Analysing practices related to forest road landscapes

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Antti Rehunen

Finnish Environment Institute
Department of Geography, University of Helsinki

antti.rehunen@ymparisto.fi
Forest roads in Finland

- 130 000 km forest roads built for forestry
- About as much other private roads in forest areas
  - for rural population, agriculture, to summer cottages etc.
- *Forest road is defined here as a road in forest area drivable by car*
- Average road density in forest areas more than 1 km / 1 km²
- Forest roads are used in connection with many outdoor activities in nature
- Construction of basic forest road infrastructure
- Top construction period
- Finalizing the road network and improvement of old roads
Road network in the year 2005

Average distance to road in forest area in 2.5 km x 2.5 km grid

- 120 m
- 121 - 180 m
- 181 - 240 m
- 241 - 320 m
- 321 - 450 m
- 451 - 600 m
- 601 - 800 m
- 801 m -

Densely populated area
My research topic: Forest road landscapes and people's engagements with them

- What are forest road landscapes like and how have they changed?
- What kind of components are involved in people’s relationships with them?
- How are these components incorporated into material-discursive practices? What are the practices like?
Theoretical points of departure

- Landscape research
  - From landscape ecology to (inter)subjective meanings of landscape
- Focus on embodied, practical engagements with the environment
- Landscapes as materialities and sensibilities with which we experience and encounter the surrounding world
- Hybrid landscapes of human and nonhuman actor(network)s and activities
- From coherent structures to situated positions and multiplicity of practices
Case study: the municipality of Nurmes in North Karelia, Finland

- Research material
  - Field observations
  - GIS analyses
  - Thematic interviews
  - Local newspaper articles
  - Planning documents
Extending spatial scope of the forest road network

- Overcoming distance, increasing accessibility
- Surveillance and control over space
- More efficient, all year round harvesting and transportation of wood resources
- Easier silvicultural work
Hybrid forms and varying patterns of material landscape

- Intertwinement of nature and human action in the forms, patterns and changes of material environment
  - Geomorphology, soil, topography
  - Vegetation, animals
  - People, equipment, machines
  - Road construction and maintenance
  - Road alignment, road base and surface, ditches
  - Surrounding nature areas: forests, waters, mires etc.
  - Management of forests, nature conservation
  - Adjacent places (recreation sites, summer cottages etc.)
Studying the surroundings of the road network:
Summer cottages 2006  Nature conservation areas 2006
People’s travelling in the forests

- Infrastructure
  - Roads, turning points, signposts, widenings
  - Tractor tracks, footpaths, nature trails, etc.
- Seasonality and changes
- Ways of moving
- Wayfinding
- Roads channel and direct people’s travelling

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Activities and uses of roads

- Forestry – main economic use, heaviest strain on roads
  - many types of forestry work
- Travelling to a recreation destination – most frequent use
- Travelling along roads as recreation
- Flexible ways of action, adaptation to changes
- People’s different relations to the road and the area
Landscape experiences, routes and places

- Experiences are embodied, multisensory, situated and often sensed in the movement
- Viewing the landscape from the road / the road in the landscape
- Feelings of joy, safety, frustration, fear…
- Experiences along **routes** people travel
  - similar looking views, extraordinary landscapes and particular places
- Caring for meaningful landscapes and places
Social dimensions, events and meaningful landscapes

- Human actor networks and organisation of activities
  - Companies, organisations, associations, hunting groups, friends, families

- Sharing experiences, telling stories, constructing identities
  - Meanings are told and shown, landscapes are also heard and imagined

- **Events** as focal points in space and time, important in place-making
  - Events in activities and in nature
  - Encounters with people and animals
Representing and discussing forest roads

- Writings in newspapers and magazines
- Guidelines, plans, programmes, recommendations etc.
- Forums, events and expeditions

- Aims and motives, institutional contexts
- Framing questions, using concepts and metaphors
- Audience’s embodied and situated imaginations
Planning and decision-making

- Different types of power use and positions
- General planning and impact assessment of forest roads led by experts, partly open forums
- Decision-making on a particular road by land owners who have their own needs and motives
- Normative and financial steering has an essential role
- Interaction of different authorities, companies and interest groups
- Role of public discussion
Summary: Multiple landscape-practices

- Diverse forest road practices
- Practices as multiple combinations of many elements and tensions
- Practices are contextual and relational
- Relationship to landscape (according to Sandell)
  - functional specialization / territorial adaptation
  - active / passive
- Practices are partly separate and partly connected
Some conclusions

- Forest roads have an ambivalent position in people’s experiences and activities: good and bad sides
- Integrative planning of forest roads and forest areas requires a good understanding of various practices related to them
- To analyse practices it is needed to tie together many types of narratives, contexts and sources of information.
Thank you!

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