

Outdoor recreation and place identity in the Kristianstad Vattenrike

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The Kristianstad Vattenrike

The protected landscape of the Biosphere Reserve Kristianstad Vattenrike is a unique landscape construction. Building upon themes in the region's history, an integrated natural and cultural history including an ecologically significant biodiversity, the United Nations Kristianstad Vattenrike Biosphere Area (reserve) was established in 2005. UNESCO (2013) describes biosphere reserves as sites established to promote sustainable development based, in part, upon local community efforts and quality science: "As places that seek to reconcile conservation of biological and cultural diversity and economic and social development through partnerships between people and nature" (n.p.). This effort to present a more relational approach to questions of people and nonhuman nature has been highlighted in the Kristianstad Vattenrike since the designation of the area. The Kristianstad Vattenrike initiative deliberately set the boundaries for the biosphere core area not only inclusive of the ecologically significant wetlands of the region, but also to include the municipality of Kristianstad in this effort to emphasize people as an important part of the natural systems. This integrated approach underscores the value of public engagement in the on-going efforts of the biosphere area. Outdoor recreation will be used as one aspect of the dynamic relationship between people and place to consider landscape identity and sustainable engagement.

Place Identity

An analysis of preliminary visitor survey data collected at the Kristianstad Vattenrike visitor centre, *Naturum*, has motivated further questions of participation, place identity, and environmental outcomes. For example, the visitor centre visitation data indicated that over 60% of the visitor centre visitors were also using the outdoor visitor sites located throughout the Kristianstad Vattenrike (Beery, 2013); twenty-one visitor sites serve as key locations for public engagement in Kristianstad Vattenrike natural/cultural history topics and outdoor recreation. This documented visitation along with additional preliminary results serves as a springboard for further investigation of the role of outdoor recreation at these visitor sites. Hence this next stage of study explores the outdoor recreation experience more fully and investigates whether these experiences are contributing toward the broad sustainability goals of the biosphere reserve program. Specifically, this study examines whether outdoor recreation shows a relationship with Kristianstad Vattenrike place identity and ultimately with environmentally responsible behaviour drawing on previous work in place attachment and identity (Carrus, Bonaiuto, & Bonnes, 2005; Giuliani, 2003; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Vaske & Kobrin, 2001; Williams & Roggenbuck, 1989). Environmentally responsible behaviour is explored via a place sensitive approach given both concerns about generic environmental behaviour measures (Beery & Wolf-Watz, unpublished manuscript) and the interest to measure one aspect of public engagement with sustainability on a personal and/or household

level. The analysis of particular survey items will also allow for comparisons with Swedish outdoor recreation national survey results from the national project, *Friluftsliv i förändring* (Fredman, Stenseke, & Sandell, 2014) in an attempt to approach place identity questions from multiple vantage points.

The Role of Outdoor Recreation in Protected Lands Management

In addition to questions exploring place identity and environmental behaviour, the study explores questions of access, participation, barriers, preferences, and environmental connectedness in an attempt to better illuminate the role outdoor recreation is playing in this specific example of protected land management. Data collection includes field surveys of outdoor recreation participants and a survey of a control group of Kristianstad Vattenrike residents. While the current presentation of results will focus on results of the field and control surveys, follow-up interviews from both outdoor recreation and control participants will be conducted as a third stage in this research process. Quantitative and qualitative analysis will explore each group individually as well as provide comparisons of the data sets. A pragmatist methodology underscores the belief in the ability of mixed methods research to illuminate possible insights, outcomes, and new directions for inquiry.

References

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