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Outdoor Recreation and the Nordic Tradition of "Friluftsliv": A Source of Inspiration for a Sustainable Society?

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Introduction

A linkage is frequently claimed between close contact with nature and a sense of respect, care and also active environmental involvement (Fig. 1). This idea has been a common theme in the history of outdoor life and, for example, the scout programme initially included such an approach: "By continually watching animals in their natural state, one gets to like them too well to shoot them" (Baden-Powell, 1910:20).

Simultaneously, the current relation between humans and nature in industrialized countries is to a large extent a "long-distance call" and the utilization of natural resources is generally very abstract. Therefore, if one is interested in a popular perspective on humans and nature in an industrialized society, and interested in sources of inspiration for a more sustainable human-nature relation for the future, outdoor recreation is an important field of study.

This article starts with a discussion of outdoor life as both a consequence of and a reaction against the industrialized and urbanized society. Thereafter comes a short presentation of the Nordic outdoor tradition of "friluftsliv" (open-air life), including its "allemansrätt" (everyone's right of access to the

Figure 1. The idea of a causality from closeness to nature to love for nature to an interest in defending nature.

countryside within certain limits). Finally the complicated issue of interaction between environmental experience and environmental perspective is raised and a preliminary model of the interaction between outdoor life and environmentalism is presented.

Outdoor Life as a Consequence of Industrialism

Outdoor life has developed parallel to the industrialization and urbanization of society and it can be seen as a consequence of, but also as a reaction against, this process. The following brief analysis examines outdoor recreation as a tool for the "re-creation" of conservative values supporting conventional industrial society. Thereafter comes a description of the role of outdoor life as a source of inspiration for the "creation" of other values and perspectives criticizing society, with particular reference to the ability of outdoor life to develop a radical social critique with respect to the utilization of nature.

Nils Faarlund has developed a provocative model (Fig. 2) where the whole society is seen as a "machine", where nature is used not only as a resource for the production of various material goods but also as a resource for the necessary recreation of the people servicing this production. A characteristic feature is the production of various types of waste, not only from the "production machine" (pollution from smoke-stacks and sewage pipes, etc.) but also from the "recreation machine" (litter, noise, emissions from motor-boats and snow-scooters, etc.). In practice it could be difficult to separate activities carried out due to the recreational needs of an unsustainable society, and those carried out for other reasons. It is nevertheless important also to realize that outdoor life could be a path towards a less sustainable society.

Figure 2. Society as a "machine" using nature for production of various material goods and pollutions, and also for the necessary recreation of the people servicing this production (Faarlund, 1979:78; translated and redrawn by the author).

In an ongoing study three Swedish youth organizations oriented towards nature and outdoor recreation - the Association for the Promotion of Skiing and Outdoor Life, the Swedish Guide and Scout Association; and the Swedish 4H - are investigated for the period 1890-1990. 3 Three common themes have been found regarding their interest in using outdoor recreation as a means to an end at the beginning of this century. These common themes concerned the use of outdoor recreation (i) for national mobilization; (ii) for the promotion of physical and spiritual health; and (iii) as an antidote to the negative influence of urban life. It appears from this study that outdoor life in Sweden at the beginning of the century was employed principally to serve the purposes of the right-wing circles that sustained society. Not that these purposes were reactionary in the sense that they involved a desire to put a stop to change and return to an earlier state of society. What was desired, though, was that the rapid change from a rural life-style with low productivity to a modern urban and industrially oriented society should take place on the basis of the ideals of the groups that sustained society - such ideals, that is, as national unity, increased productivity, patriotism, military mobilization, and high individual physical and spiritual stature with Christian overtones.

The Shaping of Environmentalism

Four phases can be identified in the history of environmental debate during the 20th century in Sweden and other industrialized countries. (i) Preservationism; the interest in protecting some special and exotic features (e.g., trees, waterfalls) for scientific, cultural or economic reasons around 1900. (ii) Between the two world wars the public interest in outdoor recreational activities increased and this was added to the other reasons for conservationism. (iii) During the 1950s and 1960s it became obvious that it was not sufficient to protect only a few specific areas but a control of the environment and a systematic approach were necessary. (iv) With the exception of some "utopian" groups industrial society had not generally been questioned in the industrializing countries during previous historical phases. But during the late 1960s and onwards the need for a sustainable development and "another" or "alternative" society, has been discussed more frequently. New environmental movements have been born like "Friends of the Earth" and "The Future in Our Hands" which have stressed global perspectives and "life-style" aspects. In Sweden during the 1980s public opinion with regard to environmental questions increased dramatically and the more radical perspectives of an "alternative" society could, to some extent, be traced in the increasing interest in being a "green consumer" etc.

Outdoor Life as a Reaction Against Industrialism

Since the Romantic period contact with "pure" nature has been considered as a rectifying counterbalance to destructive industrial and urban ways of life. Henry David Thoreau's (1817-1862) critique of society and his efforts to live closer to nature are still a source of inspiration for movements and people dealing with outdoor life and environmental issues. Inge Lien has illustrated the conflicts between "natural values" during leisure time and "machine values" during working time (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. The conflict between "natural values" as part of leisure time and "machine values" as part of working time (Lien, 1977:14; translated and redrawn by the author).

An obvious linkage between Romanticism and modern outdoor life is the role of "primitive" people, especially Indians of North America, as sources of inspiration. For example the outdoor life within the scout organization could be seen as a combination of the perspectives of the former colonial officer, Baden-Powell, and the initiator of the youth "woodcraft" movement in North America, Ernest Thompson Seton, who tried to reflect the clothes, practices and social organization of the Indians. Baden-Powell used, for example, Zulu warriors from Africa as a model for the scouts. This "native" perspective still holds a position which can be illustrated with a current Swedish book for outdoor leaders by

Isberg (1991) where he uses symbolic stories from North American Indians as a framework for outdoor pedagogics.

A striking example of the close linkage between outdoor life and philosophical and political perspectives close to what is often referred to as sustainable development is the work of the Norwegian "ecosophers/ecophilosophers" Naess (e.g. 1973, 1976), Kvalmy (e.g. 1976, 1987) and Faarlund (e.g. 1978, 1990). These persons have been heavily involved in environmental actions and environmental ethics, and have also pointed to outdoor life ("friluftsliv") as inspiration. With regard to "friluftsliv" Naess (1976:303-4) outlines five principles for a responsible outdoor life from an ethical and ecological perspective:

1. respect for all life;
2. "identification" [with life and landscape];
3. minimization of the stress upon the cycle of nature in combination with a maximum of self-reliance;
4. natural lifestyle [e.g., using local and natural resources for equipment];
5. including enough time for adaptation.

This approach combining a judicious outdoor life and a social critique embodying an alternative to current urbanization and industrialization has also been an element of more conscious outdoor groups in Sweden like the small associations of "Argaladei" (motto: "friluftsliv - a lifestyle") and "Friluftssungdomen" ("Friluftsliv youth") from the 1970s. Torvald Wermelin was one of the most important leaders for these outdoor life groups criticizing society. He said: "What we are reacting against is that the [high] standard of living has fooled us.... If we are dependent upon a lot of dependencies we are losing our freedom. We will be defenceless against changes - insecure; because our life was based upon material and commercial values.... Comfort to death?" (Wermelin in Tordsson, 1978:14).

A current example of this critical perspective is Faarlund's (1990:23) discussion of the need of a new global ethic with regard to the man-nature relation. He says: "The 'Friluftsliv', according to the Norwegian tradition, is to meet free nature. In the meeting with free nature we will know nature. Knowledge [incl. "feeling for"] will open friendship: friendship involves commitment! Using 'friluftsliv' as a method in environmental education we have a direct path to a change of lifestyle - with joy. No arguments for an improvement of the interrelationship between culture and nature, and between people, will be more powerful than joy."

Is There a Specific Nordic Tradition of "Friluftsliv"?

Looking for hard facts about current outdoor life in Sweden we can, for example, note that: "The dominant outdoor activities are walks for pleasure and exercise, cross-country strolling and visits to open-air swimming baths. Each of these activities is practised by some 80 per cent of the population of the ages 16-74 years" (SCB, 1987:115). With regard to the level of activity we can note that about 60

"It could also be noted that 53 per cent of the adult population have a weekend cottage at their disposal" (SCB, 1987:119) and that "Slightly more than 40 per cent of the adult population have spent at least one week in a weekend cottage during the preceding year. 27 per cent usually spend their weekends there." (ibid). According to Adolfsson, (1984:116) every year half a million Swedes hike along the organized paths in the southern and middle parts of Sweden. We can also note that 2.2 million Swedes have gone leisure fishing during a year (Hedman, 1990). The Association for the Promotion of Skiing and Outdoor life has about 150,000 members and the five scout and guide associations have a total of about the same number.

Vogel (1990:125) says with regard to a comparison of the Nordic countries that: "The types of leisure activities in the Nordic countries are quite similar due to common cultural traditions, similarities in settlements and climate etc. About 15 activities have been studied. The results show that outdoor life and exercise has a strong position in the Nordic countries." 6

It is easy to identify elements from other countries of what today is labelled "friluftsliv" in Sweden. For example, the scout movement is, and has been, one of the main organizations for urban dwellers' contact with nature, and in general the introduction of scouting in Sweden was a "translation" of the principles and practical activities from England. Nevertheless, in an overview of outdoor life and "friluftsliv" during the 20th century Tordsson (In manuscript:106) strongly argues that the English and American tradition is different from the Nordic one. He especially highlights the difference in legitimation and ideological context. The Nordic tradition of "friluftsliv" is often characterized by simplicity and popularity, emphasizing its difference from the more commercialized and specialized outdoor-life activities of North America and Continental Europe, which to a large extent are motorized, "high-tech", action-oriented and ecologically destructive.

Like a dichotomy between:

1. putting on a pair of wellingtons and taking a walk in the nearby forest, picking some berries and enjoying the scenery and quietness; and,

2. with all the latest and most expensive equipment entering the helicopter for heliskiing or climbing into the rubber boat for rubber-rafting, perhaps for the first (and last?) time in a lifetime (next time - diving, mountaineering, or...).

Although more "waste" (cf. Fig. 2, above) is produced by the latter "outdoor life" practices, could it not be argued that this is negligible compared with all the factories etc.? No, it could instead be hypothesized that these two types of outdoor life ("friluftsliv" and "outdoor life"; i and ii above) are linked to different life styles, ("genres de vie"), and therefore important both as indicators and as pedagogic paths leading to change.

"Allemansrätten": the Public Right of Access to the Countryside

The unique tradition of "allmansrätt" in Sweden (with similar situations in Norway and Finland) - by which is meant everyone's right to move freely, pick mushrooms, flowers and berries, within certain restrictions - is a basic element in the "friluftsliv" tradition. The "allmansrätt" is not a law but could be seen as the "free space" between various restrictions, mainly: (i) economic interests; (ii) local people's privacy; and (iii) conservation. For example, it is allowed to camp for not more than 24 hours, to bathe, to traverse any area, lake or river, to light a fire, etc. if none of the restrictions mentioned above is endangered.

Due to the current large-scale monocultures of modern agriculture and forestry it seems necessary to add "specialization" and "rationalization" of the landscape as a fourth limitation of the "free space" for the "allmansrätt". The increasing "industrialization" of agriculture and forestry makes it physically more complicated to pass through a landscape. There are no ditches, no intermediate zones between field and forest, no pastures, but instead thick spruce areas of the same age. Hgerstrand (1988:46) says: "These shifts [from pastures to forest, etc.] taken together mean that the landscape which once upon a time showed gradual transitions between settlements and deep forest has been replaced with a new landscape, constituted by monotonous blocks with sharp edges". Teigland (1990:12) also points to the fact that impact assessments with regard to outdoor life generally have dealt with larger exploitations but have ignored the cumulative impact of many small effects of changes in agriculture and forestry.

There is, however, also another (and perhaps more important) limitation of the "allmansrätt" due to the "industrialization" of the landscape, namely the decreased access to "free nature", the decreased access to a landscape which to a large extent follows natural rhythms in time and space (i.e., where the location, behaviour and features of many landscape elements such as animals, trees, water

and landforms are in accordance with ecological processes, not human rationale; Fig. 4).

Figure 4. The right of everyone to move freely, pick flowers etc. in the countryside is here identified as the "free space" left between the traditional restrictions of: (i) economic interests; (ii) privacy; and (iii) conservation; but currently also (iv) the increasing specialization and rationalization of the landscape.

Outdoor Life for a Sustainable Development?

Bell et al. (1990) devote a special chapter of their "Environmental Psychology" to the problem of "changing behavior to save the environment" and indicate the general strategies of: (i) environmental education; (ii) appropriate environmental prompts and cues; (iii) various reinforcement measures; and (iv) combinations of all three. Even though the efficiency level increases from (i) to (iv), the overall picture is discouraging. In a recent overview of outdoor life research Teigland (1990:11; my emphasis) notes that: "If research can prove real personal or social effects, to promote outdoor life will not only be a goal in itself, but be a tool for different social institutions with regard to health, social welfare and environmental management. So far, few such studies of effects have been carried out." Nevertheless, a causality is often claimed between outdoor life and environmental involvement, for example with regard to environmental education within organizations and as part of school activities. But little seems to be known about this causality, especially with regard to the radical endeavours to achieve sustainable development. 7

Figure 5 represents an attempt to tie together some of the arguments above as a guideline for further research and discussion. It involves a number of preliminary assumptions, the first of which is that it is reasonable to see outdoor-life activities as an important source of inspiration in respect of wanting to shield specific animals, plants or stretches of landscape from essentially all human influence, this within the perspective of preservationism. Together with this goes the assumption that such activities can also be an important source of inspiration regarding nature conservancy in the broader sense that includes consideration of how the human utilisation of nature should be (as, for instance, in the case of agriculture and forestry). A further assumption is that quite a large socio-political interest is required when it comes to commitment to a broader environmental perspective. Finally, there is the assumption that it is reasonable that "sustainable development" should be viewed within the perspective of development policy where prominence is given to such questions as quality of life, fundamental power, the global view and long-term responsibility.

Figure 5. A pictorial representation of the interplay between outdoor recreation and environmental commitment.

In sum, this means that there is every reason to pay increased attention to the more or less manifest socio-political perspectives that constitute the framework of the open-air life which it is hoped leads to a deeper environmental commitment. Outdoor recreation and the open-air landscape are always charged with an ideological content - and the character of this content determines their role in the endeavour to bring about a more "sustainable development".

Notes

1. Financial support from the Swedish Council for Planning and Coordination of Research is gratefully acknowledged.
2. For the present, "Nordic" will primarily refer to Sweden and Norway and to some extent to Finland and Denmark.
3. As a part of the research network: "Land - Life - Lumber - Leisure, Interplay of Local and Global Concern in the Human Use of Woodland and Forest". With regard to this part of the project see, in English, e.g.: Sandell, K. 1991g. Outdoor Recreation - Re-creation or Creation? -Nordisk Samhällsgeografisk Tidskrift, No. 14, Dec., pp. 35-46; Sandell, K. 1991h. "Ecostrategies" and Environmentalism - the Case of Outdoor Life and Friluftsliv. -Geogr. Ann., 73 B., No. 2, pp. 133-141; Sandell, K. forthcoming. Perceptions of Landscapes - Perspectives on Nature. -Swedish Council for Planning and Coordination of Research, Stockholm; Srlin, S. 1991a. Ideological Controversies in Swedish Forestry: A Historical Perspective. -In: Buttimer, A., van Buren, J., Hudson-Rodd, N. (eds.), Land Life Lumber Leisure; Local and Global Concern in the Human Use of Woodland, An Interim Report, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, pp. 55-63; Srlin, S. 1991b. On Foot and on Ski in Forest and High Mountain: The Ideology of Recreational Use of Nature. -Paper for the "Land - Life - Lumber - Leisure" workshop in Ottawa, May 14-17, 1991, in manuscript.
4. 62
5. 40
6. He also notes that comparative data regarding for example Continental Europe is not available (Vogel, 1990:126).
7. For this discussion see, e.g.: Dunlap, R.E. & Heffernan, R.B. 1975. Outdoor Recreation and Environmental Concern: An Empirical Examination. -Rural Sociology, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 18-30; Jackson, E.L. 1986. Outdoor Recreation Participation and Attitudes to the Environment. -Leisure Studies, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 1-23; Bikales, E.A. & Manning, R.E. 1990. Outdoor Recreation and Environmental Concern: a Further Exploration. -In: Proceedings of the 1990 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium, United States Dept. of

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