Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Volunteering in Scotland

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1. Introduction
Increased reliance on Outdoor Volunteering for resource conservation and outdoor recreation infrastructure upkeep has become necessary in Scottish protected natural areas. By learning about these volunteers through a qualitative methodology study, research findings have the potential to inform: recruitment strategies of protected area managers, conservation and recreation planning strategies, wider ‘social prescribing’ initiatives, how best to use ‘place’ and landscape in related recruitment and advertising, political strategising around the lack of ‘ring-fenced’ natural area funding as well as adding to knowledge gaps in all these areas.

2. Research Statement/Questions
‘What is the relationship between motivation and place attachment for volunteers and other stakeholders in Scottish Regional Parks and how do perceptions of landscape affect their attachments to these natural landscapes?’ Specifically:
1) What factors motivate volunteering in the regional park landscape?
2) To what extent does attachment to place shape volunteer engagement with protected natural areas?
3) How do cultural representations of Scottish landscapes affect volunteer perceptions and attachment to Scottish Regional Parks?

3. Methodology/Methods
The approach for this project is Constructivist Grounded Theory (GT), an inductive methodology which advocates the development of new theories from research grounded in the data gathered. Constructivism is a research paradigm that ontologically (through relativism) denies the existence of an objective reality and epistemologically emphasises the subjective interrelationship between the researcher and participant and the co-construction of meaning. Constructivist GT goes through several phases in search of explanations, theories and the possible formation of models of a phenomena (see process below).

Grounded Theory Process

- Comparative Analysis, Memo Writing, Theoretical Sampling, Saturating Theoretical-Categories
- Research Questions
- Theoretical Statements
- Categories/Properties
- Focused Coding
- Initial Coding
- Data

Research Question

4. Three Question Areas
1. Motivation
The widely used quantitative Recreation Experience Preference scales of motivations are set out by Driver (1983) (2) and inform question prompts in the motivation section of the interviews.

2. Place Attachment
Place attachment has two main components: place identity and place dependence. Question prompts stem from the quantitative statement sets initially formulated by Williams & Regenbogen (1989) (3).

3. Understanding/Perception of Landscape
Four aspects of landscape ‘place’ explored: Scenic/Aesthetic, Activity/Goal, Cultural/Symbolic and Individual/Expressive (Farmum., et al. (2005) (4) and two ‘hedonistic’ concepts of landscape are: ‘Arcadian’ - reflecting harmony between man and nature and ‘Wilderness’ a pristine natural landscape, ‘untrammeled by man’ (Buijs., et al. 2006) (5).

5. Choice of Scottish Regional Parks for study
The three regional parks (see locations on map presented below) follow a ‘multi-use’ protected area model. This includes a ‘wild’ area worthy of conservation as well as: agriculture, culturally important sites, recreation areas, businesses and residential communities.

6. Preliminary Findings
Initial findings have highlighted;
Social aspects, learning new skills, nature interaction, physical activity, exercise, scenery, education, working in natural settings, variety of work, improved mental health and working in fresh air as motivating factors for outdoor volunteering.

Of particular note is how strongly social aspects of volunteering has emerged as a motivation for this activity. When the research is concluded, it is likely that this category alone will have many sub-categories.

References