

Diss Proposal idea

Abstract:

For my dissertation I am proposing to research alternative living and sustainable community development. I hope to explore how different perceptions of one's environment is shown through daily living and how communities are formed through a shared vision to live sustainably and different from mainstream society. I want to understand the motives behind these projects/groups and find out why people are drawn to them and if this has any impact on how they might view the world differently as a result. These communities are shaped through a collective phenomena; whether that be the drive for a sustainable future, an identity formed in alternative living which is not found through mainstream culture, a deeper sense of connection to the land through possibly a belief or cosmology or a combination of all of these.

Fieldwork:

To conduct my research I am hoping to collect data from multiple fieldwork experiences. The first will be on my trip to Bore, Kenya where I will be staying with the Giriama people for three weeks. Within this fieldwork trip I will be working with the Community Carbon Link project tending to the tree nursery. This will allow to gather sufficient data surrounding my hypothesis as to how different cultural perspectives of the environment may be a significant driving factor into how the project is carried out and the impact this has on the community. I also wish to understand the importance of the project amongst the Giriama people and how this affects their daily lives. My second piece of fieldwork will potentially be in an eco-village in Pembrokeshire, Wales called 'Lammas.' I hope to volunteer here for 1-2 weeks working with my host family to develop their allotments and experience living a complete eco-alternative lifestyle. I hope to find out why individuals and families choose to live within this community and why it is regularly visited. I hope to indulge in the lifestyle and community and learn some new concepts and ideas as to how everyone can live more sustainably. I also hope to learn whether they feel their lifestyle should be adopted by greater society and how they outreach through tourism. Finally, I would like to gather data from the Lampeter Allotment Project here at Lampeter University. As an active member of the student body building the allotment with the hopes of turning it into a community garden, I have already been exposed to the reasons as to why students and the wider community are drawn to the project. I hope through my observations and potential interviews with my fellow gardeners to find out why the project is of interest and important to them and observe how this is affecting the wider community in Lampeter. This will be a longitudinal study as I currently live with this project everyday so it also has the potential for being auto-ethnographic as the project is my 'anthropology at home.'

Methodology:

For my data collection I will be using my main method of participant observation. This means I will be fully immersed in my fieldwork experiences and living as 'one of the community' during my time in the field. This will allow me to gather sufficient in depth interpretative data. I will also have a reflexive journal in each of my fieldwork areas to record my observations and conversations. I plan also to conduct ethnographic interviews with community members. These will be unstructured and open-ended in order to allow my 'informant' to lead the conversation as I feel this will help me get to the core of understanding and interpreting how the community member feels about the environment and the reflection this has on how they choose to live. I will also be recording my data photographically to create visual evidence of my time in the field to allow my reader to also experience some immersion of the trip.