The Negotiation of Leisure Citizenship: Leisure Constraints, Moral Regulation and the Mediation of Rural Place

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ABSTRACT This paper extends the constraints of leisure literature by demonstrating how materials are circulated to regulate and constrain leisure behaviour in the countryside. It is argued that constraints in the form of moral regulation should be recognised as part of the constraints literature. The development of the Country Code in England is regarded as part of a long-term and ongoing effort to extend governance and control by means of informal and semi-formal codes of conduct. Crucially, however, the Code has changed over time and may act as a means of placating different interests in the countryside as much as observably constraining them. The Code is seen as a constraint project mediated between groups and is found to be contested and reworked over time. Drawing on key concepts expounded in Bourdieu’s post-structural social theory it is argued that actors occupy positions within social fields and draw on their own habitus, other dispositions of power and imaginations to co-construct leisure regulation and behaviour. Such conceptual devices should more properly be viewed as contingent dispositions that are subject to challenge and revision. As such the more diffuse and circulatory constraints affect practices differentially. A need for more attention to this in leisure studies research and a recognition of how different constraints are experienced and responded to is needed.

KEYWORDS: Constraints, materials, power, behaviour, countryside, regulation, leisure, citizenship

Introduction

The development of leisure has involved the imposition of all manner of regulation and restrictions. Rojek (1992) advances that leisure regulation in the modern era has been an important part of state activity and that the mechanisms developed are significant constraints on both activities and participants. Some constraints are designed to restrict leisure behaviour; others, for example, are physical, economic or time-constrained; while some involve an assemblage of socio-economic or practical limits, laws and regulations. Yet more rely on the construction of moral norms.
and place identities. This paper contributes to post-structural and cultural assessments of leisure constraints and has a specific agenda to discuss an aspect of constraints that has not received sustained attention in leisure studies. This focus is the informal regulation of leisure spaces through material intermediaries, as part of the development of state-led leisure governance. The way that such intermediaries are designed, circulated and revised are important elements in considering how some intervening constraints are circulated, internalised and maintained and how they are altered. Foucault’s pioneering work on governmentality and self-governance is influential in prompting this paper, given the emphasis placed here on the way that power is circulated, negotiated and internalised via ‘heterogeneous assemblages’ of materials as constraints to leisure behaviour (see Foucault, 1977, 1991; Dean, 1996, 1999; Murdoch, 1997; Rose, 1999).

The lens for this exploration focuses on the use and development of the Country Code as a moral regulatory project and ‘intervening’ constraint on leisure in the English countryside. I indicate how the authors and promulgators of the Code have made use of an heterogeneous assembly of many materials, artefacts and practices to circulate the Code messages and maximise the potential impact. In engaging with this topic I also draw into the constraints debate Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and field to help demonstrate one example of how place, environment and host communities mediate and contest appropriate leisure behaviour through the design and co-construction of ‘moral regulation’ (Tuan, 1974; Dean, 1994; Hunt, 1996; Ruonavaara, 1997). Drawing on work debated at length in cultural and political geography I widen the scope and definition of such barriers, arguing that such discursive regulation represents an interesting subset of intervening and socio-psychological constraints on leisure behaviour and activities (see Hagerstrand, 1970; Kaplan, 1983; Iso-Ahola & Mannell, 1985) but that such constraints may be increasingly ineffectual in a postmodern socio-cultural context (cf. Bhaskar, 1989; Valsiner, 1998).

An account of the leisure constraints literature and the need for a continued theoretical analysis of leisure–society–space relations is rehearsed below. I then outline the development of the Country Code and provide a reading of its relevance to leisure constraints thinking. In concluding the paper I argue that such constraints ‘carriers’ support Shogan’s (2002) assertion regarding leisure constraints as performing facilitatory and restricting roles. Her work involves Foucauldian social constraints theory, organised around the key concept of governmentality. This organisation of the field of government is relevant here in terms of how the ‘conduct of conduct’ is ensured (Foucault, 1991; Dean, 1999); that is, how individuals self-regulate and conform to structural rules. While a thorough review of Foucault’s work is not possible it is clear that the techniques and materials used to foster self-governance are central to the way that constraints are shaped and change over time: to reflect shifting power relations and to attempt to inculcate particular behaviours and the acceptance of socially constructed ‘norms’.

**Constraints and Leisure in a ‘Post-structural Landscape’**

This paper is situated within a generally used conceptualisation of leisure constraints ‘as a mechanism for better understanding barriers to activity participation’ (Samdahl
& Jekubovich, 1997a: p. 431). The way that people respond to environments and other cues and structuring factors is an important area of research for a wide range of social scientists and disciplines interested in nature–society–culture relations (cf. Jackson, 2005a, 2005b). This interdisciplinary research activity has included trajectories of approach focussing on social regulation, environmental constraints, landscape interaction and co-constructive identity formation (among others, see, for example; Tuan, 1974; Stokols & Shumacher, 1981; Daniel, 1989; Korpela, 1989; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996; Jackson, 2005a). In terms of leisure geographies more specifically, there has been a shift in recent years to embrace the implications of post-structural theory that breaks down deterministic and positivist ideas and divisions based on binaries and dualisms. This has included the erosion of boundaries and a consequent interpenetration of traditional academic disciplines.

In leisure studies research the constraints literature has largely focussed on attempting to better understand specific barriers to participation in various leisure activities and efforts have been made to classify, organise and critique the types of constraints which intervene in leisure practice (e.g. Wade, 1985; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997a, 1997b; Jackson, 2000; Shogan, 2002; Ravenscroft et al., 2005). Iso-Ahola and Mannell (1985) provide an early listing of the kinds of social and psychological constraints that potentially impact on leisure participants. The micro-political/biopolitical dimension of leisure practice has been noted elsewhere in the leisure studies literature and it is germane here. The way that activities and behaviours are structured and how efforts to promote such structures are designed and circulated are important in terms of the mundane everyday working of governmentality and the maintenance of constraints (cf. Arendt, 1968, on the banality of evil). Conversely the way that constraining factors are understood and internalised is equally relevant here in terms of the language, composition and delivery of such regulation.

Such efforts have focussed on several areas including: ability and skill levels, rules, income/pricing and perspectives based on age, sex and ethnicity as well as factors such as fear of crime and inter-user group conflict (e.g. Jackson, 1991; Henderson, 1997; Aitchison, 1999; Ravenscroft, 2004; Walker & Virden, 2005). During the 1990s the research agenda expanded when the discipline shifted to reflect on developments in social theory and to embrace the postmodern and ‘cultural turn’ in the social sciences (Aitchison, 1999; Shogan, 2002). The cultural turn in geography in the 1990s has encouraged different avenues of research into how place and space affect leisure practice (Kay & Jackson, 1991; Rojek, 1995; Jackson, 1997, 2000; Aitchison, 1999, 2003; Crouch, 1999, 2000; Shogan, 2002). A longer tradition in geography exists around people–environment relationships and the sense of place that is experienced and constructed through interactions between landscape, objects and people (e.g. Tuan, 1974, 1980). In Hetherington’s (1997) terms these are part of the ‘materialities of place’, which constitute and lend meaning to spaces and activities. Similarly a tradition of research into environmental self-regulation has also developed since at least the 1970s (Korpela, 1989) and in psychology the role of agency in making and shaping culture also provided useful insights into leisure behaviour (Bhaskar, 1989; Bonnes & Secchiaroli, 1995; Valsiner, 1998; Ratner, 2000).
This shift augurs a broadening of the scope and a subsequent deepening of conceptual thinking about constraints (cf. Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997a), and happens to coincide with Jackson’s (1991) early call for diverse research interests to engage with the constraints agenda:

The concept of constraints can serve as advice to assist in perceiving new connections among apparently discrete facets of leisure, and therefore as a vehicle to facilitate communication among researchers with diverse topical interests. (Jackson, 1991: p. 279)

Jackson (1997) subsequently set out an iteration to his agenda for extending constraints research, which included a recognition of a need to better understand contextual issues that relate to constraints on leisure, while also calling for a more theoretically informed approach. He further extended this type of call in a review chapter that admirably summarises the development and coverage of leisure constraints research, particularly in North America (Jackson, 2005a, 2005b).

It is acknowledged that forms of participation, the location and context, the duration and costs of participation and the ability to participate are all relevant and impact on participation, but these are not the focus here. The basic premise of leisure constraints theory is extended here, to demonstrate how informal regulatory tools are prepared, circulated and negotiated and act as leisure constraints that can both facilitate and restrict leisure behaviours and spaces. Indeed Shogan (2002: p. 37), in drawing on Foucault’s work, makes a call for this type of consideration to be made in leisure studies, noting that: ‘a valuable study would be to explore how intervening and antecedent constraints function within a network of power relations’.

Leisure studies authors have attempted to categorise constraints in leisure. Crawford et al. (1991) list three: (1) structural, including time and resources; (2) interpersonal, such as relationships and animosities; and (3) intrapersonal, including socialisation effects. This view is, however, rather anthropocentric and Hagerstrand (1970), working from within a regional geography tradition, also developed three aggregations of constraints putting space and time at the forefront of the analysis. His classification comprised: ‘capability’ constraints, including physical and biological restrictions; ‘coupling’ constraints, where a combination of other people, tools and materials are required to participate or otherwise engage with the activity; and ‘authority’ constraints, where the activity is to some degree controlled with ‘accessibility protected by the exercise of power’ (Peet, 1998: p. 152). These threefold typologies are useful start points, particularly given the subject matter considered here. Yet it is how these types interrelate and combine and how regulations are mediated and assemblages gathered, circulated and received that are considered here. Therefore I seek to restate the hybridity and negotiated nature of constraints in some leisure circumstances, which is recognised in Jackson’s (2005b) overview (see also Jackson, 2000).

Post-structural views of society–nature contend that social relations are as much fluid and different as stable and predictable. This allows conceptual space for leisure practices and imaginations that are more individualised and which are contested and reworked in ‘action spaces’, rather than assuming the performance of leisure either homogeneously or ‘according to all the rules’, or indeed responding as predictably or consistently to constraints (Goffman, 1967; Ravenscroft & Parker, 1999; Jackson, 2005b). Crucially:
landsca....result of continuous, dialectical struggles of power and resistance among and between the
diversity of landscape providers, users and mediators. (Aitchison, 1999: p. 29)

If we accept this the possibility of contestation about rules and imposed constraints
are ever more likely and the process, strategies and tools used by various groups
make for very interesting, if taxing, research material.

In seeking to extend the scope of constraints research it is also important to
recognise calls for place to be incorporated more explicitly into work assessing
leisure behaviours. Crouch (2000: p. 63) emphatically asserts that ‘places are a
pervasive component of leisure and tourism’. Constraints are usefully ‘placed’
more explicitly to include the situating of ‘constraints’ in terms of space and in
terms of geographical coordinates, environments or actants. The latter term signi-
fies the influence of the non-human world, including animals, landscape features
and other materials (see Law & Hassard, 1999; Urry, 2000; Whatmore, 2003). In
this conceptualisation it is accepted that there are multiple encounters and
responses to constraints and that a widened view of the ‘place’ of leisure is
required. Both Crouch (2000) and Aitchison (1999) have called for a more
geographical and cultural account of leisure behaviours. They urge a more detailed
understanding of how people interact and feel; that is, how leisure is ‘spatialised’
and perhaps fetishised.

However, it is equally important to understand how leisure is politicised in
space. The contrasting views of the strength and durability of social norms and the
challenge of social fluidity and geographical mobility give rise to a need to under-
stand how structures are maintained and reworked in different places, and where
different micro-political dispositions are deployed. It is well established that the
social environment can influence the individual and the cultural geography litera-
ture, focussing around leisure, indicates that the social and physical environment
are important structuring (f)actors for all manner of activities and identities (cf.
Butler, 1990; Rojek, 1995; Rojek & Urry, 1997; Crouch, 1999; Crouch & Parker,
2003). Crouch points to non-representational theory as a useful analytical position,
arguing that ‘place becomes the material of popular culture which is worked,
reworked and negotiated’ (Crouch, 2000: p. 64). In this way a different form of
imagineering is developed beyond the planned and orchestrated assemblage of the
theme park, museum or shopping mall.

This shift in thinking implicitly demands that leisure constraints are viewed
intersubjectively, to consider the activation or experience of constraints differen-
tially by actors who interpret and interact disparately (Crouch, 1999). Social roles
and societal norms are often reified and circulated through different forms of
regulation and these are also reflected in leisure behaviours and experienced as
embodied practice. However, efforts to regulate behaviour are likely to be differ-
tentially successful or result in a variety of outcomes, including different kinds of
conflict (Rapaport, 1974; Parker, 1999, 2002; Ravenscroft et al., 2005). Within this
assessment different interests and activities may well conflict and goal interference
is common. This is perhaps particularly so in spaces where more than one activity
is pursued at one time, the countryside being a case in point.

Yi-Fu Tuan, in his work on place, argues that new people, practices and objects
can create dissonance within a pre-existing ‘sense of place’. Such occurrences can
be repelled, absorbed and create conflict, but also potentially transform the sense of place (Tuan, 1974, 1980). The ‘contents’ of place is only part of this; the individual perception and interaction with the individual lifeworld or habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; and cf. Parker, 1999; Hillier & Rooksby, 2002; Howe & Langdon, 2002) is a label developed to encapsulate the dispositions: feelings, attitudes, experiences and knowledges that promote actions and reactions. The field evokes ‘a domain of activity within which actors engage and compete with one another to achieve their objectives’ (Howe & Langdon, 2002: p. 213). It is a mediating context where external factors and changing circumstances are integrated with individual practice (Jenkins, 1992). Bourdieu (1996) developed the notion of hysteresis to account for instances where there is dissonance over objectives or actions, otherwise labelled a ‘subversive habitus’ (Bourdieu, 2002). In this understanding different actors may clash if their objectives or sense of place conflict and/or the features of their habitus are incongruent.

Korpela (1989) (after Sarbin, 1983) draws on theories of self-regulation derived from psychology to argue that individuals construct their own thought worlds that require particular features and experiences. This internal narrative or plan is labelled as the ‘emplotment’ and is designed to optimise sense of self and self-esteem where individuals assemble their own ‘worlds’ (Valsiner, 1998). These may be manifested as a selective adherence and resistance to different ‘rules’, social parameters or constraints (Ratner, 2000). These usefully become ‘carrying’ and ‘holding’ ideas used to explore the maintenance and iteration of norms and ‘rules’ as constraints here.

Such interactions may also be usefully theorised using Bourdieu’s wider conceptualisations of (social) field and the habitus of different actors (see Bourdieu, 1977, 1990, 1996, 2002; Wacquant, 1989). Bourdieu’s work represents an attempt to transcend ‘the pernicious dualism between objectivism and subjectivism...as part of a theory of practice’ (King, 2000: p. 417). Jenkins (1992: p. 86) views the field as: ‘the crucial mediating context wherein external factors – changing circumstances – are brought to bear upon individual practice and institutions’. Bourdieu (1990) himself uses the metaphor of ‘the game’ to get across the sense of interaction and activity or practice that constitutes the habitus/field relationship: ‘to be successful in a game situation requires not just understanding and following the rules, but having a sense of the game’ (Hillier & Rooksby, 2002: p. 7, paraphrasing Bourdieu, 1990: p. 89).

However, the notion that different ‘places’ engender unpredictable attempts to maintain different ‘rules’ is important. Individuals interact and exist within social fields and individual dispositions have been widely recognised as relevant and important factors in shaping and maintaining ‘rules of the game’. Certain knowledges are likely to be gained through experience, yet this sense of the game or sense of the legitimate and of possible behaviours will vary. Hillier and Rooksby acknowledge that the field is importantly a ‘space of conflict and competition as actors struggle to achieve their objectives’ (2002: p. 6). Such conflict may result in challenges to the rules of the game or the standing conditions in a particular context or field. Conversely, the rules may be observed with, in some cases, revisions to extant regulations or a shift in the (local) enforcement of ‘standing conditions’ being effected (Clegg, 1989) or often these social rules are ignored or ‘bent’ in a
‘choreography of the moment’ to suit individual dispositions, mood or specifics of the setting.

It is reflected that more mobile and informed citizenry are more likely to challenge rules where the rules interfere with their (increasingly divergent) goals. The resources or capital that they bring with them may substantially affect their likelihood of successful renegotiation of the field conditions, either temporarily or more durably. In one example, walkers and other newcomers to a particular area (or field) were demanding to use closed-off, although legally extant, rights of way. Efforts to use and open up the routes led to conflict and eventual changes to the social field or leisure setting were made (i.e. the opening up of the paths and the provision of signposting; see Parker, 1999). This demonstrates how there are both uneven practices and constraints on users and different reactions to such constraints, along with different potential outcomes.

Such influences are adding to a developing debate in leisure studies about the materials and networks that shape and construct leisure activity. Aitchison (1999) implies that leisure activity is substantially shaped by mediating tools of governance. Dean (1996, 1994) sees attempts to control behaviour through material artefacts as part of a moral regulatory strategy where numerous techniques and materials are circulated. The use of intermediaries such as written rules and specifically codes of conduct are considered here. For example, there are many different codes of conduct (and more widely self-regulatory tools such as codes of practice) in existence that have been prepared to regulate numerous activities, including leisure activities (see, for example, Houlihan, 2001). Further research is required to understand and reflect on the impact and roles that such codes play in shaping leisure activity, environments, objects and participants and what other materials and assemblages are enrolled to encourage adherence.

Such codes of conduct are central in this analysis in terms of their role, not in creating conflict, but as means of interposing between potential conflict, in mediating between conflicting senses of place and emphasising narrower interest-based positions and appropriate behaviours. It is demonstrated how such devices can represent attempts to maintain a stable relation between interests and to provide a regulatory environment that reduces conflict while delivering an outcome favourable to authorial power. It is argued that attempts are made, using different strategies and mediating tools such as codes, to structure leisure environments and influence participants’ constructions of appropriate behaviours or ‘leisure cultures’. These attempts may be more or less successful for different interests as constraints and facilitators to leisure and other aspects of amenity. This theoretical context is the point of departure for focussing on the development over time of the Country Code for England (Countryside Agency, 2004a; Parker, 2005).

The Country Code: Top–Down and All Around Regulation?

The term ‘Code’ is used in the paper to signify the wider Country Code project that has involved numerous formats, material assemblages and methods of circulation. The material drawn upon here was collected through archive research, literature analysis and key interviews with staff at the Countryside Agency involved with the 1981 and 2004 Codes (see below). The archive material, primarily relating to the
earlier Codes, was derived from: the National Archive, Kew; the Countryside Agency’s information resource centre, Cheltenham; the Ramblers’ Association library, London; the Museum of English Rural Life, Reading; and the London Metropolitan archive in Camden. For reasons of space only a selection of the material uncovered is discussed explicitly here (see also Parker, 2006, and Merriman, 2005 for other supporting information). Merriman (2005) provides a detailed account of the different materials associated with the Country Code, including the use of numerous forms of advertising and dissemination methods, while in Parker (2005) the interjections and politics surrounding the Code are rehearsed. Here the English Country Code is the focus but a Code for both Wales and an outdoor access code for Scotland are now in circulation (see http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/default.asp).

Efforts to modify behaviour and leisure practice are extensive and may be more or less visible as implied in the review above. Top–down exhortations from resource holders can extend from written or assumed ‘rules of the game’ to economic or physical barriers, while other actants may modify behaviours through internalised messages of a more general or diffuse nature. However, even engaging with the range of constraints or modifiers implied here is too great a task. Within this conceptual understanding the assemblages and instruments arranged around just one form of leisure activity (walking in the countryside) cannot be explored fully, such is the potential complexity of how different constraints are applied and contested regarding different activities, action spaces and by individuals. Instead, it is hoped that the account raises the issue of how leisure activities are implicated in complex networks of constraining and facilitating environments, which are intermediated by a range of materials or cultural artefacts.

The English Country Code is positioned here as a constraint devised to maintain and reify a particular construction of the countryside. The Code project is read as a moral regulatory tool for constraining (and enabling) leisure in the countryside. The Code, in this view, is a tool of (self-) governance, representing part of a sustained effort on the part of a network or policy community to intermediate in leisure use of the countryside (Blunden & Curry, 1989; Curry, 1994; Shoard, 1999). A central part of the analysis rests on the multiple revisions and changes in composition, tone and mediation strategies of the Code, with alterations being made in 1971 and 1982 and again in 2004, following the original Code’s publication in 1951 (National Parks Commission, 1951a; Countryside Commission, 1971, 1982; Countryside Agency, 2004a). It is argued that the various contestations and iterations of the Code reflect not only its role as regulatory tool but also its position as a leisure constraint. The Code is also a container for particular constructions of the ‘rural’ (Mormont, 1990; Macnaghten & Urry, 1998; Woods, 2005), yet different interests have shaped and resisted the Code, reflecting in part their shifting political fortunes and public attitudes to landowners and competing uses of the countryside. Therefore the content, design and mediation of the Code reflect changing attitudes to the countryside, as well as wider and relative shifts in importance of various rural economic and environmental interests.

The Country Code for England was first drafted as a result of the passage of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 as a method of placating landowning and farming interests. These interests were expecting an increase in
leisure use of the countryside, particularly in the soon to be created National Parks in England and Wales (see Cherry, 1977; Blunden & Curry, 1989; Parker & Ravenscroft, 1999 on the story surrounding the 1949 Act and discussions relating to the ‘right to roam’ in the inter-war years). Measures to mitigate the politically contentious extension of access rights were also a necessary political expediency, even though much of the access by right was dropped from the eventual 1949 Act (Cherry, 1977; Parker & Ravenscroft, 1999, 2001). The Code was designed to encourage ‘responsible behaviour’ in the countryside, with the 1947 Hobhouse report on footpaths and access to the countryside having earlier recommended that a country code be published. The following passage neatly summarised the justifications used at that time:

Much of the ill feeling which has existed in the past has been due to ignorance or thoughtless behaviour on the part of some townsmen (sic). This we believe could be considerably reduced by persistent educational efforts. We accordingly recommend that a simple Country Code be prepared and issued. Its object should be to evoke a better all round standard of responsible behaviour in the countryside and to instill a greater appreciation of the ways and needs of rural life, and the inter-dependence of town and country. (Ministry of Town and Country Planning, 1947: p. 44)

After the passage of the 1949 Act the Code was drafted by the newly established National Parks Commission during 1950 and early 1951. The draft Code was influenced heavily by pre-existing codes and informal regulations that leisure and amenity organisations had drawn up during the 1930s and 1940s. For example, the Ramblers’ Association, the Open Spaces Society and the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) all had their own codes of conduct relating to visitors to the countryside (Parker, 2005).

The research found no voices raised against the project in principle during the consultation and drafting of the Code. Instead the issues raised by consultees in 1950 were in terms of wording and other details (National Parks Commission, 1951b). It appears that all interests seemed to want to adopt semi-formal ‘rules’ that would provide a template for both landowners and recreationists and act as a guide to instruct visitors to the countryside. For landed interests the Code was an opportunity to regulate (unwanted) visitors to ‘their’ environment or territory. This intimates that the Code was produced as a corporatist effort to placate landowning interests as well as amenity groups. The Code was viewed by politicians and civil servants as a method of ordering access as well as protecting ‘the rural way of life’ which, it was feared, could be threatened by the new recreationalists (The Times, 1951; Turner, 1951). Leisure participants were frequently referred to in extremely colourful, if not alarmist, language (Sheail, 1981; Matless, 1998). The countryside elites were attempting to mitigate feared impacts of leisure and ‘protecting’ a particular lived, working and ‘natural’ environment (Woods, 2005) through the creation of the state sponsored Code and its characterisation of a regulated, ordered and conformist recreationalist.

Thus the Code was designed to explain and embody appropriate behaviour and to influence the practice of leisure with explicit and directed ‘aspirations to achieve certain outcomes in terms of the conduct of the governed’ (Rose, 1999: p. 52). The finalised 1951 version of the Code used 10 key messages to outline the parameters of ‘good’ leisure behaviour (see Table 1 below).
These messages were contained in a Code booklet that explained each ‘rule’ and portrayed the countryside in specific ways through pictorial representations. The general justification for the imposition of these rules related to the needs of the land manager or farmer and those living in the countryside. Transposed in terms of leisure participants this constitutes the framing of leisure behaviour and the imposition of diffuse rules couched in terms of ‘good citizenship’. Urban adults and children were seen as subjects needing education about the countryside and both groups were to be taught to adopt new, codified behaviours that would be in harmony with ‘country life’.

The Code project in the 1950s embraced as many different methods and ‘carrying’ artefacts as could be negotiated by the National Parks Commission. These strategies of dissemination included poster campaigns, the production of a Country Code board game, the key messages were reproduced on cereal packets and post office franking machines, while television and radio were enrolled to promote the Code. Cartoonists, notably Thelwell, were used to produce amusing images to accompany the Code messages and the Countryside Agency incorporated reproductions of these cartoons in special educational packs sent out to teachers after the launch of the 2004 Code (Countryside Agency, 2004b). The Code text and associated images were circulated in a variety of ways and directed to many different environments – notably factories, schools, shops and railway stations.

Such measures were devised to extend the reach of the Code and promote the internalisation of the Code beyond the countryside itself, particularly in the towns, workplaces, homes and about the body (Merriman, 2005). The purpose of detailing the Country Code project is to underline how and why it has changed. While space restricts the fullness of the account here the Code was revised in 1971, 1982 and again in 2004. Alterations were made in terms of the way that it was worded, the way that it was presented and the way that it was circulated and mediated. This approach demonstrates how mundane or quotidian devices can be used to reinforce and maintain political projects; creating what Appadurai (1996) has termed ‘ideoscapes’ where images and other materials are used to construct politically useful images of place and which are then enrolled into the individual’s social ‘emplotment’ (Korpela, 1989).

Table 1. The 1951 Country Code key messages

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Guard against all risk of fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Fasten all gates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Keep dogs under proper control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Keep to the paths across farm land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Avoid damaging fences, hedges and walls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Leave no litter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Safeguard water supplies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Protect wildlife, wild plants and trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Go carefully on country roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Respect the life of the countryside</td>
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</table>

The 1971 alterations were made primarily in terms of updating the presentation, revising the accompanying text and the use of multi-coloured imagery. The text also stressed the economic impact on farming that visitors to the countryside might have. However, the late 1960s also marked the first explicit signs of friction about the Code. By the early 1970s calls for separate Codes for visitors and land managers had been voiced (e.g. Hall, 1973) and in 1979 a Country Code review group was set up by the Countryside Commission who indicated that there could be a case for multiple codes, saying: ‘a further variation on this argument is for a set of different and more explicit codes, each designed for a different audience and different surroundings’ (Countryside Commission, 1979: p. 8). This notion was to acknowledge the different environments and activities being performed in the countryside as well as the perceived need to regulate land managers.

The Code had been supported by the Ramblers’ Association since 1951, and was incorporated as part of the Association’s membership pledge. This support lapsed in the early 1980s, partly due to the lack of progress in extending access voluntarily and partly because the Association felt that land managers were not always fulfilling their legal responsibilities, for example, through neglecting the maintenance of paths and stiles and by blocking rights of way (Shoard, 1987; Parker, 1999). Another reason for this political shift is seen in the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), which had incorporated an amendment regarding the Country Code. However, this was ignored by the Code review group, allegedly because the process of drafting the 1982 version of the Code had been completed.

The 1981 clause stipulated that the Code should promote both rights and responsibilities of visitors and may be read as the beginnings of a shift towards a more balanced Code (House of Lords, 1981). Contrary to this apparent shift, the 1982 Code in fact extended the list of exhortations for users (see Table 2). The pre-existing points were reordered and two further exhortations were added, producing a final list of 12 key points. The two new exhortations were ‘make no unnecessary noise’ (12) and ‘leave livestock, crops and machinery alone’ (7), both reflecting concern about visitor behaviours. The editing also reflected popular phraseology of the day, representing a further attempt to maintain a receptive audience.

Table 2. The 12 points of the 1982 Country Code (and order from 1951 Code)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Exhortation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work. (10, Amended)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Guard against risk of fire. (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Fasten all gates. (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Keep your dogs under close control. (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Keep to the public paths across farmland. (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls. (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone. (New)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Take your litter home. (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Help to keep all water clean. (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Protect wildlife, plants and trees. (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Take special care on country roads. (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Make no unnecessary noise. (New)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, the imagery used in the Code booklet and associated posters and other materials was more sober than the 1971 version and made extensive use of colour photographs of rural scenes.

Efforts to negotiate wider access to the countryside had been faltering since the 1949 Act. During the 1980s and early 1990s the Ramblers’ Association in particular had pressed its case for a ‘right to roam’ (Shoard, 1987, 1999). By 1994 the UK Labour Party formally adopted an extension of access rights as an election manifesto commitment and announced its intention to legislate on the matter in 1999, after gaining power in 1997. As a result, the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act was passed in December 2000, delivering a belated and somewhat limited ‘right to roam’ amongst other provisions (see Parker & Ravenscroft, 2001). The Act also required that the Country Code be revised, stipulating that:

…it shall be the duty of the Countryside Agency to issue, and from time to time revise, a code of conduct for the guidance of persons exercising the rights conferred…and of persons interested in access land. (Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; s20(1))

This rubric, for the first time, explicitly directed that the Code be aimed at both visitors and land managers. This widened focus is significant, signalling an apparent shift in state support for particular groups.

The discussions over the design of the new Code after 2000 tended to broadly mirror the debates that had taken place in 1949–1951, with some user groups arguing that the 1982 version of the Code was felt to be too ‘dictatorial’ and ‘dated’ (Countryside Agency, 2003a, 2003b). The Open Spaces Society and Ramblers’ Association both claimed that ‘a code for landowners and occupiers is needed more than one for visitors’ (Ashbrook, 2003). Conversely, concerns were expressed by land managing interests about the shift to a twin-track Code, but despite these protests the two-pronged approach, which included a code of conduct for land managers, as well as for the public, was eventually published in July 2004 (see Table 3 and Figures 1 and 2).

The 2004 version bears little resemblance to the 1951 Code, or even the later iterations of 1971 and 1982, although the cartoon style extends previous efforts to use bright colours and humour to promote the Code’s messages. The appearance of the Code is distinctly populist, using Aardman Animation Ltd™ images, animated characters and films to promote the new Code (and see Figure 1 and 2). Aardman is the trademarked name of the Oscar-winning animation company renowned for the Wallace and Gromit™ and Creature Comforts™ films and TV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Advice for the public</th>
<th>B. Advice for land managers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Leave gates and property as you find them.</td>
<td>2. Make it easy for visitors to act responsibly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.</td>
<td>3. Identify possible threats to user behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Keep dogs under close control.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Consider other people.</td>
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</table>

Source: Countryside Agency (2004a).
Countryside Code – advice for the public

From a gentle stroll or relaxing picnic to a long-distance walk or heart-pumping adventure, the countryside provides every opportunity for enjoyment and relaxation.

- Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Consider other people.

If you follow the Countryside Code wherever you go, you’ll get the best enjoyment possible and you’ll help to protect the countryside now and for future generations.

adverts. The Code adverts have been shown in cinemas and were available for viewing on a special countryside access website from July 2004 (see: www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk).

The Code messages are much shorter and are less detailed in the 2004 version than in previous efforts but crucially they are more balanced (despite there being five missives for the public and only three for land managers). The Code claims its justifications based on ‘safety, respect and enjoyment’ (which is used as the strapline). In this first level of analysis the Code appears to claim the kind of enhancing credentials that Shogan (2002) speaks of in her work and that, by following the tenets of the Code, the countryside can be negotiated better by users. Informal recreation in the countryside is cast in terms of responsibility (as much as rights) and safety is implied as a justification for self-regulation. Land managers, however, are reminded about their rights and the responsibilities of users. This demonstrates how the new Code still aims to ‘protect’ farmers and landowners.

The Code project from 2004 has replicated the types of strategies for dissemination seen previously, but also makes use of new technologies, including the bespoke website. The publicity films and associated imagery were aimed at associating the Code with popular and amusing characters in order to highlight the commonsense and reasonableness of the suggested constraints. In this vein Allen (2003), discussing the successful exercise of power, argues that:

…the exercise of authority [requires]…a willingness on the part of others to believe and not find fault with the attitudes and sentiments expressed. As such, the claims must strike a chord with existing attitudes, interests and beliefs among sections of the population. (Allen, 2003: p. 147)

The use of popular media forms wraps the messages and presents them as unproblematic and straightforward, the intimation being that to disagree or disobey would be churlish. However, it is difficult to know for sure the extent of public knowledge and internalisation of the Code in detail. Shoard (1999: p. 373) recounts how research in Scotland indicated that people were able to recall on average only two of the key Code messages. However, it is not the detail of the Code that is significant but the presence and impact that the Code has on behaviour. The research referred to by Shoard conducted for Scottish Natural Heritage (System Three/Scottish Natural Heritage, 1996) may indicate the co-construction of the Code to fit with individualised emplotments and attitudes towards use of the countryside.

The 2004 Code may be read as a necessary reworking of a successful and long-lived tool aimed at interposing between conflicting interests. The approach has been shaped and refined but remains essentially the same: the Code promotes particular behaviours and maintains its status as the latest version of the moral regulation deployed, on a broadly consensual basis, by user representatives and landed interests and lent authority by the state in 1951. The constraints are presented as commonsense, powerfully if subtly encouraging and shaping people’s sense of self. This also aims to protect a particular sense of place and construction of the rural.

Discussion: Moral Regulation, Leisure ‘Worlds’ and Constraints

Moral regulation is a special kind of social control. Its target is primarily how people see themselves and their ways of life, and its method is persuasion rather than coercion. (Ruonavaara, 1997: p. 290)
It is argued that the introduction and design of the Code originally depended on the calculation of people’s willingness to accept and internalise a rural discourse based around the primacy of private property, farming interests and traditional constructions of the rural environment. This construction was accommodating but constraining, seeking to perpetuate the countryside as a place of quiet continuity where traditional practices of agriculture should be accorded primacy. In doing this the Code had to appear reasonable, draw on generally accepted accounts of rurality and demonstrate the problems that transgression would bring. It was designed to be seen as ‘commonsense’ (The Field, 1980; Parker, 2006) and therefore play on dominant conceptions of morality and personal ethics. Indeed, the 1951 version of the Code was praised by Lord Chorley as ‘the best fourpenny-worth of common sense he had ever read’ (quoted in The Times, 1953: p. 3).

However, constraints are felt and recognised differently by different groups and in some cases adherence to or contravention of ‘the rules’ are intended as micro-political acts or as pleasure maximising calculations. The Country Code was intended to be read by ‘countryfolk’ and urban dwellers, children, landowners and managers, visitors and leisure users. However, it has served different purposes: the users (and potential users) were required to respond and modify their behaviour. Visitors are explicitly invited to internalise the disciplines explained in the Code text, seeking to shape and maintain potentially dissonant habitus. In this exchange the country dwellers and landed interests were to read the Code and be comforted. This is where the Code plays a defensive role. For the user groups it plays a restrictive (if facilitatory) role acting as a means of justifying and consolidating access rights and only more recently as a means to begin to regulate land managers.

The Code’s development and mediation reflects a struggle over the countryside and the boundaries of appropriate behaviour and activity. Traditionally powerful interests or elites have strained to regulate practices and behaviours in rural leisure spaces (Parker, 2002; Woods, 2005). The Country Code has been constructed, promoted and shaped by competing interests to serve as a mediating tool of governance and has proven a powerfully persuasive tool in imparting messages about expected behaviour in the English countryside. Its constructed reasonableness and commonsense has been adjusted periodically to reflect changes in the setting and the relative power of the interests served or addressed by the Code. These have been necessary to maintain its authority and have involved the use of a multiplicity of artefacts and opportunities to make the Code mobile and widespread. This changing construction has involved the reinterpretation and redefinition of users, landowners and the countryside itself, as well as implicitly redefining the appropriateness of activity.

Rural change has involved not only economic restructuring and socio-demographic change, for example, through in-migration (Boyle & Halfacree, 1996; Countryside Agency, 2004b), but has also involved cultural change and changing attitudes towards authority and expertise. Indicatively rural leisure practices have developed with many more types of leisure activity taking place in rural areas and others becoming less commonplace, either through changing tastes or through being more tightly controlled (e.g. motor sport) or being outlawed altogether (e.g. hunting). Paralleling social and cultural changes, economic change has placed
leisure and tourism as the major economic driver of the English rural economy (Countryside Agency, 2004b; Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, 2004). Such wider shifts have tilted power and influence towards user groups as accessibility for leisure activity is now seen as an economic necessity as much as a social or moral right. In the latest revisions to the Code the construction of the leisure environment has been reassessed and rebalanced with the new formulation recognising that leisure is economically and socially desirable and that in political terms a clear majority are supportive of the extension of access rights under the CRoW Act 2000. However, the changes made to the Code are incremental with a balance being presented between the rights of the landowner and the user in order to continue to interpose between traditional interests and leisure users.

Some researchers argue that many constraints are not sufficiently influential to prevent participation or to otherwise change a decision to participate (see, for example, Shaw et al., 1991). This argument has value, yet this only tells part of the possible story. How leisure is performed is crucially set within a network of power and it is not always about whether of not participation takes place but rather how that participation takes place and what the experience of that participation is, i.e. how the participation has been shaped by other actants, including materials and constituents of the environment itself and how the individual or group as participant negotiates and, where possible, selectively observes constraints. Certain activities in certain places are actively regulated and constrained by a range of actors including local inhabitants, special interest groups, the state and the environment itself which reduces the possibility of differential response.

This view implies that leisure constraints theory needs to relate to how rules are maintained and how they are resisted. In this respect I think the Code project and associated recreational behaviour illustrate three key variables: that constraints change over time through negotiation, practice and conflict; that all manner of materials and tactics are used to enforce and persuade participants of their legitimacy; and that individuals increasingly and knowingly construct their own worlds (their own ‘leisure cultures’). These reflections indicate the individualised and contingent nature of at least some constraints on leisure, although it is reasonably certain that others are less easily modified or overcome.

Assessment of such materials and subsequent changes are justified as important for analysis because ‘any theory of moral regulation should provide an account of the micro foundations of moral regulation’ (Ruonavaara, 1997: p. 291). Moral regulation involves interaction between the regulator and the regulated and there are other resources and intermediaries drawn into the effort to legitimise and destabilise leisure practice. In applying Bourdieu’s theories it should be noted that they have been criticised for suggesting permanency or at least the durability of habitus and for being implicitly structuralist (King, 2000). However, in Bourdieu’s later refinements such criticisms have been countered (Bourdieu, 1996, 2002). Bourdieu has stated that the habitus and field are constantly reinforced and shaped by outside or new experiences and knowledges. In drawing together the development of the Country Code and ideas of co-constructionism informed from social psychology it is argued that rules and constraints do not coincide. They are used and enforced, ignored and adhered to. There are overlaps and disjunctures exploited and engineered by leisure users as they create their own world – their
own habitus and leisure culture. In this analysis constraints can be constructed, experienced, negotiated and shaped by individuals.

The way that activities and settings are characterised and mediated to influence participants is a complex but important facet of the constraints research agenda. Some material intermediaries are directed specifically at a given leisure activity, while others may be more general in nature and aimed at regulating behaviour regardless of intent or activity. The Code is simultaneously used to regulate particular activities in particular places as well as seeking to portray and demarcate the countryside as somehow different and separate and therefore requiring different behaviours. The Code acts here as both the medium and the message. In this case we see careful and increasingly subtle and balanced regulation, but regulation all the same, in particular over ways of encountering rural leisure space. The Code and other such behavioural regulations are important intermediaries, passing and interrupting between ‘host’ communities and leisure participants. The role of mediating regulation such as the Code provides a template for outsiders to navigate around the ‘rules of the game’ that are constructed and maintained by field referees (such as wardens, but also in the past by farmers and other rural inhabitants). The issue is that multiple and concurrent games are in progress and ‘in anticipation’, both in and for the countryside.

Tools of regulation may be portable, embodied and reinforce other constraints or ‘rules’. Visitor activity, in this reading, is practised in particular ways and there are different sub-groups with different dispositions and modes of behaviour for whom the regulation may be ill-fitting or from whom a reaction is provoked (hence the efforts made to promote the Code in a populist way and in the use of ‘reasonable’ language). It is argued here that the Code represents a meeting point or conjunction; it is a mobile inscription circulated to intervene, regulate and inform practice, field and habitus. Moreover, such intermediaries circulated to highlight rules are at one time reflections of powerful groups’ subjectivities abstracted from a lived environment or habitus and applied in this case at a national scale, transposed onto the field of rural politics.

The investigation of the Country Code demonstrates the contingency of moral regulation, despite efforts from some interests to maintain and defend particular constructions and a particular rural field. Changing attitudes and economic environments highlight that rules and the enforcement of rules shift. Despite concerns about Bourdieu’s work in terms of its flexibility and post-structural credentials, it has been shown that the concept of habitus should be properly understood as a mutable disposition that alters and is in flux with the social field. In terms of leisure constraints, rules, barriers and norms are also contingent. They may be defended and attacked in various ways and the defence of such fields may be more or less successful or changes may be effected in an intermittent or inconsistent manner. The presence and durability of the Code reflects the durability of the habitus and at the same time illustrates the way that fields and habitus are contingent dispositions negotiated and altered to reflect social conditions and are furthermore selectively enrolled by actors in their (constrained) leisure worlds.

Co-construction of leisure constraints is particularly interesting as leisure itself suggests a degree of freedom and escape (MacCannell, 1992; Ravenscroft & Parker, 1999). Leisure carries the promise and the suggestion of unconstrained
behaviour away from work and commitment. This tension between social, moral and legal constraints and the promise of leisure freedom provide the ingredients for conflict and individualised assemblages of rights, responsibilities, constraints and opportunities as people explore ‘their’ countryside on ‘their’ terms. In this sense the Code provides a template for both behaviour and misbehaviour and is a grand, yet perhaps ultimately unsuccessful, project attempting to construct no less than a leisure citizenship in the countryside.

Notes

1. The Code itself was originally known as the Country Code, although in its more recent incarnations it has been retitled the Countryside Code. For the purposes of this paper I have termed it the Country Code throughout.

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