**Title:** *Geodiversity and human difference: disability, landscape form and process*

**The project**

This project works across **ecological performance**, **geomorphology**, **human geographies of exclusion**, and **sociologies of disability** to develop new understanding and accounts of the relationships between humans and environments.

Using empirical testimony of people with a range of disabilities alongside provocative and performative occupations of dynamic and hard-to-access landscape geographies, the project will explore the experience of being disabled in wild places.

**Context**

The project responds to the demonstrable lack of connection between disability and geodiversity and the marginalisaton of disabled people within and by environmentalist/geodiversity discourse (Abbott & Porter, 2013). Such discourse most often presumes and reiterates a normatively undifferentiated, able-bodied cultural subject, demonstrating a ‘corporeal unconscious’ within environmental thought (Ray, 2009).

The United Nations reports that over 15% of the world’s population lives with disabilities – the world’s largest minority. In the context of global environmental crises, environmentalist and geodiversity discourse and practice needs to develop new corporeal consciousness that recognises the diversity of bodies and acknowledges the body as a dynamic and changing locus of experience and encounter.

The project operates at a science-policy-practice interface and will prompt a critical debate on geodiversity in Scotland and elsewhere – *diversifying geodiversity*. In the Scottish Natural Heritage-led debates on the **Scottish Diversity Charter**, there are calls for such research:

‘*The social and economic value of geodiversity and its contribution to human welfare have not been systematically appraised, despite the scientific value of geodiversity in Scotland having long been known.’* (Myall, Birch, and Knapman, 2011).

The project works constructively towards *embodying* geodiversity agendas in Scotland in ways that assess the relationship between geodiversity and disability, prompting the ‘opening up’ of wildernesses to disabled people.

**Outcomes**

The project aims to:

1. investigate the extent to which ideas of ‘geodiversity’ and ‘wilderness’ are dependent on ablest presumptions of body-place interactions and the exclusions and practices that result;

2. engage ideas about geodiversity and human cultural heritage in coasts, forests and mountains by exploring scientific field encounters with these landscapes as performative cues to rethink disability/embodied access issues.

3. collaborate with a range of disabled people and their embodied experiences of geo-diverse and wild landscapes in order to understand and *influence* the value of geodiversity for human culture and welfare in a greener Scotland.

4. develop innovative, interdisciplinary models of *body-landscape research* (Macpherson, 2010), capable of both exploring and communicating the affective and sensuous dimensions of body-place affordances and entanglements – *body-worlding* – extending research in the nexus of disability and environment beyond issues of access;

5. explore the inter-relationships between disability and the environment, transforming their conceptualisations and taking up the challenge of thinking ‘*with disability’* to engender ‘the normality of (different bodies) doing things differently’ (Hanson and Philo, 2006) in Scotland’s landscape geographies.

6. produce performative practices that reference the materiality of landscape and geomorphology in order to rethink *the values* of geodiversity in relation to ‘normally different’ bodies (Hanson and Philo, 2006) in ways that have public impact.

**Training and Supervision**

The doctoral researcher will be supported by an interdisciplinary team of supervisors: Professors Deirdre Heddon (Theatre Studies), Hester Parr (Human Geography), Nicholas Watson (Disability Studies) and Dr Larissa Naylor (Earth Science). Upon completion of the PhD, the doctoral researcher will have developed methodological skills in **practice-based creative and ethnographic research, qualitative and quantitative analysis, and geomorphological fieldwork techniques**. The doctoral researcher will also develop experience in the dissemination of research through innovative, creative practice, with potential impact and policy influence built into the research design from the outset. It is anticipated that over the course of the project, the team will develop a network of appropriate non-academic advisors or partners.

In addition to the support provided by the supervisory team, the student will benefit from the specialist training provided for doctoral students in the Colleges of Arts, Social Sciences and Science and Engineering, as well as the Scottish Graduate School for Arts & Humanities and the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science. The student will also find supportive research environments in each of the disciplines: the Human Geography and Earth Systems Research Groups offers a collegiate home for cross-disciplinary scholars and the student will be welcome to participate in ‘Create, experiment and express’ research activities in the school; the dynamic Performance, Ecology and Environment research hub in Theatre Studies offers an ideal site for the contribution and testing of practice-based research; the Centre for Disability Studies is one of the largest such centres in the country and currently has 12 research students working on disability related projects.

**Person Specification:** Applicants should normally have a first or upper second class degree in a relevant discipline (e.g. performance studies, geography, disability studies), have completed or be on course to complete a Master’s degree, and have experience of developing creative practice.

The successful candidate will need to be enthusiastic about acquiring new skills in an interdisciplinary setting and have a strong interest in disability and environment. A demonstrated ability to work independently as well as to forge networks will be considered an advantage.

**Application details:** Enquiries should be sent to Deirdre.Heddon@glasgow.ac.uk