Experiencing wild landscapes - recreational, spiritual and tourism values of wild places

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Introduction

➢ Management issues
  ➢ Case study: mountain business
➢ *People* and wild places
➢ Spiritual connection
➢ Embodied connection
➢ Sustaining economies
➢ Conclusions

Case study: mountain business

- ➢ The case in question: Cairngorm Mountain Limited
- ➢ Lack of snow cover due to climate change
- ➢ Ski business under threat
- ➢ Substantial investment in the funicular and attendant infrastructure
- ➢ Visual and general environmental impact
- ➢ Research: exploring the visitor experience

Additional Management issues

➢ Stakeholders

➢ Economic imperatives

➢ Not enough… now there's too much! (snow)

➢ Infrastructural maintenance

➢ 'Closed system' of visitor management

Framing the research question

- How do people experience CML?
- How do people 'do' being on the mountain/being a tourist in this setting?
  - Ethnographically informed method
  - Participant observation
  - Auto ethnographic accounts
  - Group discussions

Discussion - but first, some underpinning ideas from the literature

People and wild places

- Indigenous people?
- Of the land?
- Degrees of separation: Marx' 'traditional' vs industrial communities
- Romanticism: Thoreau, poets, Muir
- Late-modern ocularity
- - inequalities?
- - hegemony: power through 'eco-imperialist' consensus (Cater 2006)?
- An enduring disjuncture...

Ecosophy

- Arne Næss (1912-2009): considered the intellectual founder of the deep ecology movement

- ...although he himself attributes Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) as marking its beginning

- Engendering more harmonious relationships between place, self, community and the natural world' (deep ecology) (Drengson, 1999)

- Warns against creeping comfort and 'convenient ' nature

- But also against ecotourism's shallow ecology footings

Findings at CML:

➢ The car parks are stark, sterile and industrial… ideas about wilderness and mountains are often wrapped up in ideas of escape, of difference, and the possibility for an enchanting experience of nature (Cohen and Taylor 1992; Rojek 1995; Urry 1997).

➢ The CML site dispels many of these imaginings as, after travelling through the natural wooded areas (Rothiemurchus), tourists are faced with lines of road-signs, so that the feeling of being anywhere out of the ordinary and natural is hard to sustain.

The funicular experience:

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7djfTLAaM8

Ocularity or embodiment?

➢ The contrast between the more embodied experiences of the mountaineer/wanderer and that of the CML tourist are marked here.

➢ From the car park, CML tourists pass through the wide double doors of the base station into a concrete stairwell leading up to a ticket office.

➢ The train journey itself continues the theme of disembodiment as CML tourists are insulated from mountain environment and fed recorded narratives about the natural surroundings

Spiritual connections

- Dwelling (see Cloke & Jones 2001, Obrador-Pons 2003)

- Just being and belonging in a place
  - 'a practical and embodied way through which we are involved in the world' (Obrador-Pons 2003)
  - Back to 'heftedness'

Conclusions

➢ Management of wild places can be elitist, bio-centric, but:

➢ By allowing dwelling, heftedness to the land

➢ Re-engender belonging - natural care

➢ Playfulness

➢ Wandering

➢ The authentic engagements of childhood: Naess

➢ Beware 'education' without inspiration

Example

➢ Fin Groves on Camusdarach

- Deep ecology/ecosophy does not separate humans - or anything else - from the natural environment.

- Sees the world not as a collection of isolated objects, but as a network of phenomena that are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent.

- "Deep ecology recognizes the intrinsic value of all living beings and views humans as just one particular strand in the web of life." (Capra, 1996:7)

- Næss argued that whilst he was pessimistic for the 21st Century where his ecosophy was concerned, he remained "an optimist for the 22nd Century" (Devall 2001:33)