
Original Article

Refrains and assemblages: Exploring market negotiations and green subjectivity with Guattari

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Abstract This article uses the philosophy of Félix Guattari to explore subjectivity among environmental consultants. Drawing on his exploration of processes of enunciation in the context of a critical appraisal of 'assemblage theory', it looks at how one environmental consultant operates and makes senses of her world, how she understands her practices and beliefs, and how the world around her shapes her existence. In experimenting with refrains that are teased out of fieldwork material, it argues that Guattari's examination of the production of subjectivity, his insistence on the variable relations between the material and the semiotic and the role that refrains have in disclosing complex territorial relations offer a useful counter to the homogeneous and abstracted register of meaning production that is presumed in much interpretation of qualitative interview data. The case of environmental consultants is developed as an example of the complex and contingent qualities of market action, contesting a view of the 'market actor' as the profit-hungry, value-free agent imagined by commentators on the nature of capitalism. Our Guattarian reading leads us to recognise the complexity of subjectivities formed at interstices of 'markets' and 'nature'.

Subjectivity (2014) 7, 385–410. doi:10.1057/sub.2014.18

Keywords: Guattari; assemblages; market actor; environmental work; refrains

Introduction

ecology must stop being associated with the image of a small, nature-loving minority or with qualified specialists. Ecology in my sense

questions the whole of subjectivity and capitalistic power formations
(Guattari, 2000 [1989], p. 53).

Environmental consultants, working on the protection or repair of specific elements of 'nature', including the prevention of damage to peat bogs, the protection of wildlife or the repair of contaminated land, often work in the ethically grey areas of advising property developers as to what they must do to meet environmental legislation and each warns us against unspecified others who do not do it right. Trained to degree level, networked, and often facing a tension between dreaded paperwork and pleasurable forest work, their visceral participation in changing 'nature', the 'built environment', the aesthetics of our lived world in a way that seeks to *neuter* the desires of a certain kind of property developer makes environmental consultants interesting subjects for the study of subjectivity. Thinking of them as 'green', as 'worker', as 'professional' limits how we can understand what they do, and why they do it. Established identity categories make only for a limited recognition of the complex way in which any field operates. In this article, we explore how Jenny, a nature-lover and qualified specialist (employing other qualified specialists) operates with

a very strong ethic, that is actually trying to give them a product that they might not want but we think they should have, but not everybody does, and that's part of our reputation I think.

This article explores the interweaving of Jenny's subjectivity with capitalistic forms of economic value and the natural environment in order to develop understanding of the assemblages through which markets operate, with stress placed on how contingent forming and reforming of values are in practice. Jenny is a long way away from the received critical ideas about the fragmented, schizophrenic subjectivity associated with the work of Guattari, as developed from his analytic practice, yet the article draws explicitly on unjustly neglected insights into subjectivity provided by the latter's work. Our analysis of Jenny's world draws in particular on Guattari's exploration of 'refrains' in relation to the production of subjectivity and, while it acknowledges the manifestly political and highly pragmatic qualities of his thinking about subjectivity (as part of his ongoing critical engagement with psychoanalysis), our account considers the way in which such thinking might be deployed as part of a social scientific concern with the everyday and mundane, rather than the psychotic.

Guattari's writing is of value to us here for a number of reasons. In particular, his approach to the idea of assemblages counters notable weaknesses in the current literature on assemblages, especially its neglect of subjectivity. His work enables us to explore the scope of processes and practices that are not easily reduced to the tenets of exchange value or the abstracted understandings of market action within the domain of 'work'. His conception of the refrain, in

particular, is developed here as a way to explore the transitions and shifts that can be gleaned from individual interview data in relation to broader material shifts in the configurations of agency in the life of a working subject. We intend to bring subjectivity back into a consideration of the complex assemblages of contemporary economic and social life. Our overriding concern has been with finding ways to address the ticklish problem of subjectivity partly in relation to the particular abstracted understandings of agency that pervade research in the sociology of work, and partly in relation to the contemporary turn to assemblages, distributed agency, lively materiality and so on that has formed in response to the analytic shortcomings of the abstractions of structure and actor in sociology, social and cultural theory more generally.

Identity, Assemblage and the Marginalising of Subjectivity

The empirical starting point for this article is a focus on the founder of a small environmental consultancy business as part of a wider study of green work.¹ By focusing on small business the aim was to compel recognition more broadly of how understanding the doing of work benefits from paying attention to markets, and vice versa, and to recognise the contingent nature of the emergence of market values. Tensions between kinds of values and the processes of valuation they imply become more obviously perceptible for insecure small business owners and employees, who do the work of making or selling or mending, as well as the work of management and filing tax returns and the like. Jenny operates as worker, manager, owner, service provider and so on, and she works with spread sheets, orchids, chemical tests and university scientists. How someone negotiates the considerable tensions that this situation creates raises interesting questions about subjectivity and the forms of agency it possesses, yet much of the literature on agency and value, particularly in the field of the economic, has little to say about subjectivity and its position *vis à vis* broader sets of forces and relations. Indeed, sociologists of work are more likely to consider identity than subjectivity, as indicated by discussions as to whether work is a salient source of identification (Strangleman, 2007), by how consumer identities may be relevant to doing some forms of work (Maguire, 2008; Sherman, 2010) or by understandings of professional identities (Fournier, 1999). Identity, however, privileges the knowing and knowable subject, and we find work (or 'consumer') identity to create unfeasible boundaries between work and 'life'. In (sociologically informed) management studies, where concepts of identity and subjectivity overlap, Foucauldian-inspired accounts of the activities of management in forming and inculcating working subjectivities and corporate cultures have been influential (for example, Knights and Willmott, 1989). The dispersed account of power offered by Foucault enables working subjectivities to be seen and articulated as

individualised and self-disciplining, but again forgets to acknowledge that subjectivity precedes and exceeds the mechanisms of managerial obligations and workplace resistance. Subjectivity is too readily collapsed into (work) identity, and work identity appears to be discursively produced, meaningful to those who have it and tangible to sociologists who reconstitute, say, the self-expression of an interviewee to fit it into a broad and abstract identity category. This marks ‘a peculiarly scientific conception’ (Fraser, 2009, p. 63) of the work of the sociologist. When work comes to be about identity, and when identity is all you need to understand subjectivity, we quickly lose sight of the processes constitutive of the production of subjectivity, in favour of a system of symbolic positions into which actors are slotted. But as Blackman *et al* (2008, p. 9) suggest, ‘the “subjectivity” of such individuals is not wholly accounted for by power, discourse and historical circumstances’.

When they focus on discourse, Foucauldian accounts tend not to attend to the processual qualities of the assemblages within which the discursive constructions of subjectivity take shape. The configurations of subjectivity, the ways in which capacities for action are shaped in intimate connection with material processes and the contingent actions of ‘things’, become rather difficult to read off from discursively constructed identities. For this reason – and others – we think that subjectivity may be more productively approached as a situated and decentred (as for Mol, 2008) element of an assemblage and as a factor in the relations between assemblages. Assemblage theory has gained ground in recent years, particularly – but not exclusively – in the fields of social and cultural theory (Venn, 2006), the sociological study of governmentality (Li, 2007) and geography (Anderson *et al*, 2012), where it has been used, for example, to explore geopolitics (Dittmer, 2013). Buoyed by Manuel De Landa’s (2006) systematising reading of Deleuze and Guattari and, more recently by the explorations of vibrant materiality conducted by Bennett (2010), and, indirectly, the ‘agential realism’ proposed by Barad (2007), assemblage theory offers a way of addressing the complex distributed forms of agency, the uncertain configurations of human and non-human agents, and the relations through which the actions of a combination of elements add up to more than the actions of the sum of those elements. For Bennett, working out of the problematics of political theory, this kind of vital materialism offers an important corrective to human exceptionalism, and its bid to figure ‘thing-power’ (which is to be distinguished from the causative powers of objects) back into our understandings of the world has an obvious relevance to research seeking to address the tensions between economic action and the growing unpredictability of the natural environment. Green workers are frequently intimately and passionately connected to the environments they work in, and there is a materiality and a passion in what they do that complicates abstracted understandings of market action or worker identity.

Assemblage theory obviously also chimes with the more broadly recognised insights of actor-network theory into the contingent and uncertain bringing

together (and holding together) elements of the human and non-human worlds in the generation of social order. For our purposes, the ways in which actor-network theoretical literature has drawn on the idea of assemblage in making sense of markets has been particularly helpful (for example, Callon *et al*, 2002; Mackenzie *et al*, 2007), not least because Jenny in our study presents many recognisable traits of the market actor: much of the work of the environmental consultant involves negotiating with clients in the context of a competitive market, and Jenny is responsible for the market strength of her consultancy. However, our references to Jenny as a market actor in this article entail some qualifications, derived both from our reading of actor-network theory and assemblage theory more broadly.

Actor-Network Theory's (ANT's) attention to socio-technical assemblages in particular provides a welcome acknowledgement of the complexity of economic action (Çalışkan and Callon, 2009), of the role of the non-human actor, including the market device (for example, Mallard, 2007), and of the performativity of economics as a discipline (Mackenzie and Millo, 2003; Callon, 2007). Much of the work in ANT explores the complex markets in financial goods, and considers the technical systems that make possible financialised capitalism (for example, Mackenzie *et al*, 2007). We suggest that other kinds of markets, that likewise also include

rules and conventions; technical devices; metrological systems; logistical infrastructures; texts, discourses and narratives (e.g. on the pros and cons of competition); technical and scientific knowledge (including social scientific methods), as well as the competencies and skills embodied in living beings.

(Çalışkan and Callon, 2010, p. 3)

merit a different kind of attention, one where the machinic assemblage implied in the idea of the 'socio-technical' is placed alongside the semiotic; where the 'performativity' of market action is understood as influencing the intimate spaces of working lives; and where subjectivity and its hesitations, urges and attachments become significant, if problematic, components of such assemblages and the connections between them, and where the lively materiality of the natural world and human relations to it bears more sustained consideration.

However, although much work adopting an assemblage theoretical approach offers a welcome consideration of the material complexities of the socio-technical, and/or an address of the non-human elements of agency that provides a useful corrective to overly abstracted accounts of action, we suggest that its approach to assemblages entails an understanding of subjectivity that is limited. Indeed, much work on assemblages concerns itself so strongly with non-animate actors that the worlds that are studied can feel unpeopled (Mol, 2002 is an exception). And while we recognise that consideration of subjectivity would not be precluded from such work, the downplaying of human actors that characterises ANT does tend to leave human thought and speech in the mind, mouth

and hands of the researcher. This position seems to be unsatisfactory to us, and is suggestive of the ways in which old subject-object habits of thinking can persist even where conceptual frameworks that unsettle or challenge such addictions have been developed. Here, by contrast, we propose to extend existing research on socio-technical assemblages with the help of Guattari to develop an understanding of the subjectivity of green workers, their values and the constitution of such values through practice, without translating them into pat frameworks. Careless use of conceptual tools to flatten subjectivity, to read it off from structures or precipitously to individualise it, to separate it out from the material contours of an environment, or think it as a game of identifications, obscures the singularity of situations and hence the real possibilities of transforming them.

Rethinking Assemblages with Guattari

The primary philosophical reference point for research that draws on the concept of the assemblage is usually Gilles Deleuze, or Deleuze in his writings with Félix Guattari. And although systematising accounts of assemblage, referring to Deleuze, do useful theoretical work, they risk missing the crucial and original contribution of Guattari to the development of the concept, along with some of the more interesting – and perhaps less comfortably formalisable – aspects of what thinking with assemblages might entail. In this regard, we think that it is worth noting a number of key points about assemblages as understood by Guattari that recommend his thinking as a way in to understanding the subjectivity of green workers. Note, however, that this section is not a comprehensive ‘introduction to Guattari’, whose work is often difficult and has been hampered in the English-speaking world by a lack of translations of key texts.²

Guattari worked out of a radical tradition that fused militant political activity with an intensive engagement with the analysis and treatment of mental health issues – specifically patients with serious problems of psychosis – most notably at the La Borde clinic. The concept of assemblage not only has a very precise role to play in Guattari’s understanding of the institutional contexts of psychosis, but was developed with a view to an ongoing theoretical and practical engagement in a problematic of the production of subjectivity. His late shift towards developing ‘ecosophy’ is quite explicit in this regard – the challenges faced by the destruction of the natural environment cannot, he argues, be solved without a renewed approach to subjectivity (2000 [1989], pp. 35–40), but his earlier, more notorious work with Deleuze on psychoanalysis prefigures this, in ways that might make uncomfortable reading. Their claim that desire is ‘part of the infrastructure’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984 [1983], p. 104) informed their later arguments linking assemblages with subjectivity: ‘The rationality, the efficiency of an assemblage does not exist without the passions the assemblage brings into play, without the desires that constitute it

as much as it constitutes them' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004 [1987], p. 399). Of course, concepts are developed and used in ways that exceed their original formulation, as has been the case with many uses of the concept of the assemblage. However, if significant facets of a concept then get ignored, in this case the relation to subjectivity, then it is reasonable to redress the balance. Having said that, the value of Guattari's own (provisional and apparently circular) definition of subjectivity as 'the ensemble of conditions which render possible the emergence of individual and/or collective instances as self-referential existential territories, adjacent, or in a delimiting relation, to an alterity that is itself subjective' (1995, p. 9) may not be immediately obvious, outside a clinical or perhaps developmental context, although it does point towards several related issues. One is the link between subjectivity and existential territories, which we will discuss in more detail shortly. The second issue is that in its emphasis on conditions that 'render possible', we find his pragmatic analytic concern with possibilities of value (say those of treating the seriously ill, or of responding to the destructive effects of capitalism). In his own version of analysis, the unconscious (a term Guattari retains for convenience more than anything else) is turned, as he puts it, towards the future, and to the generation of values other than those of the market. Here his complex understanding of subjectivity is framed in terms of the possibilities for its future production, in response to a difficult present. The third is that he understands subjectivity in terms of relations of transversality. Transversality is a key concept for Guattari. Initially developed in the context of the La Borde clinic where he worked for all his adult life, it originally denoted a kind of 'institutional transference' explicitly opposed to psychoanalytic transference and its reliance on the one-on-one situation of the analytic dialogue. In this respect, transversality allowed Guattari to understand the institution of the hospital itself as a kind of 'modelling clay' able to generate situations conducive to the treatment of patients, exemplified in the way that the kitchen at the clinic could generate a situation in which patients might 'open up' (Guattari, 1995, p. 69). In work with Deleuze, transversality comes to acquire a more explicitly social sense, referring to the complex rhizomatic networks of the unconscious in its relations to power. In his final writings it becomes a speculative concept that allowed him to think through the connections between the 'three ecologies' (respectively: Guattari, 2004 [1974]; Deleuze and Guattari, 1984; Guattari, 2000 [1989]). For the purposes of this article we adopt an understanding of transversality as a quality of relations between, and sometimes beyond, elements of an assemblage – connections between individuals, or groups, and things, institutions, technologies and so on, that matter, that are registered subjectively, that have a resonance, impact or repercussion.

Guattari's thinking through of subjectivity in terms of transversality helps us make better sense of another aspect of the concept of assemblage that has been downplayed. This is the idea that assemblages are always both machinic assemblages of bodies and collective assemblages of enunciation. The agency of assemblages, as Jane Bennett points out, is critically linked to the lively

materiality of the distributed elements of an assemblage – to the machinic assemblage of bodies, in Guattari's terms. But ignoring enunciation in this context once again means subjectivity is a little too easily overlooked. There are important parallels between the idea of the collective assemblage of enunciation and Foucault's conception of discourse (parallels that both Deleuze and Guattari in their own, separate, work on Foucault encourage us to see). However, Guattari (2009) gives greater emphasis to the processual elements of enunciation and to what he calls a 'micropolitics of existence and desire' and a 'pragmatics of existentialisation' and contrasts this to the view that would see Foucault's work as limited to a single type of 'global intervention in the de-subjugation of social groups' (pp. 228–229). We can understand these differences in emphasis in part because of the way that the concept of the collective assemblage of enunciation emerges – at least in part – out of Guattari's prolonged practical and theoretical critique of the 'personological' understanding of language at work within psychoanalysis, and specifically, Lacanian versions of analysis. The relationship between subjectivity and language in analysis – the 'talking cure' – is reasonably well known (see Todorov (1970) on enunciation in Freud). However, Guattari (with Deleuze) argues that conceptions of language like those drawn on by Todorov (and Lacan), that infer features of the subject of enunciation (the one doing the uttering) directly from the grammatical features of the subject of the statement, are mistaken, overlooking the myriad 'machinic' processes animating subjectivity. What gives rise to a particular set of utterances in an analytic situation is not an 'individuated' unconscious open to coherent, if partial, reconstruction, but a potentially broader set of elements and processes – in short, an assemblage. An assemblage has a multiplicitous richness that is all too easily missed when analysis adheres to a methodological individualism that locks enunciation down via the privileged situation of the analyst/analysand, or researcher/respondent relationships. When considering how to engage with a qualitative interview, conceptualising and treating enunciation as a collective process in which different forms of expression may be at work, and in which the relations between expression and content are not given in any straightforward way (as they may be in linguistic approaches that insist on the coded correspondences between signifier and signified) asks and allows us to consider the interview as a more complex semiotic entity than is the case if one treats it as in principle an expression or manifestation of an individual's beliefs.

Connected to the crucial qualification of assemblages as collective assemblages of enunciation is the complex plurality of semiotic systems operative within an assemblage and Guattari's (2012) correlative refusal to accord any centrality to what he calls the 'homogeneous register of meaning production' (p. 207). Guattari's emphasis on the plurality of semiotics, on the *polyvocality* of meaning production, leads in part to the importance of considering the ways in which multiple (human and non-human) voices speak through an individual. As Deleuze and Guattari (2004 [1987]) put it, in typically picturesque terms: 'I always

depend on a molecular assemblage of enunciation that is not given in my conscious mind, any more than it depends upon my apparent social determinations, which combine many heterogeneous regimes of signs' (p. 84). This insistence on the heterogeneity of semiotic forms is connected more broadly to an understanding that the 'material' and the 'semiotic' are in a complex relationship to each other. Material content and semiotic expression 'feed into each other, accelerate each other, or on the contrary become stabilized and perform a reterritorialisation' (ibid, p. 96). This happens when a policy or regulatory diktat intervenes in the material relations of bodies human and non-human, or a 'natural' event (for example, 'Ash Dieback', the spread of Japanese Knotweed as a toxic plant, a too-hot summer) runs ahead of the expressive semiotic codes that stabilise it as material content. To understand how an interviewee reports on this means not only hearing what they say, but listening also to those who we have not interviewed. If we consider the heterogeneous, distributed elements of an assemblage, the variable relations between the material and the semiotic become readily obvious (graphs on a computer screen differ from promotional material on a website or the perceptual codes that an expert adopts examining peat bog erosion in a national park). But by the same token, Guattari's view requires us to address some of the ways in which Bennett's 'thing-power' may or may not be registered within the speech of an individual within an assemblage. What kinds of – transversal – connections might there be across elements of an assemblage? How do bodies, of all sorts, overlap with meaning and its production and how can they be detected within speech? This brings us to the final element of Guattari's work that we want to discuss, and another significant omission in the development of assemblage theory.

The examples that Deleuze and Guattari often use in their exposition of concepts – the idea of the collective assemblage of enunciation in particular – tend to come from the literary, obviously political, or therapeutic fields (their privileged point of reference, in fact, is Kafka). This can create difficulties for researchers working in more mundane areas. Indeed, the often highly accomplished professionalism of the environmental consultants whose interviews form the background to this article is a far cry from Guattari's patients at the La Borde clinic. However, Guattari is insistent that the kinds of 'semiotic discordances' – non-discursive points of rupture, moments of non-sense – that are so important to his therapeutic practice are as operative within the non-clinical world as they are in psychosis. Psychosis, as he puts it, 'haunts ... all the forms of normality' (1995, p. 79). The task for us here has been to try to find ways of making possible discordances visible, to present the disparities, tensions and contradictions that otherwise recede to the background. Of particular significance in avoiding settling for homogeneity in meaning production has been the concept of the refrain, or *ritornello*, which is crucial to the way in which Guattari endeavours to think with assemblages. It is discussed extensively in Deleuze and Guattari (2004 [1987]) and in numerous Guattari writings (1995, 2000, 2012) and has been used by

Stengers (2008) in a comparable ecological approach to the 'modern territory'. As with enunciation, the concept of the refrain points towards an aspect of Guattari's thinking about assemblages that has been somewhat overlooked in social science appropriations of his work.

The particular importance of the concept of the refrain for Guattari derives from the way in which it connected to three different aspects of all assemblages in their relation to processes of de – and re-territorialisation, as he sees them. It marks the initial emergence of an assemblage, the internal re-organisations of an assemblage, and possible passages to other assemblages, and quite possibly all three at once: infra-, intra- and inter-assemblage relations (Deleuze and Guattari, [2004] 1987, p. 312). In this respect, the refrain has an important methodological value for us, in that it forms an index that signals shifts in the individual and social cartography of experience, within often tightly composed sets of relations: a composing or recomposing of the rhythms and territories that make up experience, pointing to contingent possibilities for transformation that may or may not be acted on. 'Territories' here are not necessarily elements of geographical space, although they may be. For Guattari, territories (which he qualifies as 'existential') can be, and are, both more abstract and more concrete than this: an autistic patient banging his head against the wall may be generating an affectively embodied existential territory through his repeated action; brands in consumer capitalism seek to occupy semantic territories through the refrains of advertising; while the university professor who struggles in a supermarket but is eloquent in the auditorium is indicative of the subjective stability that is the counterpart of the consolidation of a territory.

However, the existential territories that are part of assemblages are rarely readily manifest and in this respect, refrains have an important analytic value, in that they help us address what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer to as the 'first concrete rule for assemblages', which is 'to discover what territoriality they envelop, for there always is one' (p. 503). But given the way that refrains are linked to different aspects or moments of assemblages and relations between them they also help us consider points of de-territorialisation and/or re-territorialisation, and hence the tensions, complexities and contingent opening up of possibilities within otherwise coherent and consistent discursive voicings of experience. For Guattari, working with his patients, a refrain is something that one might explore in analysis, for example, as pointing towards possibilities for a cure, as when an autistic patient's libidinous fixation may also be an opening into their closed world. Refrains are linked more generally to what Guattari (2000 [1989]) calls the search for 'dissident vectors' that run counter to the normal order of things, and through which new 'universes of value' 'make their presence felt as though they had been 'always already' there, although they are entirely dependent on the existential event that brings them into play' (p. 45). In this respect, refrains also help us consider ways in which fissures might start to become manifest in otherwise coherent and consistent subjectivity.³

Method

The actors we talked to in the course of this study were chosen from a purposive sample for their participation in settings that were of interest to the overall direction of the study. They were all working in either environmental consulting or eco-sales, as the original intention was to explore the inter-relationships between values and market practices among private sector green workers. In trying to use the idea of the refrain in particular to think through a qualitative interview, we draw on a long tradition of being cautious about what kinds of representations are produced in social research, and are sensitive to the various critiques of social science methods informed by ANT (Law, 2004), feminism (Letherby, 2003) and pragmatism (Allen, 2003). Taking the position that 'standard' qualitative methodology is itself a process of assemblage, within which and by which an interview 'subject' comes to be located means our analysis is a contingent and performative account that imagines and creates rather than explains and represents. Our strategy has been to take one interview, and one account, and hear its refrains, to see something of the world/s of an environmental consultant. In the discussion that follows we pull out some of the refrains we heard in the transcript to say something about subjectivity in relation to nature, work and markets. The repetitive nature of refrains gives rise to a written account that differs from a qualitative thematic analysis in its rejection of the abstraction of a 'theme'. Instead, we open our ears to multiple sources and contrapuntal refrains. And although we present one story of one life, our attention to refrains is not akin to narrative analysis: we do not aim to remake Jenny's own construction of her story but to speak at once from within and without this 'life', and to bring to light the contingent moments of becoming that lives envelop. We have tried to disclose the shifting sets of relations of which Jenny is a part (and are others, in different interviews), to consider what kinds of links there may be between the kinds of subjective tensions that were disclosed in the interview and the complex and contingent assemblages within which and as which market action evolves.

We have 'analysed' here by reading, re-reading, doing further research into the things mentioned by the interviewees, having conversations with each other, writing fragments and so on. Our incipient sense of a recurrent refrain generated further investigation, numerous re-readings of interview material in terms of a consideration of the territorial aspects of assemblages, and a consideration of the contrasts that could be derived from within the interview transcripts, and motifs from refrains noticed in other transcripts informed our development of Jenny's story. We found it impossible to map out in their entirety the assemblages that make up the worlds of all our interviewees, but we did not expect to be able to anyway: the point for us here was to develop a focused and intensive treatment of particular features of the material that we have gathered.

Silent Spring

Jenny is 62, and ‘years ago’ read the *Sand Country Almanac* by Leopold and *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson.⁴ Many others did the same, and these books were important to the emergent environmental movement. She was already studying biology, already thinking about protecting nature (and we note Jenny would have no truck with social constructionism’s prim ‘nature’). The transversal nature of experience, of experience felt as open and connected to things, can be unpicked from the interview text. Rather than re-working her story as though she articulated it as a linear account with an inevitable endpoint, from being inspired and angered by *Silent Spring* to setting up a business, we think Jenny’s story is more productively grasped in terms of an attempt to map out the transformations of a collective assemblage of enunciation, to chart movements and shifts in Jenny’s experience, processes of de- and re-territorialisation that become manifest as the interview unfolds. We explore the contrasts, tensions and unusual patterns of speech that emerge, where *Sand County Almanac* and ‘I’m not going to remember what it was called. It’s gone out of my mind ... *Silent Spring*’ are remembered as actively mattering, alongside her longstanding interest in nature and the subsequent set of contingencies and interests that are significant to her by the time of the research. Jenny has run an eco-consultancy business since 1972 (just after her MSc in environment studies), specialising in habitat. It began with her alone, part time with a small child (her husband did other work), and then she took on some subcontracted partners and employees. Now Jenny Porterhouse Consulting (a pseudonym) is ‘medium sized’, employing 40 staff. The consultancy is involved in conservation, ecology, wildlife and habitat protection, and landscape protection (for example, moorland restoration); it works with government, statutory agencies and the private sector (including some very large and eco-notorious companies). Many of Jenny’s early recollections are vague and fuzzy, like her memory of a book whose content means more than its title, and this is perhaps not surprising, given how long she has been in this field. But interesting contrasts emerge, and in the movement of these contrasts we might look for the work of refrains. We consider two of these refrains, and then pay attention to Jenny’s enunciative strategies.

Orchids

Jenny talks a lot about her expertise, about the operations of her organisation, about dealing with the property developers, government quangos and other kinds of clients, with all the difficulties that involves. These are issues that would perhaps be relatively easy to interpret as being about the necessary work of building a business in a competitive market. But things that crop up in Jenny’s

conversation complicate this perception, orchids for one. For a green worker – and this is a point worth emphasising – connections with the natural world do really matter, and it would be presumptuous to think that these connections can be dismissed on the basis that market (exchange) value has overwhelmed all other forms of value. But it would also be somewhat presumptive to reduce these mentions to signifiers in an abstracted discursive structure marking out the interviewee as identifying as a ‘nature lover’ or ‘eco warrior’. It struck us that Jenny, despite the fuzziness of her early recollections, singles out orchids when, towards the end of our interview, she returns to her beginnings:

I love the orchids, I did my BSc thesis on orchids. And there was one occasion when we had one orchid called a lady orchid and there was only one clump, the only one I knew, it was a rare plant. And when I came on holiday from university I’d go and check that it was still there, and there was one occasion I went to check it was still there and it had been picked. And I was absolutely incensed by that and I joined the Kent wildlife trust as a result of that.

Orchids, orchids, orchid, lady orchid. Not exactly punctuating the flow of her speech but proffered briefly and recurrently, they mark a striking contrast with discussions of keeping up with the latest technologies or telling it like it is to property developers. Lady orchids (*Orchis purpurea*), with ‘tubers ovoid; sepals forming hood, veined dark purple; lip broad, whitish spotted red. Woods and shady place on chalk mainly in Kent. Flowers May’ (Martin, 1976: plate 81) can be hard to identify, as they look similar to other orchids, and often hybridise with them. The orchid’s disappearance angered Jenny. Is this a representation of loss, say of a significant childhood memory and special place? It is true that it coincides with Jenny’s transition to adulthood and a difficult family dynamic with her brother (orchids do not ‘answer back’ in the way he does). But the matter is a little more complicated than that, we think. Their disappearance marks the removal of an earlier connection Jenny felt between herself and the world, between person and plant, and this event catalyses change, it opens up the world: she joins up as a result. She goes on to discuss a two year MSc taken a little while after finishing her degree, and although she still thrills enthusiastically about the ‘brilliant’ course, the ‘buzz’ comes because she was ‘already inspired’ through the catalysing effect of the flowers. The orchids, though fragile and contingent in the world, reappear and they keep on mattering. By treating the brief appearance of these orchids in the interview as a refrain (an ‘experimental’ decision, as it were, motivated by our perception of a shift in the rhythm of the discussion) we are able to see that their mention crystallises a moment of experience, clarifying memories that had until then been a little fuzzy, illuminating a region of the past, and introducing a contrast with the claims to and expressions of expertise she had already made.⁵ This asks us in turn to review and reconsider how we situate that

expertise within a broader assemblage, because the orchids modify the sense of what Jenny had been saying previously. They are only mentioned seven times, first in the context of a discussion of the collection of a long sequence of data (see below), then in the context of a broader discussion of the formation of here ecological beliefs and ‘certain events’ that affected her. The rarity of their occurrence in the interview, recurring in a few short sentences, is what, in part, makes them interesting: blink and you might miss them. While it is tempting here to think of the orchid symbolically, Guattari’s transversal conception of experience suggests that attachment to natural objects really is to those natural objects: the subjective investments of environmental workers are not necessarily displacements from more fundamental human relations. For this reason it is important that we try not to read the importance of the orchid for Jenny as primarily symbolic.⁶ Considered as a refrain, orchids here mark the opening up of a universe of value, a shift for Jenny that indexes a new set of affective connections with the environment: an ‘event’ that turned Jenny ‘more to the conversation’.

So, the growing environmental movement, Jenny’s increasing knowledge of environmental damage and activism and her shock and anger at the loss of the orchids made for a significant and productive moment. She joined a low-key campaign group, and also started to work in environmental activism and habitat protection. Such extraordinary moments are easily seen as crux points in a life: sudden changes have their origins in strong emotions. But the transversal qualities of the refrain and Guattari’s ecosophy remind us that revolutionary moments need to be understood in more complex ways: the orchid’s disappearance is important, but it is heard in the context of a broader refrain, a chorus of voices, in fact, acting as expressive markers of other forms of environmental damage as Jenny learns how to ‘think like a mountain’ (Leopold, 1970, pp. 129–133). The refrain indexes that these material shifts and changes in Jenny’s life draw together mental, social and natural environments in ways that are difficult, even impossible, to separate. The orchids trigger a movement, the emergence of an assemblage of social, natural and mental environment that, over some years and with numerous shifts, will form Jenny’s consultancy business. Changes to knowledge and feeling are made possible by the opening of a new universe of reference, where a different system of values exists, where the rare and fragile beauty of the orchid matters in itself and beyond itself. The refrain, here, functions as something that catalyses experience, and marks at one and the same time both a specific kind of existential territory and its opening up onto something else. Transitions happen through involvement with crucial elements of a collective assemblage of enunciation (and others do not resonate). In Jenny’s account, what sets off sympathetic resonance for the orchid becomes also care for and a scientific interest in the orchid so that ‘you realise the need to look after things, rather than take pleasure in them being there. They’re not secure’. Actions follow, a number of years spent teaching what she has learned, talking to children in schools, working for wildlife trusts, conservation groups and so on, serve to

generate an existential territory for Jenny, the outlines of a new assemblage. Setting up a one-woman business in habitat protection, running surveys, doing urban restoration projects, facilitates a continued relationship with nature.

The orchid-refrain in Jenny's life is also seen in her plans for the future, where the orchid is an affective link to the past, to her values and is also an object of her scientific interest, once again prized for its rarity:

I've also collected data ... from a place called Miller's Dale, Derbyshire wildlife trust, I have been recording some of the orchids there and what the vegetation's doing since 1977. So I've got this long sequence of data, and having a long sequence of data is a rare event in the ecological world Having got it, changes in climate, weather, then it could actually be a very interesting thing to do, well it will be, when I retire, to get the data on computer, and talk to my colleagues and ask them, because I'm not a statistician.

This long period of observation to generate 'raw data' (an insufficient term for something that is the product of a lifetime's fondness, curiosity and observation) turns into a plan for the future, and a collaboration that she hopes will generate some insights into the long-term changes and continuities in orchids. Science and expertise combine with the imperative to respond to nature now and later. Something similar becomes apparent when we tune into a different refrain.

Peat and moorlands

Amid a discussion of moorland, Jenny explains why a woman who lives in the north of England knows so much about a rare orchid that grows only in Kent: 'I don't come from up here, I just fell in love with the moorland'. Such feelings and affections are manifested in a project that she discusses at length, a project that supports the moorlands she loves:

So we've now done about 30 years worth of moorland restoration, and it's one of the things that I specialise in, I just love the moors.

Jenny twice refers to love for moorlands, and we interpret this in terms of an imperative to speak to, communicate with, work on and for, something other than the human world, which is both different to and co-exists with the desire to win business, earn money and generate profit. A complicated account of value is envisaged within Jenny's work. The moorlands offer something of a counterpoint to, and complication of, the orchid-refrain and they mark a different shift or transition in relation to Jenny's work. Where orchids seem to catalyse action,

opening up a universe, triggering a number of years of involvement in a range of activities, the emotional resonance of the moorland connects to her development as a market actor and to the consolidation of her work as a woman who has 'built' a business since her first commission in 1980. She has, as she points out, worked on moorland restoration for a long time and this work has facilitated the development of her business. To interpret this solely in economic terms seems wrong: What would that say about the love she feels? Is she kidding herself? This is one point at which we think that remembering the links between assemblages and the production of subjectivity is important: Jenny's affective connections and the values to which they are related sit in a sometimes tense and difficult relation to the economic. But they are not 'simply' subjective: she is attached to the moors and they have enabled her to meet the imperative she feels to conserve and protect. In the interview, the moors complicate the refrain heard in relation to the orchid, magnifying or intensifying the felt connection, reiterating a sense of contingency at the same time as indicating the considerably broadened scope for economic action they entail:

If the moors get dryer, warmer, there's more decay of peat, and peat over the whole country is the biggest store of carbon, more than all the forests of England and France together, which is huge. And we need to keep it, because if we release it all, then we're releasing carbon dioxide into the air.

Peat is produced slowly through the decomposition of moss. The disjuncture between peat's slowness and the rather more rapid timeframes of Jenny and her clients cannot really be 'managed'. We see here how different universes of value, marked by different temporalities, are in tension and conflict with each other. Jenny's love of the moorland encounters a complex market process whereby worth (which includes, but is not reducible to, a financial calculation) is assigned to the peat bog, in different ways for those involved. Jenny's company works with a water company to protect peat moorlands. The water company wants to avoid customers complaining about brown water coming out of their taps. For Jenny, the loss of carbon stores that results from the degradation of the peat bogs is dangerous and contributes to climate change, and the loss of an environment she considers to have 'majesty' is distressing. New peat arrives slowly, so slowly that its rhythm can hardly be heard. It is, however, used up rapidly, not least in response to demands from gardeners who became accustomed to using peat as a fertilizer in the 1950s and whose habit has not been broken. These different temporalities contribute to the urge to protect what peat currently remains. The science of moorland restoration, benefits to customers, benefits to water companies, what Ofwat (the agency that regulates private water suppliers in the United Kingdom) wants and permits, and what Jenny and her associates desire, come together in this instance, although they also operate at different speeds and carry different resonances. Rather than seeing all action as subsumed by the

market (and so implying that Jenny is motivated only by making money for her company), or seeing only the personal story of Jenny and how she thinks like a mountain, we can see here some of the material and affective complexities of the assemblage of environmental work. There are rhythms or timescales that do not operate harmoniously, attachments that sit at odds with the image of the peculiarly dispassionate self-interested actor; there are contradictory positions, competing agendas and agonistic moral claims. Despite the evident tensions to which they are subject, despite the disagreements and contradictory paradigms that they entail, these elements of content and expression can come together, can be temporarily stabilised. '[A] client driver, because the cost of cleaning water is so great', is also 'a much broader environmental question too'.

Orchestrating Enunciation: Policies and Preaching

Actor-network theory uses the idea of inscription to describe how elements of assemblages and interests are translated into material form, that is, how skills, texts, institutional arrangements and so on come to be black-boxed (Latour, 1987). We prefer instead to use the Guattarian idea of enunciation, as enabling us to capture both the inscription of rather obviously impersonal technological dimensions of practices, and the importance of subjectivity to the semiotic dimensions of assemblages. As well as getting her hands dirty, enunciation through writing and speaking are key elements of Jenny's work. This has been the case since she started working. She used to write nature trails, generate teaching material (pre-computers is all this, Photostatting) and develop surveys. Now she gives testimony at public enquiries, offers her clients 'bragging rights' and produces restoration plans for the moors. She intends to write a book when she retires. Her business deals with inscription. Inscriptions from elsewhere include laws and 'a lot of policy' and there are also those she contributes to forming as she produces practical guidance and biodiversity action plans. These elements of enunciation, which Guattari would refer to as forms of expression (rather than inscriptions), have complex and pragmatic, material effects that tell us something about the assemblage of the elements of green work. For Jenny and her organisation, the complex agency of nature, the 'thing-power' of peat bogs, snails, silage, nitrogen polluting water, is not all that shapes the way in which work is done. Enunciation matters too. The moors 'speak to' Jenny, and law, guidance and action plans themselves give her work its temporality. Her anticipation of action generates a rhythm for the work she does, that her colleagues do and that she expects clients to do. She just calls it 'thinking ahead and advising'. If we were to describe it as framed by a calculative, preference ordering rationality, with typical features of entrepreneurial opportunism readily highlighted, that would mean we had taken a shortcut and ignored some

important features of the organisation of enunciation and its configuration as part of an assemblage. We consider two specific dimensions of this, while recognising that others matter too. First, we consider how what is heard matters as much as what is spoken. Second, we look at the care that Jenny takes to speak.

The effects of enunciation are complex, operate at different levels and are far from pre-accomplished, even if they are routinised within work, because they may be resisted. Speech is not always welcome, any more than are the documents and other kinds of expression that make up 'regulation'. Very often, Jenny finds herself dealing with people who do not welcome what she is doing, or who sit, instead of act, on the reports her organisation produces. To put it more simply, not all clients are keen to comply with environmental regulations, and such a situation requires negotiation, diplomacy, or, as she puts it, 'orchestration', which is not easy. This is a delicate work that coordinates and re-orders the relations between agencies itself through a collective process of assembling material:

We have to approach it in as diplomatic a fashion as possible. We have to use the law, and the requirements of the EU in order to make our arguments. And once we've done that, and you do it gradually, and you don't just sort of, it's not a bomb, you say are you aware that this might, that sort of attitude, um, so that it, by the time you've got to the point where you might otherwise have dropped the bomb, they know that there's going to be something, so they're prepared.

Jenny puts her organisation at the centre of this orchestration of temporary harmony and charges it with mediating between agonistic groups with different agendas, both those present in the room and those represented by guidelines and policies. Only part of the story about 'orchestration' is on display here. The grey work of monitoring, data-gathering, the careful preparation of surveys that happens behind the scenes is not acknowledged directly at this point, although Jenny does talk about it elsewhere and it is of course crucially important to the possibility of standing in front of an audience whose economic interests do not predispose them to being receptive. Jenny talks to us by modulating pronouns (we, you) in a way that mutes but does not deny her own presence, and in doing so, her organisation's expertise, its backstage work, its mediating position is modulated into 'brownie points' or 'bragging rights' for clients – a radically different form of enunciation to that taken in the regulations and guidance documents.

The choice of words matters, because words do things, and multiple small moments in our interview show how careful enunciation must be. The diplomatic processes of 'orchestration' Jenny described above are delicate and hedged with all kinds of limiting statements. She seems constantly aware of the risks and dangers of enunciating in a way that cannot be heard by others, to avoid them

thinking 'that's Jenny going on again', When we suggest that perhaps she has to bite her tongue quite a bit, the silence on the recording sees her, well, biting her tongue. 'Mmm' is all she says. She fears preaching and being preachy, she makes compromises to fit 'in with the wider picture' and takes care with the art of speaking in order to find the kinds of words that can be heard. Here we see that orchids, peat bogs, the moors undergo considerable semiotic transformation within the complex web of human and non-human elements of the assemblage of green work, 'translated' into something that corporations can process. Careful enunciation of different values to bring clients on side leaves them with potential marketing messages: the idea of 'bragging rights' involves a kind of pragmatic transformation of the refrains of peat and moorland we heard earlier, by virtue of what it allows companies to do. Relationships and practices are specific, intimate and affectively charged even as they are marketised, valued and assessed. To work towards involving 'everyone', Jenny empathises with her profit-motivated clients

And you've also got to sell it on ideas that, look, if you do something you'll be the first to do it, use it as your brownie points, or your bragging rights. You're trying to fight in a way that they will feel like they are getting something significant out of it.

Jenny persuades by stepping into the worldview of the developer. She combines ethical intention and skill in her work with big corporations by learning how to read and play with the signifiers that matter to them. But if that process tends to suggest a capacity for identification (with corporate values, or with actors in corporate institutions), it would be a mistake to read this purely as a transformation into the discourse of the market, any more than we should consider the obvious 'personologisation' of enunciation implied in the phrase 'that's Jenny going on again' as refuting the idea that enunciation is a process of collective assemblage. Jenny does not disavow the discourse of the market or the identities associated with the individualised subject positions (boss, nature-lover, scientist), but nor can we or should we consider that these swamp everything else.

As she talks to us, the interviewer and reader, Jenny offers some unprompted thoughts about the ethics of her business:

I'll tell you one of the most important things I think. And this is where I think you'll find that we're different from others, in that this is not just a job, this is actually trying to apply our vision, our vision, you've seen it on the website, is to try and integrate nature conservation all the time with what we're doing. We're trying to contribute to something that's a better place for wildlife but trying to do it with everyone else involved at the same time. And I think if you went to some of the big organisations ... I think that you'll find that they're much more commercially focussed.

We are brought back to markets and reminded once again of a possible transformation of the assemblage of environmental work in its relations with other assemblages. Although it is important to make money and to support the staff, Jenny does, in part, reject a simple profit motivation. It is not just that the ethical position of conservation is a good in itself, and something that she hopes infuses the actions of her company: it is that green work is in a delicate position in relation to the economy more generally. There is clearly a contingency to the work of environmental protection that does not fit with the calculations, projections and business models of corporations, and the complex semiotic work of orchestration addresses this contingency: there is always a possible ‘bomb’ to drop

Discussion

It may strike the reader that drawing on the complex theoretical writings of Félix Guattari here, a figure who is inseparable from the revolutionary radicalism of the latter decades of the twentieth century, is a bit like using a sledgehammer to crack a nut, if not a rather perversely misguided manoeuvre. In any case we would quite willingly accept that the account of Guattari and the analysis we have offered of our empirical material risks misfiring because of the significant disparities between the abstract discourse of theory and the mundane registers of interview material. It is not easy to match up the research tools of qualitative social science research, and the tacit assumptions that often guide their use, with theoretical tools that were devised in the rather different context of militant therapeutic work. Yet we think that the kind of experiment we have been engaging in here is necessary. Two reasons stand out. First, there are significant omissions in the take up and development of the assemblage concept as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari in social scientific research that risk losing sight of some of what made the concept interesting and challenging in the first place. That these omissions concern, to a significant extent, questions of subjectivity is not merely incidental: the new ‘realism’ that is sometimes associated with assemblage theory (Harman, 2008; Sayer, 2013) seems to us to allow for difficult questions about subjectivity to be quickly explained away by reference to laws that operate behind our backs.

Second, there is a substantive need for tools to explore subjectivity that do not reduce it to simple category boxes into which people can be squashed and from which motivation, and inspiration can be read off, and that acknowledges contradiction and complexity. As Strangleman (2004) says, in a different kind of context, the ‘profound sense in which people engage with their jobs and find meaning in them’ (p. 176) matters, though one might struggle to see what people think about their work when reading some scholarship in the field. For Jenny, this profound engagement may be seen to come from those meeting points

between specific objects of work (the environment), an ecosophy and her learned skills of manipulation. Her particular attachment to 'nature' impels her, and she also operates with an understanding that some amelioration of the environmental degradation that troubles her is possible through market action. How could we separate out the market actor from the objects, the environment, the ideas for Jenny? We would lose something important for our understanding of subjectivity. How could we see values here in the unilateral terms of market exchange? We would omit the very real 'non-economic' elements of value.

In our interview with Jenny, with its movement of recollection and forgetting, the play of enunciative position that we find in it, foregrounding and backgrounding and its connections to the natural world, we are inclined to see subjectivity as a complex, stratified phenomenon. Not so much a shifting of partial identities but a transversal layering of relations, territories, values and so on. Guattari himself suggests (1995), in a reading of the work of Daniel Stern – that the production of subjectivity might be understood in terms of parallel 'levels' of subjectivation that coexist throughout an individual's life (p. 6) levels that, we would add, are organised according to different mental, social and material coordinates. We have found the concept of the refrain a helpful starting point for trying to tease out some of these elements of subjectivity, in their relationship to the assemblage of human and non-human elements that comprise the kind of environmental work we look at here.

The insistence or recurrence of refrains in interview material flags up something that matters in ways that are not always easily verbalisable or, indeed, directly verbalised. In Guattari's (2012) words, refrains are 'like the messenger-bird that taps on the window with its beak, so as to announce the existence of other virtual Universes of reference' (p. 147). But by helping us explore semiotic 'discordances' refrains also mark out territories and their real or possible transformation. The orchid-refrain in the interview with Jenny indexes a contingent relation to the contingent territories of 'nature' and to the emergence of her environmental activism that now appears in a complex relationship to 'the market'. With the moorlands and the peat bogs we have a more direct indicator of the tensions within the broader organisation of environmental work, the different temporalities that animate it and the complex place of Jenny's subjective attachments in relationship to that work. Her expertise is important here in understanding both her work and her account of it, but there are also passionate attachments that are as, if not more, important. Finally, with the semiotic work of orchestration that Jenny's interview describes for us, we have a means of addressing the transformative work that processes of enunciation accomplish and the difficult negotiation of interests and, we would add, passions, that environmental consultancy involves in its external links with other organisations.

It might be objected that we have, to a certain extent, 'aestheticized' aspects of the interview. We accept this charge but would argue that that, at least in part, this is what is entailed in what Guattari himself refers to as an 'ethico-aesthetic

paradigm'. The account that Guattari offers of the refrain is itself intended to introduce the creativity of the aesthetic into unexpected contexts – mental health, ethology and so on. We suggest that such aestheticisation is indispensable if the widely acknowledged complexities of the relationship between the material and semiotic are to be addressed within interview data, and if the sensibilities that are generated in and by work are to be given a more complete treatment. In any case, aesthetic consideration is not the same as aesthetic judgement, and if we choose to hear the faint music of the refrain, we do not make a claim to its beauty, but use what we have heard to address the 'transindividual' dynamic that transversal relations between elements of an assemblage disclose.

Focusing in particular on the role of refrains as indexing shifts within the configuration of assemblages and their correlative impact on the shape of subjectivity gives us a stronger basis to provide understanding of the often ambiguous or contradictory elements to subjectivity that environmental consultants – and other market actors – may have. For example, we have shown some of the feelings Jenny has for nature, as well as her sense of how to work with developers to get results she and they are comfortable with. Her work to protect features of 'nature', while also making new development possible, makes it hard to justify simplistic explanations of her way of working: she is neither a greedy capitalist nor a hippy; she is both manipulative and committed; she is a skilled worker with expertise and an opportunist building a business on the back of legislative changes that generate demand for environmental consultancy. We suggest that a recognition of these complexities, in tandem with an acknowledgement of their interweaving with the existential territories that link Jenny to the natural and social worlds in the assemblages of green work acknowledge a complex subjectivity. We suggest in particular that researchers studying economic activity, including actor-network theorists, might consider adopting a more expansive understanding of assemblages and the place of subjectivity within them, to make sense of how market action is animated, and how the value and values are maintained.⁷

Jenny may well be seen as not doing enough. In the familiar repertoire of critical judgements that theory often allows researchers to make, Jenny's life trajectory might be considered to be marked by successive stages in the appropriation and ideological 'greening' of capitalism. From this position, the expression in the interview of hard-nosed commercial considerations of business would be treated as the realist trumping of all other values by those of economic exchange. We do not support such a view, but it is also clear that Jenny is not a political ecologist. Our argument here regarding the complexity of relations within and between assemblages, the heterogeneity of values that we could tease out through the interview, suggests that when it comes to the relation between environmental action and the market (or capital, if one prefers), matters are not as simple as one might be tempted to claim. We found a lively 'affective' charge in Jenny's interview, indexed to her relations with the natural world in particular,

and in our discussion of enunciation, we pointed to the difficult work of negotiating this in relation to market values. And in the world of her client corporations, Jenny's greenness is notable. In this respect we think it perfectly appropriate to consider her as part of what, with Guattari, could be called 'a dissident vector of capitalism', running counter to a mainstream that wants to develop at all costs. Her talk of how she gets developers on board with this dissidence hints at how 'rupture' is possible, and she tries to change what counts as valuable: protecting toads and repairing moorland make sense not for the way in which they can have economic value, but because they remain outside of the regime of economic valuation even as they are coopted into it, as when you and I remember walking across the moorland Jenny protects.

Conclusion

Focusing, albeit not exclusively, on refrains and the transformations of enunciation in the interview has allowed us to flag different aspects of the assemblage of green work and the place of subjectivity within it. We do not seek to generalise from Jenny's experience but to unfold a set of changes and tensions that in their dynamic movement might be explored similarly elsewhere. The approach we have taken allows us to offer something of a corrective to current uses of 'assemblage theory', understood as a way to explore the complexities of agency. Adopting the conceptual vocabulary of the refrain here has, to some extent, entailed approaching interview material in somewhat aesthetic terms – considering orchids and moorlands as well as biography and belief.

Exploring interview material with environmental consultants in these terms has allowed us to introduce some complexity into our consideration of the subjectivity of people who are perhaps a little too quickly read as individual – and individualistic – market actors, or workers with 'eco' identities. Through Jenny we can start to see that what makes up an assemblage in green work entails different temporalities, speeds and slownesses that present an ambiguous challenge to the monolithic pretensions of capital. From one point of view, 'nature' presents something to be codified and measured – to be abstracted into spaces of calculation – but from another, and at the same time, 'nature' is a set of problematic deterritorialising forces in their own right, moving and changing at speeds that fall outside of the rhythms of investment strategies, economic cycles, changing legal frameworks and so on. Market action that engages with these other forces entails a negotiation of subjectivity in and with some of the dissident vectors of contemporary capitalism. Jenny is simultaneously working with and against contemporary capitalism as she fights for peat bogs, negotiates with developers and protects her company from the effects of the recession.

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Notes

- 1 British Academy Small Grant SG111072, held by Pettinger.
- 2 Texts by Genosko (2002), Watson (2011) and Alliez and Goffey (2011) address significant aspects of Guattari's work and can be usefully consulted on some of the issues that we raise.
- 3 Considerations of space have made it impossible for us to address the question of the relations between refrains and affect. Suffice it to say here that there is one, and that it is closely linked to the issue of enunciation, which we have been insisting on. Guattari (2012) goes so far as to claim that affect is in fact the 'deterritorialised matter of enunciation' (p. 213). Rather than engaging directly in a discussion of affect here, we take the connection that Guattari makes between enunciation and affect to signal that one cannot abstract out forms of expression, such as language, as the bearer of purely ideal significations or information, from emotional, erotic or affective investment, and we ask the reader to bear that in mind here.
- 4 Leopold's book was first published in 1949 but was most influential following publication of a paperback edition in 1970; *Silent Spring* was first published in 1962.
- 5 Plants and their agency recur across the range of interviews carried out, and although the orchids do not recur throughout the interview, when Jenny does mention them, in a 'coda' to the main body of the interview, where it has been a matter of discussing expertise, relations with clients, and the complexities of environmental work, they are mentioned repeatedly in quick succession. It is this change of 'pace' in the discussion and the sudden clarity it introduces that becomes interesting. On pace and rhythm more generally in relation to refrains see Deleuze and Guattari (2004 [1987], pp. 311–323).
- 6 This is an issue that Guattari discusses at numerous points in his work and stems from his not wanting to read desire as 'lack': making the orchid symbolise something else, making it a substitute for something else, effectively de-realises Jenny's ecological concerns.
- 7 We note in passing that in his recent work on modes of existence Latour has started to address the problem of value, in recognition of the ways in which ANT descriptions of heterogeneous networks of agents all start to look alike, after a while. We further note that Latour's (1987) new account, in this regard, owes much to the work of Stengers (2011, 2012), whose own work explicitly references Guattari's account of the opening up of universes of value. A detailed discussion of these links, however, is beyond the scope of this article.

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