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Thinking of ‘The Outdoors’ as a Social Movement

Dr Chris Loynes

Reader in Outdoor Studies
What is a ‘Movement’? The Wandervogel

A type of group action by which oppressed groups challenge powerful elites

Carry out, resist or undo social changes

Made possible by freedom of expression, education and economic independence

A dialectic between ‘communitas’ and institutions/the state
The Wandervogel 2
Why the outdoors? Liminal spaces

Less cultural density: further from the centre, less dominated

‘At the edges culture thins and frays so that reality peeps through’
Madeleine Bunting
Why the outdoors? Communitas
Why the outdoors? Progressive and democratic
Histories of resistance

The Romantic Movement

The Arts & Craft Movement
A new politics: Outdoor recreation and self education

Citizenship & Democracy

Working class emancipation
  • Outdoor clubs
  • Huts, hostels and cafes
  • The Holiday Fellowship

A British ‘Bildung’ – self-enculturation
Lakeland touchstones: Daisy’s
“The preservation for the benefit of the Nation of lands and tenements (including buildings) of beauty or historic interest and, as regards lands, for the preservation of their natural aspect, features and animal and plant life. Also the preservation of furniture, pictures and chattels of any description having national and historic or artistic interest.”
Lakeland touchstones: Charlotte Mason

A ‘republic of shepherds’
William Wordsworth
Emmeline Pethwick: political movement

Emancipatory

Practical self help

Link between education and working life

Empowering women through nature and retreat
Outdoor Education Movements: Scouting and Outward Bound
Outdoor Education Movements: Woodcraft Folk

Roots in paganism and anti-capitalism and the labour movement

Inspired by romantic ideal of native American life

Peaceful cooperation between people and with nature
Alpinism: Letting our hair down
Transgressive Scotland: Rum
Transgressive Scotland: Loch Nevis
Transgressive Climbers
Contested places
Protest: for the outdoors
Protest: in the outdoors
School Strikes: truancy or protest?
Xtinction Rebellion: terrorists or freedom fighters?
Outdoor Movements: in summary

• The causes can be social (in), and/or environmental (for) the outdoors
• The outdoors as public space can be a liminal or free space giving voice to a dialectic between the people and their institutions
• Outdoor movements can seek to transform or counter the dominant culture
• This can work by being with, ahead of or against the flow
• They seem always to be progressive, democratic, equitable
Outdoor Education: on the edge?

Is the failure of Outdoor Education to become mainstream in education a good thing?

• It maintains a foot in ‘communitas’
• It is flexible to social and environmental issues
• It can resist the occupation of education with institutionalized curricula and pedagogies
• It is fundamentally about freedom which lies at the heart of citizenship and democracy
• Yet, is itself vulnerable to ‘occupation’

A safety valve, a seedbed or a resistance?
Or are there signs of a larger Movement under way?

• Outdoor Citizens - able to co-exist with nature, understand their surroundings and reap the benefits of an outdoor lifestyle.

• Outdoor Citizens have respect for the outdoors. They have the knowledge and skills to both protect the natural environment and to personally thrive within it. They are adults who have experienced outdoor adventures throughout their childhood and understand how to manage risk and challenge. Their academic success has been aided by the impact of effective outdoor learning.

• Outdoor Citizens are future parents who know that outdoor education is a must have for their own children. They are connected to nature in a way that benefits their physical and mental well-being. They are equipped to address the challenges facing the natural world - in their community, across the country and around the world.