discourses. It has shown that different visions emerged from shared facts but divergent values. Relational values, stemming from peoples' ways of relating to each other and to the environment, have been discussed here as critical dimension of this.

Whilst individuals and discourses may claim to speak on behalf of homogenous rural communities about a unified desire for the landscape against outside pressures, here we show that there are crucial differences within communities, and changes sometimes portrayed as externally generated threats can have support from within rural communities. Rural landscapes and societies will continue to change, as challenges from globalisation and from national and local politics of subsidies, trade and production continue, and our approach and findings can be applied to navigate through them. This is particularly applicable to the UK, where the UK's exit from the EU may result in radical changes to agricultural landscapes, and where very different visions for rural areas, particularly around rewilding, are being implemented in some areas. Our method can illustrate areas of consensus and divergence in what people want from their landscapes, and the values and ideas that underpin it.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Appendix A. Supplementary material

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2022.05.014.

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