

Loynes, Christopher ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9779-7954> (2016)
Liminality, culture and place: a contribution from outdoor education to sustainable development? In: 7th International Outdoor Education Research Conference, 4-8 July 2016, Cape Breton Island, Canada. (Unpublished)

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7TH INTERNATIONAL
OUTDOOR EDUCATION RESEARCH
CONFERENCE
UNAMA'KI/CAPE BRETON ISLAND
NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Cape Breton University
JULY 4-8, 2016

Liminality, culture and place: a contribution from outdoor education to sustainable development?

Chris Loynes

University of Cumbria, Norway

During the 20th century anglo-western traditions of outdoor education (OE) have emphasized the transformative benefits of wild and unfamiliar land to personal development. It is argued that such places provide a 'liminal' space of new possibilities in which identity can change. Since the 1990's OE has also explored the contribution it is, could and should make to education for sustainable development (SD). The conclusion so far is that it has much to offer with regards to connection to, understanding of, relationships with and action for the environment. More recently OE has embraced the contribution it can make to engaging people in places - place-based education. This paper explores whether the liminal spaces in which personal development can occur could extend beyond environmental outcomes to include the social dimension of (SD).

OE creates less structured 'liminal' spaces in which the voices of participants can be heard. They become actors in the social construction of their norms, values and behaviours. However, whilst this explains how OE can destabilize the power relationships that maintain identity and social norms so allowing personal transformation to take place, up until now the link with environmental norms has not been made.

Recently Waite (2013) and Preston (2014) show how liminal spaces can also include the construction of the place as well as the community of people. In recent action research I hypothesized that including young people in the politics of places whilst destabilizing their current social constructions would allow new meanings linked to SD to emerge. This would be a significant contribution from this field. I will present evidence from two case studies that indicate that, by deterritorialising the experiences from normative OE, taking a values oriented approach to the social and environmental experiences of participants, a different approach to programming and the power relations in the learning community OE can impact significantly on environmental and social outcomes for SD.

References

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Biography

Dr. Chris Loynes is reader in Outdoor Studies. He is also an educational advisor in the UK and internationally for universities and experiential education organizations. He is currently the chair of the European Outdoor Education Network.