

A photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, a dirt road with two tracks leads from the bottom left towards the center. To the right of the road stands a weathered wooden barn with vertical slats. The middle ground is a wide, open field of dry grass. In the background, there are rolling hills and a range of mountains under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is peaceful and rural.

Health and Place: A Health Geographer's Perspective

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you'd waken with the peewits crying across the hills, deep and deep, crying in the heart of you and the smell of the earth in your face, almost you'd cry for that, the beauty of it and the sweetness of the Scottish land and skies.

Sunset Song, Lewis Grassic Gibbon




The connections
between health
and place

A photograph of a middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a dark baseball cap and a red and white plaid shirt. He is standing in a field of golden-brown crops, possibly corn, with his arms crossed. The background shows a blurred landscape with a house and a utility pole under a warm, golden light, suggesting sunset or sunrise.

The connections between health and rural place

- Extreme environmental events
- Fuel poverty
- Seasonal work
- Physical distance from services
- Normalisation of risk
- Social isolation
- Visibility
- Social connectedness
- Historical memory
- Landscape



Rurality, rural
community and health
and wellbeing are linked

Reflecting on qualitative research
capturing the voices and
experiences of rural residents and
healthcare professionals

Landscapes, nature and the outdoors

- Can be therapeutic
- Physical, mental and emotional healing
- Rural or natural traditionally therapeutic
- Palettes of place: green, blue, white



Landscapes, nature and the outdoors

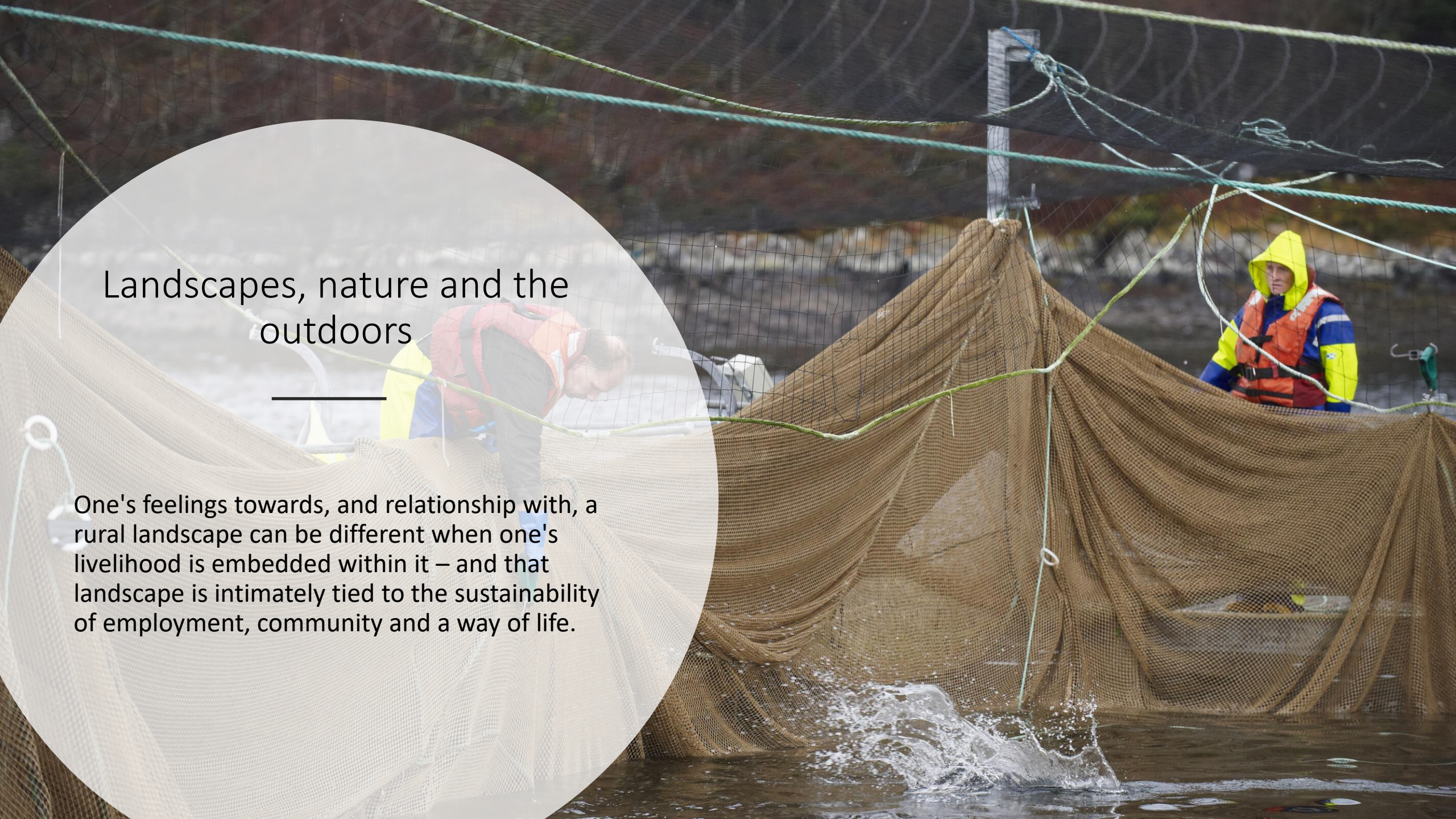
- Therapeutic consumption of rural landscapes from the 'outside'
- What is the therapeutic experience for those who live and work within these environments?



A woman with short brown hair, wearing an orange life vest over a dark blue jacket and blue pants, stands on the deck of a fishing boat. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The boat is on a body of water, and a forested hillside is visible in the background. A large, semi-transparent circular overlay is positioned on the left side of the image, containing text and a list of bullet points.


Landscapes, nature and the outdoors

- The mitigating effect of employment
- Land-based work within rural spaces
- Notions of toil, endurance, risk and stress
- Not necessarily simultaneously therapeutic



Landscapes, nature and the outdoors

One's feelings towards, and relationship with, a rural landscape can be different when one's livelihood is embedded within it – and that landscape is intimately tied to the sustainability of employment, community and a way of life.

A photograph of two men standing in a snowy mountain landscape. They are wearing red winter jackets and hats. The man on the left is wearing a dark beanie and a red jacket with a 'THE NORTH FACE' logo. The man on the right is wearing a red jacket. The background shows snow-covered mountains under a clear blue sky. A large, semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

Landscapes, nature and the outdoors

- Watching the consumption of the rural
- The landscape as for others
- Othering, elitism, loss of control, grief

Landscapes, nature and the outdoors


- Rural landscapes can be experienced as therapeutic by rural residents
- Evidence from rural residents not engaged in land-based or tourism-related work
- Many walk for health and wellbeing benefit
- They report similar benefit to urban and suburban populations



Landscapes, nature and the outdoors

- 'Added' wellbeing from nostalgia
- Happy childhood memories
- Spaces are part of the community
- Perception of the rural as a therapeutic landscape differs according to individual construction of meaning based on lived experience.



A person wearing a helmet and a backpack is riding a bicycle through a forest. The sun is shining through the trees, creating a warm, golden light. The person is in the foreground, and the forest extends into the background. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

Landscapes, nature and the outdoors

- A rural community woodland and riverscapes
- Corporeal health
- Non-corporeal satisfaction
- Connection with individual and collective memories
- Encourages connection to place
- Natural features and sense of belonging generate therapeutic experience



Landscapes, nature and the outdoors

- Led-activities and nature-based interventions in rural areas
- Physical and mental health improvements
- Small scale evaluation



Interactions with healthcare services

- Involvement in design/ consultation around services change – primary or community services
- Engagement is difficult without social, cultural and historical knowledge of the rural communities

A healthcare professional with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a blue and white plaid shirt with a stethoscope around their neck, stands in a bright, modern hallway. The hallway features wooden accents, a large map on the wall, and a skylight. A large white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

Interactions with healthcare services

- Physical presence of a healthcare professional is tied to residents' understandings of their community as valuable, viable and sustainable

A photograph of a man in a dark jacket and light trousers crouching on a green lawn, holding a small metal bowl. He is feeding three ducks. In the background, there is a white house with a chimney and a dark barn with a corrugated metal roof. The sky is overcast.

Interactions with healthcare services

- Communities can see the same engagement process as 'negative' as healthcare professionals see as 'positive'

Interactions with healthcare services

- Bodies to be served, devoid of social, cultural and historical context
- Communities ground down by successive rounds of engagement that are not connected to each other





Interactions with healthcare services

- Successful engagements are cogniscent of previous co-production in the community
- Need to speak the language of the community
- Reluctance to engage with processes that are devoid of an awareness of place

Interactions with healthcare services

- There are social determinants of engagement that are place-based
- Deep mapping can explore these
- Community members identify and present the stories and information that are important to them
- Can help shape engagement

Greetings from Cromarty






Interactions with healthcare services

- There are also social determinants of rural health services usage and help-seeking behaviour
- Also linked to place attachment
- Mental health – impacts of divorcing the therapeutic experience from the rural place




Interactions with healthcare services

- The importance of actually going through the therapeutic/ recovery process within one's own rural place
- Social prescribing and the third sector
- Close-knit or stifling?



Rural Health

- Complex and challenging
- We need to engage with the social, cultural and historical dimensions of rural place, community and identity



***Nothing endured but the land, it moved and
changed below you but was forever, you were
close to it and it to you.***

Sunset Song, Lewis Grassic Gibbon