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A right of responsible access came into force in February 2005, underpinned by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. This clarifies the rights and responsibilities of walkers, and for the first time defines relatively new access takers, such as mountain bikers, as legally legitimate countryside users.

However, as previous studies have shown, legal rights do not determine behaviour, but are only one of many sources of moral authority used to guide and justify our actions (Blomley, 1994)¹. In emphasising that people must take responsibility for their own behaviour – regarding both the environment and other users - the law leaves space for informal social norms to influence the translation of access rights into action.

Crucially, these norms shape ideas of what constitutes ‘responsible’ behaviour and ‘damage’, and can be highly contested. The management of access to the countryside requires a range of recreational and land management interests to be harmonised. Yet we know very little about how access rights are actually interpreted and exercised on the ground in Scotland, or what values, motives and principles guide and lend legitimacy to particular actions.

¹Blomley, N.K. 1994, *Law, Space, and the Geographies of Power*, Guildford, London.



Our aim is to better understand how access legislation and the operation of social norms and ethics combine to shape actions and behaviours.

OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the values, norms and practices that are important in drawing boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable recreational use and behaviour:
 - a) as enshrined in the official legal access framework
 - b) as practiced on the ground
 - c) as represented in popular discourses & images
2. To investigate how particular ideas and principles are used to guide and justify self-policing behaviour - or otherwise - in the enactment of access rights
3. To examine how enactment processes are:
 - a) negotiated, contested and normalised between particular social groups
 - b) Manifest spatially



APPROACH

- Desk-based discourse and content analysis of official documentation (e.g. Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, Scottish Outdoor Access Code)
- Semi-structured interviews with key informants (recreationists & representatives of various relevant bodies)
- Development and testing of new methodological tools combining the analysis of visual, spoken and observational data – collected ‘on the move’, using video head-cams, with both walkers and mountain bikers