

Rambling as contributor and contrast in personal daily life



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Outdoor recreation is important. HOW and WHY?

- Outdoor recreation (O.R.) is a basic leisure activity in Norway:
 - > 90 % take short walks, more than once a year (Statistics Norway)
 - 1/3 has O.R. as the most important leisure activity
- Rough picture of the main motives (Stat. Norw):
 - Contemplation, Physical exercise, Social relations, Nature experience, Excitement & mastery
- What about the outcomes and benefits? ... preferred environmental conditions? How does O.R. fit into the daily life? ...the personal meaning attached to O.R.!

Write and tell us ...

Our study was funded by Norw. Research Council:

- Invitation in journals and newspapers: Write to us about "*Den gode turen*" (\approx the good tour / trip / ramble)
- We encouraged those who really enjoy O.R. or otherwise appreciate the outdoors
- "*... you can write about exactly what you want, as long as it is related to your own tour experiences*"
- We wanted the recreationists to reflect on their lives and their O.R.
- Invitation in two rounds (2002-2004) \rightarrow 85 informants

About having a good life?

We implemented:

- ... an open-ended study where the researchers are visible and influencing the informants only through the inviting text.
- ... with no fixed theoretical base (consciously)
- ... to reveal (sets of) meanings hidden in the texts:
 - *“What is real is a construction in the minds of the individuals”*

”Lacking” theory, but quite obvious:

- It is about personal well-being
- It is about having a good time in the outdoors

Quality of life (QoL-theory)

- **Objective aspects:**

- "QUALITY OF CONDITIONS" (e.g. Lane 2000):
 - Through situations or immediate experiences

... in interaction with...

- **Subjective aspects:**

- subjective well-being
- self-actualization
- personality traits

→ Building individual stories, influencing personal QoL

Subjective well-being

Three elements:

- perceived life satisfaction,
- presence of pleasant affect and
- absence of unpleasant affect

The Human – Nature relationship

Roughly spoken: Two major theories:

1. A universal, adaptive, evolutionary and thereby biopsychologically anchored theory (e.g. Ulrich, the Kaplans ...): The human being is predisposed for a life in nature (seeking shelter, food, water, control..)
2. Human beings are active and creating in how they interact with the landscape (transaction). Identity, valuation and creation of meaning are products of lived life and embodied experiences (e.g. Ingold, Altman ...). A social-constructive perspective.

Not mutually exclusive!

The material

- Almost all informants are really dedicated to outdoor recreation
- Representing both urban and rural areas
- $\frac{3}{4}$ women
- A very diverse material of written texts (average 2-3 pages)
- Different degree of self-reflexion on life and O.R.
 - Self-reflexion indicating HOW AND WHY!
 - Descriptive texts concentrating on WHAT!

The method and analysis

- Some texts are more helpful (reflective) than others (descriptive).
- Since the material is texts: Not possible to come back to the informants to clear up diffuse statements
- The analysis did not follow a clear systematism
- Rather: "*Ad hoc generation of meaning*" (Kvale):
 - ... concerning motivation, behaviour, benefits ...
 - ... outdoor recreation in relation to own (daily) life
 - ... environmental preferences / actual recreation areas

Two main types of activities:

- The short "daily" walk in the neighbourhood (often a forest)
- The longer hike (often for several days), primarily in the mountains
- This seeming dichotomy: A complementing set of activities and areas:
 - Often the same informants practicing both!
 - *"The daily round and the dreamtrip"*

The personal benefits

- The short and the long trip – in different environments:
 - The two contribute differently to the building of personal QoL
 - ... with different positions in relation to daily life
- The short daily walk:
 - Contrasts and thereby compliments the daily routines with: The walking itself, quietness, nature experience, reflexion, repetition
 - Shaping more complete and satisfying days / daily life
- The long mountain walk:
 - A more profound need, effort and benefit
 - Peace and reflection, coping with physical and mental challenges etc
 - The benefit of spending time: "The-third-day-effect ..."

Quality of Life: Subjective well-being \leftrightarrow Own effort

1. Perceived life satisfaction, presence of pleasant affect and absence of unpleasant affect

- Trying to maintain or achieve (daily) life satisfaction
- The O.R. experience (both short and long trip):
 - To contrast the routines, the wear and tear, the noise ... (the unpleasant affect)
 - ... by seeking the outdoors, the quietness, the reflexion (the pleasant affect)

2. Self-actualization

- Own physical effort (The walk!); Overcoming the "door-step-mile"
- The "body and soul" interaction (*"Physically I'm tired, but my mental batteries are recharged..."*)

“... the good rambling experience can be achieved anywhere; it’s about being, not doing...”

- A very complex picture of actual settings and rambling environments
- Some repeat (and have repeated) the same trip again and again (not boring, but being a favourite ...)
- Some present their spectrum of environmental experiences and their changing settings, due to own life course ...

The setting – management relevance

- Environmental diversity is not environmental indifference! Some central environmental attributes:
 - Peace and quiet!
 - Accessible nature areas in the neighbourhood
(“If the good neighbourhood hiking areas disappear, only macho-men are favoured...”)
- The path is often mentioned – for security reasons in the mountains, to follow a path as a meditative state
- But other physical facilitation are very seldom mentioned (NB: we have reached dedicated ramblers!)

”I think my walks are expeditions in the human nature”

The basic model seems to be:

A personal need (due to physical, mental fatigue)

+ own effort (rambling etc)

+ qualities in the recreational area (nature, peace)

→ personal and societal outcome (meditation, exercise, good life, improved health etc).

(fits the QoL-model)

- *”The good tour is about life quality”*

So what?

- Benefits for the individual
- Benefits for the society

Lessons to learn?

- The importance of protecting the neighbourhood forest
- Facilitation?
- Socialisation?

“My father learnt me...”

An important premise:

- Personal interest and voluntariness!

We asked: Who is qualified for the good tour?

- *“Anyone, as long as he or she is interested”*
- *“Nature is scary, disgusting and uncomfortable”*
(Bixler & Floyd 1997)

The childhood experiences and socialisation to O.R.

- Mentioned by almost everyone! The role of their father!