Routes, rhythms and practices –
a study of urban woods and forest
suburbs through motion

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How to study the meanings of urban forests in everyday context?

- Use of urban space (walking, spatial practices)
- Forests as part of the city: forest cities, forest suburbs

This presentation is a **substudy** of a larger material collected in 5 forest suburbs: A working title: 'Finnish forest suburbs as a lived space'. The main method was **interviewing**.

> Colleague: Eveliina Asikainen, Univ.Tampere
"Interviewing feet"
Study of routes and rhythms:

- The body is always in a place.
- Everyday skillful coping or engagement with environment (Heidegger, 1962)
- Better access to aspects of lived experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

"The locomotion and cognition are inseparable"

Ingold, 2005
Walking – activity, practice

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<th>Walking</th>
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<td>Jogging</td>
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<td>Cycling</td>
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*Mode of exercise
*Mode of transport
*Mode of wayfaring
*Spatial practice
*Self expression

"Leaving footsteps*)"

"By walking humans inhabit their environments*)"

*A way of sensing and knowing the environment

*)Walking seminar, 2005, Univ.Aberdeen
Embodied knowledge
Route selections
Forest suburbs and forest cities in Helsinki
Study question for a resident

• "Show me your own perspective to your home environment that you find meaningful, interesting, problematic."

• Choose a one hour walking route, that you use. It can be your favourite route, routine route, or route that takes us places you want to show."

Audio-recorded material, route maps, 12 interviews
"Interviewing feet"

1. Based on observations (all senses).
2. Difficult to know the meanings, sensations if not verbalised.

> Description of route selections and characteristics.
> Descriptions of rhythms.
Ways of walking

Walking as a style (Michel de Certeau)

Kay and Moxham, 1996:
Walking practices:
1. Sauntering, ambling, strolling, plodding, promenading, wandering, roaming (Easy and casual, spontaneous)
2. Marching, trail-walking, trekking, hiking, hill-walking, yomping, peak-bagging (Strenuous, rigorous, challenging, rewarding, require planning)
Interpreting the meanings of the routes and lived space in forest suburb

1. Modes of walking <rhythms

2. Length of the walks, route selections <rhythms

3. Various qualities of routes (route types, route environments) <rhythms

4. Place histories of residents <rhythms
Ways of walking in Haaga

'Leisure walking'
fitness purposes, wayfaring

'Transit walking'
need for mobility: daily tasks
Pavements
Garden pathway

Recreational route
Lenght of the walks

Men

Women

36,10 km

Kilometers

Teuvo Pakkalantie
Simsiönkuja
Riistavuorenkuja
Näyttelijäntie
Maria Jotunintie
Laajasuontie
Kylännevankuja
Kivihaantie
Ilkantie
Ida Aalbergintie
Huopalahdentie
Angervotie
HAAGA AS NARRATIVE SPACE, NARRATIVE PATHS
(also: Basu, 2005)
WALK AS CONCISED: PLACES AND MODES OF WALKING

- Forest for daily visits, with granddaughter: plants
- Pine bog – Childhood landscape
- A familiar route; forested landscape
- Rhododendron park
- Sports field: hobby

transition in rhythm
marching
strolling
Old school route
Central park: "formula for relaxation"
Childhood address and playground
Children's school
Children's school
Negative place: shopping centre

Transition in rhythm
marching
strolling
Strolling
Marching
Strolling foot path, in a row
Running
Walking slowly, stopping by
Transitions in rhythm

WALK AS CONCISED: PLACES AND MODES OF WALKING
Route types in walking praxes in Haaga

- **Forest trails**: "recreational mainstreams", favored by many, avoided by some, marching/strolling/exercise mode, sometimes traffic, - road noise, powerlines
- **Park trails**: part of recreational mainstreams
- **Forest footpaths**: alternative (parallel) routes: favored by some (integrated to forest, exploration mode)
- **Park footpaths**: alternative routes, integrated to park vegetation types, etc.
- **Forest shortcuts**: daily transport: a breath of nature on the work route
- **Neighbourhood shortcuts**: in some places inapproved but practical, visiting the front and backyards.

- **Pavements/Main roads**: daily transport to station and bus stops, main cycle ways – road noise, effective transport
- **Pavements/Side roads**: daily transport/leisure walks – calm housing areas, flaneur mode, looking at yards.
Monotonous route, scenic problems

Traffic nuisance, noise, high attention of cars, etc.

Traffic nuisance, (reported rush-hour problems)

Aspects of WALKABILITY

Bad connectivity
Neighbourhoods with low traffic, alternative route selections,

"Architecture, yards, streetscapes"

"Negative feature: car-parking"

Aspects of WALKABILITY
(also: Sugiyama & Ward Thompson, 2007)
Strengths and weaknesses of the method

Researchers are able to observe the informants' spatial practices in situ. Method facilitated the access to their experiences and practices.

The qualities of Haaga as a walking environment were captured. Method tracked the natural sequences of places in practical everyday life.

A leisure mode of walking dominated. Occasionally, the work route modes were discussed.

Observations on walking were based on research situation. Research technique is not a naturally occurring social occasion. "The interviewees were fulfilling the task of walking me around".