

Understanding & Reducing Conflicts

Sharing space across species difference

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Capercaillie: a protected species of ground-nesting bird



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WP 8.3.2 Mechanisms for managing rural-urban synergies and conflicts

Introduction

Many rural conflicts become configured in terms of people versus nature. Conservation and recreation are often pitted against each other in this way.

Although rarely this simple, such framings show that we need greater knowledge of how to share space across species boundaries if we are to meet the multiple objectives of flourishing rural communities and ecological sustainability.

Using the concept of 'contact zones' (Haraway, 2008), this research explores the mechanisms through which we can better understand and reduce such conflict.

Here, conflict is conceived of as discord or struggle that unfolds through sets of interconnected practices rather than as a clash of fixed values or interests.



Research Questions include:

- How can we better assess conflicts across multiple social and spatial scales?
- How are conflict framings mobilised by different stakeholders, and how does this shape the dynamic of the conflict?
- What are the key 'contact zones' in which conflict is generated or reduced?
- What practices and circumstances produce or preclude practices harmful to protected species?

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Acronyms:

CNPA = Cairngorms National Park Authority
MVE = Mobile Video Ethnography

Methods

QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY: Managing capercaillie & dogwalking in a popular recreational woodland in the Cairngorms National Park

Conflict has surrounded the prospect of increasing recreational pressure on Capercaillie in connection with a housing proposal to extend the village of Boat of Garten. Recent management measures - particularly in relation to dogwalking - provide a valuable opportunity to see how these measures (and the informal mechanisms nested within them) have been working, and why (not).

Mobile Video Ethnography (MVE)

Employing minicam video technology to record unaccompanied outings and accompanied 'go-along' interviews: mainly with dogwalkers (resident & visitor) but also the ranger, factor, a representative of the local conservation group, and others.

Semi-structured interviews

With community representatives, conservation experts, outdoor access professionals, National Park Authority staff, and NGO representatives.

Review of key documents

Analysis of scientific, policy and media documents.



Using Mobile Video Ethnography with local ranger

Progress to date

Understanding the contours of a conflict

Fieldwork so far suggests there are widely diverging views on what the problem actually is, and its resolution (and some powerful actors even consider it resolved). Preliminary analysis of key documents shows that capercaillie-related conflicts have previously been approached from a mainly biological rather than social or institutional perspective.

Understanding the dynamics of a conflict: Identifying key practices and 'contact zones'

Our concern is how and where legal and normative power (as well as non-human agency) is exerted in practice in the governance of the relationship between conservation and recreation. We have identified a number of key 'contact zones' through which multispecies conflicts are generated, sustained and resolved. They can be clustered around the following social, institutional and physical scales:

- **Forest-based spaces, practices & encounters** (e.g. dog-human-caper, dogwalker-dogwalker, or ranger-recreationist)
- **Other local community spaces** (e.g. resident contact with: other residents, visitors, NGOs)
- **Regional institutional managerial spaces** (e.g. CNPA contact with community, land managers, developers, visitors, NGOs, scientists; Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum)
- **National and international scientific, policy & legal spaces** (e.g. spaces of inter-scientist debate, European law framing species protection)

To date, we have carried out 11 interviews and 5 MVEs (with the intention of recruiting to saturation). Our focus so far has mainly been on the forest-based 'contact zones'.

Evidence of effective conflict prevention/resolution measures

There are signs that a largely voluntary, normative approach can work to change recreational behaviour, but is contingent upon a number of factors, and is not necessarily a simple case of 'more education' as often assumed. There are related findings emerging on the circumstances under which generally well-meaning people transgress legal and normative boundaries of 'responsible' behaviour – and in turn pose a threat to Capercaillie - and the part this plays in the conflict more broadly.



View from minicam worn by dogwalker

Outputs so far

- Two articles for the general public in local community newsletter
- Book chapter on using Mobile Video Ethnography in a multispecies context (and a journal paper in preparation)
- Journal paper (in press) on the links between landscape and achieving 'responsible' behaviour
- Member of group advising Cairngorms National Park Authority on formulation of strategic policy (Capercaillie Framework, due late 2014)
- Oral presentation given at public meeting of the Community Council