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CHAPTER 25

WHY OUTDOOR LEARNING SHOULD GET REAL

Chris Loynes

I have previously likened trends in outdoor learning to the "McDonaldization of Society,"¹ a title used by George Ritzer² in the title of his book on globalization. My point is that, like Ritzer, I see trends that seek to make everything the same wherever it is experienced. Ritzer used the burger to make his point. I think the ropes course – skiing, rafting, bungee jumping, mountain biking and many more activities lend themselves to this globalized treatment, "adventure in a bun." I view this as something that is counterproductive to effective outdoor learning wherever it is practised. My concerns are that an "off the shelf," commoditised approach to providing adventure experiences is counter to the organic and emergent nature of experiential learning outdoors as people respond to the rich mix of environments, individuals, groups, cultures and activities involved. I also think this approach develops values that are counter to those educators should be developing in our students in a world of social and environmental injustice.

Charlene Spretnak³ argued for a "resurgence of the real" and in doing so drew on the English romantic tradition to make her case. In looking for a more hopeful and positive response to what I saw as a widely negative practice, it was heartening to consider that one author thought the

seeds of what I was looking for were also embedded in the roots of U.K. outdoor-learning practice. This chapter explores my journey of reconstruction as I seek a form of practice that is based on values that will help outdoor learning contribute to the educational needs of today.

I am writing this from the perspective of a white, English man who has been exploring the professional and cultural diversity in our work. This will inevitably give my remarks some ethnic, gender and cultural bias. I have become curious about the way an idea becomes an institution and, as such, is applied as a political tool both within and between countries and professions. I am also interested in what lies behind the apparently conflicting claims that, on the one hand, there are approaches to outdoor experiential learning that speak globally to the human condition transcending nations and cultures and, on the other hand, that each community should develop its own authentic approach to experience, learning and the outdoors. In the context of these questions the bias of my perspective is, potentially, a significant factor in my interpretation of which the reader should be critically aware.

The Algorithmic Paradigm

What are the characteristics of this algorithmic paradigm of outdoor learning? What are thought to be the problems with it? What other approaches are there, either hidden by the dominant discourse or lacking a voice in the English language? What good would these other approaches be and for what? Martin Ringer¹ first used the term "algorithmic" to describe approaches to outdoor learning. It can be characterized in a number of ways, for example by the language that is used to describe it. Typical words include programming, processing, framing, funnelling, front loading, sequencing, cycles, outcomes, task, leader and team.

It can also be recognized by the beliefs that are taken as axiomatic. Those mentioned by the critics of this paradigm as potentially problematic are:

- Programs have predetermined outcomes, which are measured.
- Programs are sequenced according to a conceptual framework such as the learning or training cycle.

- Action and conversation are the central ingredients. You are not learning unless you are doing.
- The world of the learning experience is understood as metaphor and so is not entirely real.
- Raised self-esteem is typically the dominant outcome.
- The principles of challenge by choice, informed consent and other ethical concerns are seldom questioned.
- A belief in personal development and human progress and the centrality of the ego.
- There is an uncritical stance to the social context in which the learning occurs.
- Groups are understood as teams in the context of a shared goal and not as communities with a multiplicity of needs and dreams.
- Self reliance and leadership are widely practised taught and celebrated at the expense of human interdependence.
- Nature is understood as an assault course, gymnasium or puzzle to be resolved and controlled. It is a resource to be commodified instead of a home to which to relate.

The presence of some of these can indicate a program influenced, perhaps overly influenced, by the algorithmic paradigm.

A Modernist Tradition

I think there are three distinctive features of the paradigm that attract critical comment. They are all features of the currently dominant, western capitalist, post-renaissance paradigm called modernism. They are the scientific rationale, the production line metaphor that lends itself to mass production and the notion of learning as a product and so a marketable commodity.

1) A Scientific Rationale

Programmable, formulaic approaches are influenced by the positivist scientific paradigm. This positivist approach has set out to discover the theory behind all observable phenomena and seeks to express these theories

as algorithms. The benefit to society is that these general algorithms can then be "plugged in" to a particular problem and deliver a solution. Computer language works like this. Input the data, select the algorithm for the task you want undertaken and the result is a consistent solution.

Applying this method to the study of human behaviour has been under severe attack by other methodologies that do not treat people as predictable phenomena. Nevertheless the positivist paradigm has had a major influence as a metaphor for a course design understood as an algorithm with the capacity to deliver a consistent solution, hence Ringer's use of the term "algorithmic paradigm" to describe this approach. When this metaphor is attached to the metaphor of the production line a powerful combination of ideas capable of widespread influence is forged.

2) A Production Line Metaphor

Loading and processing are lifted straight from the world of production lines; programming, loading and sequencing form the world of computers. Both describe rational, mechanistic, technological, deterministic and linear approaches to a task. The raw materials or data are loaded at one end; they are then assembled and manipulated in a predetermined sequence to deliver a uniform outcome of a predictable standard as efficiently as possible. Applying the metaphor to a learning experience provides a rational proposal with measurable outcomes predetermined during the negotiations with the client. The linear rationality of models used widely in the outdoor learning literature such as Kolb's learning cycle or Tuckman's team development⁵ only help to emphasize a progression through a defined sequence of steps or stages to a desirable outcome, learning in Kolb's case and performance in Tuckman's

The production line approach tempts the provider and the client to consider participants as objects, resource or labour, manufactured to fulfil their potential as a cog in a machine rather than as a human being. The positivist approach reinforces the idea that this object can be manipulated to a formula. Likewise it tempts the facilitator to focus on certain learning objectives to the exclusion of others. The result, pushed to an extreme, is a participant who is oppressed rather than empowered by their managed experience.

Of course there is often perceived to be all sorts of mutual benefits to the client and the participant and everyone is happy. Evaluation forms designed for this approach are widely referred to as "happy sheets." However, if a participant dares to suggest that they learned nothing, were unhappy about what they learned or simply learned something else unintended, heads roll, usually that of the facilitator who "failed" to deliver the "right" script.

3) A Marketable Commodity

Providers have developed technological solutions that attempt to enhance, accelerate and guarantee the product in order to achieve the predictable outcomes increasingly demanded by the client. This is partly cost driven, as the naturalistic qualitative approaches are both staff and time intensive. Technological solutions include both hard and soft elements. The high ropes course is a hard response to the need for a guaranteed adrenaline buzz with guaranteed safety delivered quickly anywhere. The reviewing (processing in North America) techniques are often seen as a soft solution to establishing conscious and rational learning outcomes from the experiences. These are then readily available for collection by the evaluation tools after the program.

Considered from the business perspective, treating the experience as product and packaging it for marketing has at least one drawback. One provider confided that they could sell any programme provided it was a two day ropes course experience, Fordism alive and well in the learning market place. This approach does wonders for the program marketing. The off the shelf product lends itself to branding, costs are driven down and the mass market can be accessed. Peter Drucker⁶ claimed that "the only benefits in business are marketing and innovation; everything else is cost." This provider has solved the marketing question. However, their ability to innovate has been seriously hampered by the "off the shelf" approach. Even in business terms this will give their product a limited life cycle. They will then have to come up with another product.

Considered from an educator's approach, transforming the participant into a consumer can only lead closer to the oppressive end of the spectrum of outdoor learning. The product is now a commodity.

benefits to the consumers decided for them. Even the facilitation is influenced towards convincing the consumers that they have got what they asked for and that they liked it. In this sense I believe that an "off the shelf" approach to outdoor learning cannot be properly described as experiential. This accolade can only be attached to bespoke services, those that have been tailor made or, even better, are emergent.

If you want to learn to navigate throw away the map!

Although the algorithmic approach is often tagged as "American," the origins can be traced back to British military traditions. Of the several candidates for these early influences I have chosen map reading. Map reading and navigation are often regarded as one and the same thing. Here, I will treat map reading as one of many practical techniques by which navigation is conducted. I think understanding these concepts as different ideas is important because the way in which navigators find their way makes a difference to how they encounter the places they are exploring and there are other ways to explore a place than with a map. Actually, what I really want to do is put the map away rather than throw it away. It does still have some uses!

Part of the culture of outdoor life in the U.K. involves linear routes, time plans, journeys, expeditions, destinations and self-reliance. This latter quality is particularly British. It means to be independent of others when finding your way probably in a landscape that is considered to be wild, remote and hostile. This approach involves a high degree of control over what is essentially a dynamic situation engaged in by, hopefully, a dynamic and lively imagination.

Map reading entered outdoor youth work via the Scout Association and Baden-Powell.⁷ Baden-Powell was an army officer in the Boer War. He was impressed by how young men, too young to use weapons and so sent out to scout the terrain ahead of the army, rapidly became very competent at their tasks. In addition, he noted how they "grew up" equally quickly through the demands of their role. On return to the U.K., he founded the Scout Movement in order to raise the moral standing of young men at home through a "moral equivalent to war."⁸ Navigation

with maps and compasses became a core activity and the landscape became "hostile" terrain.

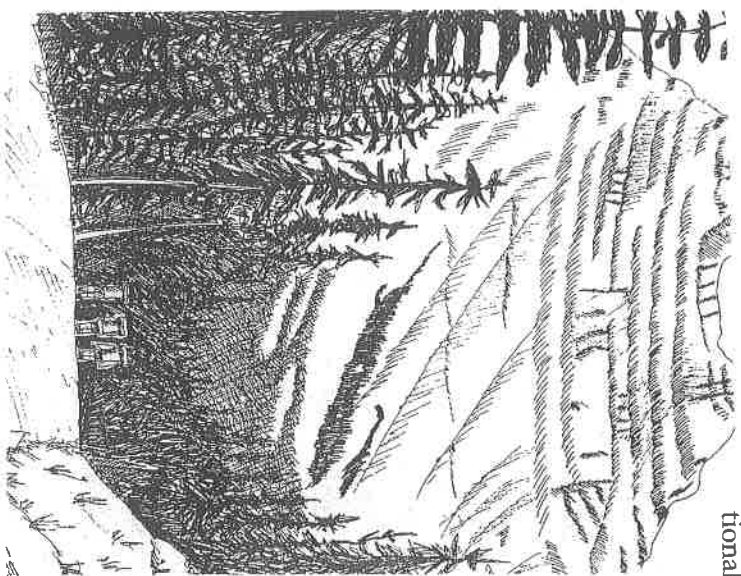
This approach to navigation is not common to approaches to journeying in other European countries but has, I believe through cultural links to U.K. outdoor education, crossed the oceans to North America, Australia and New Zealand.

The values of independence, control and hostility have consequences. In order to exercise this control groups spend a great deal of time learning to use maps. The key skills are those of planning a journey from a map and the using the map to keep to a linear route and a time plan once embarked on a journey. Landscapes are understood as potentially unsafe, challenging and risky. I am not suggesting that the values of militarism are embedded in this way of navigating, though they may be embedded in other aspects of the Scout Movement. However, I am suggesting that the underlying values of independence, control and hostility are, and that they do transfer to new contexts down the ages. The scouts on the battlefields of South Africa needed these values to survive and succeed. This all sounds sensible and worthwhile. However, my premise is that they may not always be desirable in other situations. At the very least we may benefit from not taking this approach for granted so that it becomes the only way navigators navigate especially in contexts where the educational benefits sought after may be different from those aspired to by Baden-Powell. Under the values of self-reliance and control, groups are unable to respond creatively to the landscape of the day except to control for their safety. An unexpected, moonlit night and alluring extra summits are off limits because they are not in the plan. The knowledge of local people and even other walkers is excluded because the group are independent without a guide and discouraged from encounters with others.

However, other traditions without a historical link to militarism provide an alternative approach. There was a time when climbing courses taught primarily rope work and belaying. Little was offered to help the aspirant climber move on rock. Nowadays it is the other way round. Movement is at the centre of the classes. The rope is seen as an important safety device and taught in secondary workshops that allow the climber to climb safely. Rope work is not climbing. It is a means to an end.

the map and compass were treated as safety devices how would this affect the art of navigation? Navigation would become the skill of reading a landscape and responding to it with the idea of a line to take or point to reach or a place to spend time. The navigator would also respond to the weather and the imaginations of the others in the group. A plan would emerge and yet remain open to adaptation as conditions, aspirations or information about what lies ahead changes. If conditions do not allow the navigator to navigate then, unless some imperative dictates otherwise, the group can simply stay put until circumstances change. If the group still need to keep moving then out come the safety devices, the map, compass and, these days, the global positioning system and mobile phone.

Adopting such an approach might mean a change to the activities that navigating a landscape offers. It would almost certainly mean change to risk management strategies. However, it is not far fetched. There are many landscapes navigated by educa-



tional groups without maps because they operate in countries where they do not exist or are of such a small scale to be of little use. Additionally, there are educators in the U.K. working with young children who want to introduce them to the aesthetics and sensuality of landscapes but find maps an impediment. Other educators have found great value in getting groups to create maps or other devices for each other to use to reproduce their respective journeys. Trekkers in many exotic places rely more on trails and guides

than maps for conducting their walks. So, by freeing up the approach to understanding the art of navigation a wider range of experiential options for engaging with place are created.

The Wider Problem of Control as a Value

I have argued that following maps, that is following an abstract and partial representation of a landscape, is a different experience to that of navigating a landscape. Map work gets in the way of an engagement with a place, the people and the moment. It is, as Ringer put it, algorithmic. It is hard to deviate from the plan. The person is challenged to keep in control and stay on course. This has educational benefits but can impede some of the educational outcomes possible from exploring a landscape in other ways.

I want to extend the critique of the value of control in navigation to a wider critique of U.K. outdoor education. Edmund O'Sullivan,⁹ in one of the prominent books from the environmental movement that addresses education, argues that we do need a global vision of one world and one species. However, he points out that to make this vision active in the lives of everyday people it needs many and diverse interpretations at local level. Andrew Brookes¹⁰ has made a similar point. He reminds us that a landscape is a living landscape brought to life by the interaction of a particular nature and culture. Yet often we import practices from other cultures and environments or take our students to those other landscapes because our local setting is thought to be lacking in the necessary resources for these standard activities.

Robbie Nicol¹¹ discussed the claims made by outdoor adventure education for environmental learning. The rhetoric, often convincing to policy makers, clients and even staff does not, in his view stand up to scrutiny. Education "in" the environment does not lead to education concerned with the environment unless it gets some additional curriculum or pedagogic support. A recent review of research on outdoor learning¹² concluded that education about the environment, often called field studies in the U.K., also does not lead to education concerned with the environment. That reminds me of Patrick Geddes the nineteenth century

Scottish educational philosopher, who coined the educational values of "head, heart and hands." "In," that is the hands, "about," that is the head, leaves out the "with" that is the heart. At best, feeling is left to its own devices. Colin Mortlock,¹³ an influential British adventure educator, sensed the importance of this emotional world when he wrote of love and respect for the environment as one of his driving educational values.

The problem is that even the serendipitous encounters of the heart with the landscape can be squeezed out by the map work approach to the outdoors. It might be tempting to assume that the rigour of the scientific method adopted by field studies is the antipathy of anarchic outdoor adventure. The truth is both are prone to following a predetermined, outcome driven path that leaves those who follow it unable to turn to the side or take a pace measured in their own time. Both the activities that engage us with a place and the theories, practices and curricula we have mapped out to help us work effectively in that place in fact close the practitioner and the student down to the possibility of a creative engagement with a living landscape.

Why do we allow this to happen? My opening remarks claim that one factor is simply an uncritical eye on the roots of our practice and their implications. I think there are also several influences that have encouraged us down this path. For example feminist eco-psychologists argue that the masculine controlling and dominating values of the enlightenment are manifesting themselves in this domain. This could be understood in outdoor education in several ways. In part it could be activity in the environment, the doing, gets in the way of being in or with the environment, the being. It is also possible that simple activities to enable people to make journeys in the landscape, cycling or canoeing for example, have been replaced by more technological ones that focus more on the ego of the participant than the aesthetics of the place, mountain biking or play boating for example. It is the case that educational goals have shifted their focus towards the personal and the social rather than the environmental and attention has moved from process to outcome. It may be that outdoor practitioners want to look like their school-based cousins adopting strategies better suited to classrooms (but perhaps not to pupils in those classrooms!). It is clear that an outcome-based school curriculum has rubbed off on those practitioners determined to make

the value of outdoor education apparent to school teachers and policy makers. Certainly the spectre of risk has caused many to be overly concerned with risk management to the extent of avoiding or controlling activity to a degree that even those responsible for ensuring our safe practice consider unnecessary. Another aspect is that policy makers from the institutions representing order in society have seen how effective outdoor experiences can be at instilling certain values in people. This may have led to the preponderance of courses concerning teamwork and leadership. It may also have led to their willingness to fund outdoor approaches to many of the social ills I identified earlier in my opening remarks. The algorithmic, closed approach works if what you want to achieve is citizens claiming to be modelled to your own vision.

Sometimes, of course, we do. We need a certain order in society. One generation needs to hand on what has been learned to another for it to make its own. Perhaps part of what I am arguing for is some kind of balance and that the outdoors is a place where the more generative, transforming and creative aspects of education could and should be practised. However, this politicking is only partly relevant here.

The part that is relevant is that part that has been arguing for aliveness in our relations with our culture and our landscape. I have stated earlier that we have lost our links with our surroundings and that restoring these links in some way is vital for our own health, the health of our societies and the health of the planet. Yet, by treating the landscape as a backdrop for other social enterprises, we lose the potential to engage with it actively.

Problems with the Algorithmic Paradigm

I have argued that the hierarchical, scientific, technological and mass production elements of this paradigm are unsuited to an experiential education practice. When Ringer coined the term "algorithmic," he commented:

It is my view that in the field of adventure education and outdoor leadership there has long been an implicit and hence invisible discounting of aspects of group leadership that do not fit into algorithmic schemes.

In explaining the term, he adds:

My concern is that the current political and economic climate in most of the western world supports the trivialisation and fragmentation of complex fields of endeavour such as group facilitation and leadership. In this vein, the title of this paper was a deliberate play on the word facile. If the meaning of the word – as derived from the French facile (easy) – signifies the state of being easy, then facilitation translates into the term ‘making easy’. However, the meaning of facile in English has migrated to something akin to ‘trivial’. Bending a few grammatical rules enables us to see ‘Facile-itation’ as trivialisation. Isn’t the activity of ‘making easy’ a group so simple as to warrant trivialisation? Should we not simply chunk facilitation into a number of algorithms, and derive from each algorithm the requisite competencies?

Ringer sees the reductionist approach popular with modernist science applied to facilitation in order to create simple, and therefore trainable, portable and assessable, competencies. He claims that, while this may help beginners to start their professional development, this is no reason to apply such a straight jacket to sophisticated practice. In discussing the militarist legacy, Steve Bowles¹⁴ comments:

The correspondence with both military and masculine aspects remains both in-force and in-vogue. This is perhaps as it should be and this is necessary in the light of outdoor, adventure-based work having a history within war. War has been so hard on folk and we might say that it is only human to seek out alternatives. War hurts. War hurts men as it hurts women. War is ugly for all. Perhaps it is not so much the military and the masculine aspects that need to be addressed, as it is the reasonable alternatives that need attention. This was one

of the questions of the day that was a day of the last hundred years. Hahn, following William James and others, sought a moral equivalent to war. Lord Hunt carried on that search even through to the 1990s in the UK. Perhaps we might, today, seek out alternative adventures that are an alternative to war-like atmospheres. Perhaps we might en-vision today adventures that are not just any mere equivalent to war. There is both hope and there is potential here. Such maybe. Such maybe for all. The questions will thereby be put thus: Is an adventure programming atmosphere the alternative to war-like atmospheres or does it both express and reflect, at times, the condition of war and the conditions that do create war? Perhaps to ask such questions is the only reasonable way in our work with OAE that wonderfully wobbles towards maturity.

These commentators raise the question that the dominance of the algorithmic paradigm in practice and in the literature is not only a matter of diversity corrected by a fuller description and dissemination of other paradigms. It is a deeper issue of a paradigm attached to a modern worldview, a view that is also critiqued by these commentators. The implication is that an ethical educational practice attached to the development of people in the context of community and environment would find this algorithmic paradigm wrong in our current world context.

Before I take up this question I want to consider the paradigm that is the focus of this book. I will also attempt an early description of what I believe to be a new, emerging paradigm to see if this will inform the critique of these commentators.

An Ecological Paradigm

Recent attention in Europe has been given to *friluftsliv*, a Scandinavian pedagogy rooted in culture and history as much as nature. Literally translated as nature free life, it acknowledges the importance of nature in

style of relationship with nature as defining of the culture's identity. If there are equivalent approaches in America they might be rooted in the idea of the pioneer, the cowboy, the settler or the Native People.

Scandinavia is a western region that has not yet lost the idea of a connection with community and place as important. In Norway, *friluftsliv* was championed by the explorer Nansen in an attempt to embed these values in the education system of a nation. Critically, it was seen as important for this to be an experiential education, felt and practised as well as understood. This sensual intimacy with the land and the people has strong links with ideas about indigenous traditions and the notion of authentic experience.¹⁵ Yet here a non-modern feeling has been brought forward into a modern nation state.

Friluftsliv has more to offer than another reform of the old ways valuable as this may be. Building on the tradition, Naess¹⁶ developed his ideas of deep ecology, an idea that is rapidly establishing political and educational expressions. Deep ecology offers something different because it sees the planet as a whole and the person as a member of a species, not just a community, living on that planet, not just in a neighbourhood. Further, it offers a visionary framework and advocates that people engage critically and consciously with these ideas.

Edmund O'Sullivan,¹⁷ who explores the contribution of thinkers like Naess to a new education, claims that the adoption of such a vision in education would be more than a reform, it would be a transformation that would have far reaching consequences to an emerging post modern society. This, O'Sullivan sees as important because, in a world in which the consequences of our actions have worldwide significance to ecosystems and communities, he claims it is essential to have a vision that offers the individual a way to engage with the planet as an idea. He believes that, in our world context, we need the experiential intimacy of the local but combined with the visionary cosmology of the global.

Some Ways Forward

We are faced with a problem, a complex and extended period of values development for an increasingly independent young person in an

increasingly plural and urban consumerist culture. We have sought to address this problem with an uncriticized outdoor education with its roots now two centuries old. I have tackled the value of control and its possible implications. Other pilot and radical outdoor learning projects are exploring ways to work with less control and ego in the wider sense of this critique and in the context of the development of new values in relation to social justice, economics and the environment. They highlight some interesting criteria for success that may provide solutions to this problem.

The Emerging Generative Paradigm

Outdoor learning could be a journey of discovery of a personal ontology and epistemology for the participant. It incorporates actions based on the experiences inspired by learners choosing for themselves how to make a difference. The individual moves through the role of participant and narrator, and becomes an agent in their world.

So far this particular radicalism could be criticized, as it seems to applaud the individualism that is attached to the ideas of modernism that define the algorithmic paradigm I am critiquing. However, there are qualities within individualism that this alternative worldview might consider worth retaining. For example, the liberation experienced by a shift of power to the individual and the creativity as each individual struggles to reinvent a personal world view with which they can live are both values this radical perspective seeks to hold on to. Nevertheless, these qualities can only be transforming when the experiences supporting them do not occur in the context of the market. In this world the individual is constructed as no more than a consumer or as labour.

The emerging paradigm is thus critiquing the context of outdoor learning as much as the approach. The activity of participants and practitioners radicalised in the context of a wider social and environmental field takes them into the political realm. Here is the potential for a synergy with the emerging vision, described by O'Sullivan, of sustainable communities in congruence with the planetary ecosystem. In the politics of sustainability action finds a local and personal expression linked to the community and the land. Such a vision is not just a

in congruence with the critical stances of some eco-feminist views¹⁸ already benefiting the practice of outdoor learning, and the transformative learning concept espoused by O'Sullivan, a critique from which the field might benefit.

The emerging paradigm sits firmly in the domain of political action and indeed informs it. By incorporating this paradigm in outdoor experiential learning it is possible to confront the technological, market place and image politics that have been allowed in by the algorithmic approach. Without such a position the dynamics of living with self, community and planet will be a lost battle rather than a hope filled struggle.

The Characteristics of the Emerging Paradigm

I have called the emerging approach the generative paradigm after Robin Hodgkin who first coined the term in the context of education's role in supporting young people in the creative interpretation of their experience and a transforming influence on their culture. From this point of view its characteristics are:

- Instead of a rational approach it could best be described as valuing intuition.
- Rather than being production oriented and valuing standards and predictability it is creative and founded on hope and possibility.
- It takes its metaphors from spirituality and the journey rather than positivist science and productive business, being subject rather than object oriented.
- It is not outcome focused or process oriented; it is emergent as described by the educational thinkers Robin Hodgkin¹⁹ and John Heron²⁰ valuing the twilight and the firelight where intuition and conceptualisation meet through storytelling. Meaning and value emerge within the experience rather than being represented or defined by the program structure or the facilitator. Empowerment, rather than being represented as the gift of a tool, is understood as establishing congruence with an inner sense of self.
- The facilitator accompanies rather than leads the participants as

in David Boud's²¹ advocacy of animation rather than facilitation. Its principles are egalitarian and not hierarchical as in O'Sullivan's transformative learning.

- Learning is goal free, the experience offered a step on the road rather than a solution; the metaphor of the journey emerges as an alternative to the production line or computer programme.
- Relational mutuality and trust replace transactional consent and choice.
- It is influenced by feminine as much as masculine ideologies.
- It restores place as a central and critical dimension of equal value for learning and meaning as the self and the group.
- It subscribes to a sustainable vision in relation to, and congruent with, ideas of community and the environment.
- It replaces egocentric evolutionary biology with ecocentric Gaian ecology.
- It is politically engaged. Justice and congruence rather than progress and consumption are its highest values.

A Critical Stance

Just as the algorithmic paradigm can be criticized for treating people as labour and perpetuating a culture of violence,²² so the generative model is open to a critical appraisal. Some commentators recognize that it contains the potential for indoctrination. Critics of Dieter May,²³ for example, would draw parallels between the traditions of rites of passage that he advocates and approaches that support fascist tendencies. The potential for this paradigm to degenerate is as real as they were for German liberal education. It requires a liberal and critical approach to this radical form in order to keep clear of such possibilities.

The potency of the generative paradigm lies in the dance between the emerging participant and the, potentially, mutable, even transformable social order. As is the algorithmic paradigm, this paradigm is politicized, but its worldview is a possibility for the future and not one of the established but increasingly unsupportable past. Its worldview of sustainability and justice is also available with an alternative.

agendas of the older paradigm. O'Sullivan believes that, in this context, change can best be achieved by helping people to act within their own communities, developing their critical faculties and valuing the diverse results of the solutions that emerge, values close to the roots of experiential education philosophy.

What the new paradigm offers is the possibility of a dance floor and not a production line or an arena; and an experience judged, if at all, on impression and not technical performance!

Just a Nice Idea?

I have suggested that the generative paradigm might be an emerging, collective dream of a possible future for outdoor experiential learning, one that the commentators I have spoken with are intuitively moving towards as they sense its emerging form around them. If there were some truth in this notion it would be surprising if only the watchers were attuned to the possibilities. Just as they are articulating these ideas in their critiques I would expect others to be creating the ideas in practice. Without such an expression the generative paradigm will remain the product of imagination rather than intuition, and stay in the realm of narrative and not practice.

In fact I could give you many accounts to support this approach. Here is one.

We were visiting an unfamiliar and medium sized island with a group of students. They were invited to explore the island to see what it might have to offer us. One small group set off to follow the beautiful seashore. They met a local fisherman collecting seashells and asked him about the coastline ahead. They got talking to him about his work. He invited them to his home where his wife cooked the group local food and gave them tea. As the conversation unfolded they learned about the way of life and the place from these friendly people. Meanwhile the word went around that there were visitors and neighbours dropped in for a chat. Someone got out a fiddle and started up a tune. Someone else began a long saga about the dramatic history of the island. Before they knew it the chat had turned in to a dance, the whisky had come out, the sun went down and then, before

they'd even thought of sleep or returning to our camp, the sun had come up again. Blearily eyed they eventually made it back. Their stories about the island and its people provided the basis for many walks, a football match, several more "ceilidhs" (visits) and another dance. Educationally I think that was arguably more valuable than following the values of independence and control. Indeed the opposite values of interdependence and serendipity led to the benefits we experienced. Whether you agree with me or not I think this approach certainly offered more of value to a curriculum of sustainability. The students learned a great deal about a landscape they discovered was rich in history and culture and not wild. More importantly they learned a great deal about people who were in touch with that history and landscape and living with it still.

A critical eye on this brief example might suggest that this is simply another rhetoric from a different but equally entrained worldview. This is of course possible. Even if such programmes contain strong elements of creativity, spontaneity and vitality and are relational and generative in approach they could be the beginning of something that becomes institutionalized. I suspect that generative programmes have always emerged around the edges of the so-called outdoor education world and others are always drifting into bounded convention. Perhaps it is a characteristic of experiential approaches that they transform convention from time to time even if we resist it. Perhaps acknowledging these deeper processes in our field's best work will help us develop structures that sustain more rather than less generative outdoor learning experiences.

One way of seeing the generative paradigm at work is to understand it as work in progress drawing on the traditions of older paradigms, adding new ideas and gaining a particular, community and planetary political focus. If this is so, seeds of these ideas will be emerging in writing such as this and in the practice of experiential education organizations old and new.

