

A photograph of a dirt path in a forest. Two people are running away from the camera on the path. The path is dappled with sunlight and shadows from the surrounding trees. The trees are tall and thin, creating a canopy overhead. The ground is covered in dry leaves and small rocks.

Running & Landscape

International seminar
7th of May, 2015
Alnarp

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Research on fitness (and post-sport) running has gained momentum in recent years. Studies on bodily experiences of running, the history of jogging, and running for well-being have moved beyond the confined field of sport studies, and are today a subject for interdisciplinary conversations within geography, ethnography, planning, and so on. The increased attention on running is partly related to new discourses within research (e.g. the mobility turn), but also to the marked rise internationally in fun runs and marathons etc., which has been accompanied by a flood of handbooks on how to exercise and books on running as an existential experience. Yet, despite the increased interest within research and popular culture, knowledge on the everyday practice of running remains scarce, not the least concerning how the runners interact with the outdoor environment. Where and when do people run, and why? How does running as an exercise practice vary from place to place? Are there social or cultural differences related to how we behave as runners in an urban environment? How has running evolved as a form of everyday exercise? How could planners facilitate a more welcome and inclusive urban landscape for fitness running? Equally important questions regard methodology and empirical material: how to study runners, or the interaction between runners and the landscape?

This seminar invites to an interdisciplinary dialogue on running, with a particular focus on the interface between running and landscape. Emphasis is set on running as an everyday activity, rather than on sport events. The seminar will be combined with an excursion on the 8th of May (focusing on the long history of planning for fitness running in Sweden), as a way to open up for complementary discussions in the field.

The seminar is held in Terra Nova, at Campus Alnarp. It is free of charge, but you need to **register before 27th of April** to Mattias Qviström: mattias.qvistrom@slu.se

The event is organised within the research project Reinterpreting Fitness Running, funded by Formas. It is hosted by the Department of Landscape Architecture, Planning and Management, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences.

Programme

9.00 – 9.20 **Welcome** (Mattias Qviström, Swedish Univ. of Agricultural Sciences, Alnarp)

9.20 – 9.50 ***Running, Landscape, and some painful truths*** (Hayden Lorimer, Univ. of Glasgow)

In previous writing, I've considered the particular kinds of landscape association and topographical attachment that a running habit can generate. When you hit your stride these can be enriching and enchanting, transcendent and transporting. In this talk, I want to consider opposite kinds of affect, where the runner's embodied encounter with landscape feels like an exercise in disassociation, alienation or estrangement. To try to give expression to this narrowed form of "tunnel vision" or pained toleration, I'll recall personal running experiences where landscape (traditionally appreciated in terms of form, feature and scenery) reduces to fields of sensory phenomena. This kind of ablated or detached interaction isn't unknown to the everyday (or post-sport) runner. Indeed it becomes a part of the routine or the rhythm of learning to run. What does this mean for the popular ideal of running towards personal fitness and wellness? How do we configure acceptable pain inside pleasure, and what part does an attunement to landscape play in this kind of self-awareness? Are the commonplace discomforts of running to be understood according to cultural difference, or universal suffrance? In my talk, I'll consider some painful truths to answer questions such as these.

10.00 – 10.30 ***Landscape, light, dark and mobility*** (Tim Edensor, Manchester Metropolitan Univ.)

This presentation will focus on the much neglected theme of the role of light and dark in the landscape. I will discuss the distinct ways in which we apprehend landscape with light and dark, and the distinctive cultures through which representations of landscape and practices within landscape persist to ground forms of belonging and identity. I will conclude by considering how conditions of light, dark and illumination condition and solicit particular mobile practices

10.30 – 10.50 **Break**

10.50 – 11.20 ***Indoor versus outdoor running: understanding how exercise comes to inhabit different environments through the detail of practitioner talk*** (Russell Hitchings & Alan Latham, University College London)

Contemporary societies are increasingly physically inactive. This has led to concerns to develop environments that encourage physical activity. Drawing on work examining the relationship between environment and exercise this paper asks how everyday exercise comes to happen in some environments instead of others and how it is experienced thereafter. Focusing in recreational running the paper explores recreational running ends up taking place either indoors on treadmills or outside on pavements and paths. Recreational running has been positioned as an obvious target for those hoping to promote public health to the time pressured populations of today and outdoor running seems to bring particular health benefits. Yet how people become attached to certain running environments is a process about which comparatively little is known. As a means of addressing this, the paper develops an argument about the lived experience of practice recruitment and how it can be examined through talking with those who run in different environments in London today. Extending an interest in the geographical implications of the speech patterns that pepper everyday existence, we highlight what the subtleties of recreational runner talk tells us about how exercise comes to inhabit particular places and how the processes involved may be influenced.

11.30 – 12.00 ***Use and need for designated running tracks*** (Peter Forsberg Idrættens Analyseinstitut/Play the Game, Copenhagen)

The landscape of sport and physical activity for adults has changed dramatically in Denmark in the last 20-25 years. Running and other primarily self-organised activities have seen increased participation and municipalities today are faced with the challenge of how to support these new activities. This paper explores designated running tracks (DRT) which can serve as a tool to promote self-organized running. Today, 31 per cent of all adult Danes run on a regular basis. The number of runners has doubled since the early nineties despite no greater investment in DRT's. Running is especially taken up by people with a long education, and DRT might be one way to make running attractive to a broader segment. A Belgian study on DRT's shows, that women are much more eager to use a DRT. This suggests that certain target groups might take advantage of a DRT. The analysis is based on a survey of 4,052 runners from 2012. 16 per cent use a DRT and 28 per cent say they miss access to a DRT. A binary regressions analysis show that using and wanting a DRT is related to: age, running experience and club affiliation. However, the explanatory power is very limited and the results indicate that the most passionate runners are also more often using and asking for a DRT. Not all perspectives are covered in this initial study and further research need to

cover how and if DRT's can be a way to broadening running. Non-runners or new runners need to be surveyed in detail regarding their potential needs for a DRT. Also the supply of DRT's has to be taken into consideration. Both regarding placement and function of the DRT.

12.00 – 13.30 **Lunch**

13.30 – 14.00 ***Running (in) your city*** (Kai Syng Tan, Leeds College of Art)

In this presentation, Kai runs through the ways in which running in the city may differ from running in a non-urban site, and how running may enable us to engage with the city in a manner that may differ from other urban exercise practices. What do we see, hear, smell or feel when we weave through the crowds and buildings in the streets, as opposed to, say, flocks of sheep up in the rolling hills? What are the ways in which moving in a speed faster than walking differ from cycling, parkour or, well, walking? Kai also takes a step further to ask if we can think of running as more than an exercise. Can we activate running as a playful toolkit to help us re-imagine the city? Can running make us feel a sense of ownership of the city? In other words, as we physically run in the city, can we also 'run' it - metaphorically-speaking? Kai samples practices and theories from different schools of thought, including Situationism and the Chinese philosophy of Daoism (Taoism). She also shares what she has learnt first-hand (or rather, first-feet) as an urban runner in London and Singapore. Kai's aim is to invite us to think about the possibilities of running as a poetic process, and running in the city as a creative urban practice.

14.10 – 14.40 ***Running barefoot: Touching the ground*** (Paolo Maccagno, Univ. of Aberdeen)

Running barefoot is the possibility to touch and to enter in a relation of continuity with the world. Where is the border between the foot and the ground? Does a precise line of division really exist? Between runners it is becoming popular running barefoot. A phenomenon that is drawing the attention of different stakeholder, from universities to business companies, and that is opening an embodied imaginary to runners: they feel free. But where can you run barefoot? The politics written in the city spaces seems to tell that you can walk only on surfaces that remain untouched. Modernity has designed untouchable cities. Boots and pavements on the streets establish a technological foundation for the separation of thought from action and of mind from body. This separation seems to prevent in principle every possibilities of touch. Touching the ground through

the practice of running barefoot is than attempting to that principle, a taboo for the western thought. Starting from my experience of an urban exploration with free-runners realized in the city of Schio in Italy (Silent wild Invasion 2011), this presentation discusses how a marathon for barefoot runners could challenge the experience of the city, not only for the runners. The understanding of the city will be challenged by getting in contact with barefoot runners in order to analyse their ways of moving and understanding the space, their way of perception and of knowledge. Using their skills that makes of the body an environmental sensor, it will be possible to look at the city free from the usual patterns, and discover the “ecological corridors” where they normally run in order to make visible a hidden map of perception for the city. Following their footprints it will help think politics for suitable spaces to run, to touch and to live. It will be the possibility to understand where to run a barefoot marathon, the first sign in the city that makes it touchable. As Heidegger pointed out ‘only when man is able to dwell only then can he build’. Running is ‘dwelling poetically’.

14.40 – 15.10 **Coffee**

15.10 – 15.40 ***Natural rhythms for natural running*** (Blaž Bajič, Univ. of Ljubljana)

For barefoot runners the very practice of running barefoot is always-already inscribed with profound meanings, constituting in their mutual integration and strengthening an (in)consistent cosmography. This has to do with (emic) conceptions of human nature and bodies and, on the one hand, peoples of “the West”, ephemeral cultural trends, negatively marked culture, and, on the other hand, with peoples of “the Rest”, immutable facts of evolution, and positively characterised nature. The former are deemed by the runners as primordial and “true”, while the latter are conceptualised as secondary and “false”. In addition, one is imposed upon the other thus blocking the access to one’s (and society’s) “inner nature” and to “nature out there”. According to barefoot runners, one has to run in human body’s own natural rhythms in order to overcome the blockage and tap into existent, but hidden capabilities. By (re)gaining this rhythm barefoot runners break themselves in, but experience the process of “dressage” (Lefebvre 2004) rather as “breaking themselves out”. This, for example, entails running with a metronome ticking at the required pace. With repetitive and repeating runs they not only conceptualize the world through cosmography, but feel and live it through cosmography’s meanings. This enables them, as barefoot runners often emphasise, to run with nature, not against it. Many claim, that by doing this they feel reconnected with nature, both inside him-/herself and “out there” (with affordances of certain surfaces or materials and in the form of certain landscapes), and of having extraordinary experiences of and with landscapes.

However, as these experiences are only temporary and, more importantly, as barefoot runners define themselves by way of their cosmography as removed from nature, barefoot running as a practice that enfolds meanings, body and place becomes a way of drawing upon, i.e. dialectically mediating, the marvellous alterity (see Sahlins 2012) of nature in order to better themselves as cultural beings and even claim superiority in relation to those who do not.

15.50 – 16.20 ***Running in the forest: landscape ideals and running practices in the Swedish welfare society*** (Mattias Qviström, Swedish Univ. of Agricultural Sciences, Alnarp)

Running can be performed almost everywhere. The sense of freedom and the wish to go beyond the beaten track, to run in *nature* or *the wild*, is frequently emphasised in popular media when portraying running. However, if we aim to understand how runners engage with the landscape, this marketing or self-image needs to be questioned. Based on a historical study, this paper aims to contribute to a richer understanding of the interplay between the urban landscape and the practice of fitness running in Sweden. The first part of the paper introduces the early campaigns for fitness running in Sweden (1950s – 1970s) and their successful marketing of rhythms and routines for running in (sub)urban forests as a substitute for running in “nature”. The campaigns resulted, in the 1970s, in national policies for outdoor recreation facilities (usually: urban forests provided with floodlit trails, changing rooms, etc.). In the second part of the paper, an analysis of the current infrastructure of trails for running in the Region of Scania is presented, paying particular attention to its dependency on the early campaigns and policies for fitness running. The paper is concluded with a discussion on the importance of this heritage for the current practice. The paper argues the need to develop this infrastructure one step further, rather than to only rely on the independency of the runner.

16.20 – 16.50 **Break**

16.50 – 17.20 ***The Movement Heritage: Training, History and Sustainable Landscape Use*** (Daniel Svensson, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm)

Training and outdoor life are activities that shape not only the physical landscape but also our ideas about them. Some places, through long histories of training, are understood as genuine sites for skiing, running or hiking. Through conscious effort and use of historical context, landscapes of training can become a form of cultural heritage. This movement heritage has previously been neglected by the cultural heritage management but is now being articulated in several places. What

constitutes these landscapes and how are they portrayed in tourism and marketing today? By the analysis of three Swedish cases - Hindås, Vålådalen and Vasaloppet – I will investigate how landscapes of training are constructed as cultural heritage and used for present day purposes. Movement in the landscape is somewhat under-theorized, with a few notable exceptions. The movement heritage, in terms of skiing tracks, hiking trails etc. has so far attracted little interest. Even so, landscapes of training are now being articulated as sites of cultural heritage, much resembling the articulation process of other previously neglected landscapes of industry, research, cities and other. The inclusion of landscapes of movement in the cultural heritage can result in both protection and increased attraction, like in the case of the VasaloppsArena. This paper seeks to combine the growing understanding of cultural heritage aspects of landscape, with theories on the modern landscapes of bodily movement. The status of the landscapes of movement discussed here is based on their cultural history and emotional value. Are histories and local traditions important for landscapes of training in general? Or is it only a few special cases that can aim for heritage status, while other landscapes of running and skiing are portable? These questions need further attention.

17.30 – 18.00. ***Running Amsterdam*** (Mart Reiling, Thijs Dolders, Marlies Brinkhuijsen, Ron van Lammeren, Wageningen Univ.)

This research reports on work in progress into running in Amsterdam. As landscape architects, we aim to develop planning and design principles that improve the spatial conditions of (sub) urban public space for running, thus contributing to designing healthy cities. In order to be able to design for this specific active group, we need to gain knowledge on two aspects: the spatial behaviour of runners and what spatial experiences/ preferences determine their behaviour. By analysing mobile running applications, which is a newly available source of data, we are generating knowledge on running behaviour on a level that was not possible before. In our study we analysed the data of almost 80.000 running activities in Amsterdam, collected from the mobile running applications Runkeeper and Strava. This data includes the information where and when people have been running. Differences in running locations are studied between: long and short distance runners, during different times of the day (light hours and dark hours), during different parts of the week, during different seasons and during different outdoor temperatures. These results are compared to data on environmental aspects relevant for public health, for example atmospheric particulate matter. Consequently we can give an image of places where interventions for runners could well improve public health. This is what we've found so far. It will also highlight the work still to do, which aims to increase the understanding of spatial/ environmental motivations that make people run where we showed they did. This will be done by reflecting the results from the mobile

application data upon a series of surveys in which runners are questioned to explain what spatial/ environmental aspects determine a preferred running route. Together, these two researched aspects inform what spatial requirements runners have at different locations. Based on these spatial requirements, interventions that could make Amsterdam a more runner friendly city will be explored and visualized through designing.

18.10 – 18.40 ***A desire for running?*** (Oliver Vanges, Lokale og Anlægsfonden, Copenhagen)

The presentation has, as a starting point, the substantial growth in the number of (self-reported) runners in Denmark. The popularity of running has initiated a wide variety of activities which have running as the dominant, basic element accompanied by other related activities. Based on “desk research”, the presentation discusses what motivates runners and how can we accommodate various motivations for running. What does the range of the activity mean in terms of city planning and specialized running paths in all types of regions? Is it important that running activity takes place in genuine natural environments or can we create topographical variation with equally satisfactory results? Through actual building projects and projects still under development we suggest possible initiatives to accommodate running activity in city planning.