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“you can almost pretend  
you’re not in the city”

A DISCURSIVE MAP OF URBAN NATURE IN MALMÖ

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## Table of contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
Background .....	1
Aim & research questions .....	2
Delimitations .....	3
Outline .....	3
<b>Theoretical framework</b> .....	3
Theory .....	3
<i>Urban nature</i> .....	3
<i>The nature of nature</i> .....	5
Literature review .....	6
<b>Methods &amp; methodology</b> .....	8
Semi-structured GIS .....	8
Selection.....	10
Discursive mapping .....	11
Research ethics .....	12
<i>Confidentiality, consent &amp; credit</i> .....	12
<i>Positionality &amp; responsibility</i> .....	12
<b>Results</b> .....	13
<b>Analysis</b> .....	14
The nature of urban nature .....	15
<i>Places of urban nature</i> .....	15
<i>Near nature but not real nature</i> .....	17
Functions of urban nature .....	18
<i>Refuge from the city</i> .....	18
<i>A social and an active arena</i> .....	20
<i>Sensing nature</i> .....	20
Emotional connections to urban nature .....	21
<i>Restoration and reflection</i> .....	21
Values of urban nature .....	23
<i>Intrinsic value</i> .....	23
<i>An experience</i> .....	24

<i>Provider of health</i> .....	24
<i>An environment and a resource to be used</i> .....	24
Discursive nature .....	25
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	26
<b>Summary</b> .....	26
<b>References</b> .....	28
<b>Appendices</b> .....	32
Appendix 1 – Call for participants.....	32
Appendix 2 – Survey content.....	33
Appendix 3 – Places of urban nature in Malmö .....	36

## List of figures

Figure 1: Author’s depiction of the thought process behind the analysis. ....	14
Figure 2: Discursive map of urban nature in Malmö. ....	25

# Introduction

## Background

During the course of the last century, enormous changes in the spatial distribution of human population globally have come to mean that the majority of population now live in environments described as urban (Baxter & Pelletier 2018; Cox et al. 2018). Consequently, the move away from rural living has reduced the amount of exposure that humans have to nature (Cox et al. 2017). While the proportion of urban population continues to grow annually, the increasing lack of access to nature in daily lives may lead to global challenges regarding the consequences of urbanization on human wellness. The purpose of this study is therefore to map which opportunities for experiencing nature do exist in an urban environment. The result of this study, a discursive map of urban nature in Malmö, is an exploration of the places that people in Malmö consider to be urban nature and the meanings that these places carry for people.

Spending time in natural environments has been connected to numerous benefits to human wellness (Puhakka et al. 2018; Cox et al. 2018) ranging from reduced mortality from cardiovascular disease to improved cognitive abilities (Cox et al. 2017). Furthermore, studies have shown significant associations between experiencing connectedness to nature and levels of anxiety, depression, and self-reported overall health (Dean et al 2018; Lawton et al 2017). At the same time, populations with low nature doses and worse health have been proven to benefit the most from increasing time spent in nature or residing in green areas (Cox et al. 2018). This leaves urban planners faced with the task of providing city dwellers with green environments that promote well-being and mitigate the negative effects of urbanization. Given that “Experiences of nature vary widely across populations, [and] this variation is poorly understood” (Cox et al. 2017:79), it is important to generate a better understanding of local, personal experiences. This knowledge can then form the basis of establishing and maintaining livable cities whose green and blue spaces support inhabitants in ways that they find meaningful.

Nevertheless, previous research on urban nature has been largely focused on the physical and mental health aspects of greenspaces (Thomas 2015:188). While the importance of the findings in nature’s health benefits should in no way be underestimated, it could be salient to look into the meanings that urban nature carries beyond these aspects. Perhaps urban green and blue space is as much nourishment of the soul to one person, as it is primarily a social arena to someone else? One site of exploration in human-nature relationships that has traveled beyond the common perspective has been the work on ‘nature relatedness’ (Nisbet et al. 2009; Nisbet & Zelenski 2013). In studies on nature relatedness, the understanding of humans’ connection to nature stretches from self-identification with nature to the recognition of nature as intrinsically valuable. Later research on the subject has argued for disconnectedness from nature being a significant cause of the destruction of Earth and human unhappiness (Nisbet & Zelenski 2011).

Similarly, Kellert and Wilson's (1993) *biophilia hypothesis* sees nature affinity as an innate biological need and a remainder of humans' relatively recent separation from the 'natural' environment.

The corona pandemic that is on the loose at the time of writing may prove urban nature to be as meaningful as ever. While many countries are instructing everyone to isolate themselves and stay home, and to only go outside for the most necessary errands and for walks, the situation regarding general recommendations in Sweden has been perceived as substantially less restrictive (Dagens Nyheter 2020). Nevertheless, the Swedish public health authority is now urging people to meet outside and maintain physical distance to others (Folkhälsomyndigheten 2020a) and recommending walks and physical activities in outside environments (Folkhälsomyndigheten 2020b). In a context where social interaction and recreation can take place in few environments other than the outdoors, any piece of nature in an urban neighborhood may become an irreplaceable part of survival in its many forms.

Simultaneously, there seems to be no common consensus on what nature truly is, as "according to one meaning of the term, nature is pretty much *everything*" (Castree 2013:4). Therefore, the pivotal idea of my study becomes that the most relevant definition of nature is whatever is experienced as nature. By mapping space-specific experiences of the meaning of urban nature – *meaning* being both the definition of the term, and the personal meanings given to the thing itself – a greater understanding of local preferences and possible benefits can be achieved. Furthermore, the knowledge created and collected is hoped to contribute to a more humane focus on defining and thus reclaiming the city. Lastly, my wish is that relying on lived experience could reinforce the role of embodied knowledge as a valid and fundamental way of knowing, capable of providing insights far beyond theory-heavy debates between academics.

## Aim & research questions

The aim of this study is to map the meanings of and relationships to urban nature in Malmö. This mapping is both spatial and discursive, meaning that in addition to exploring which and what kinds of places are presented as urban nature, the aim is to understand which functions, values and emotions are connected to the places described as urban nature.

Therefore, the research question of this study is as follows:

What is urban nature in Malmö and how do people in Malmö relate to it?

This is operationalized through the four sub-questions:

What is perceived to be urban nature in Malmö?

Which functions are attributed to urban nature?

How do people represent their emotional connections to urban nature?

Why is urban nature considered to be valuable?

To find the answers to these questions, a case study was conducted, where primary data was first collected from people in Malmö via a 'semi-structured GIS' method. The entries were then studied through discourse analysis, and finally, the resulting discursive map was used to highlight the findings on urban nature and its meanings in Malmö.

## Delimitations

Due to time constraints regarding this study, the thesis has been limited to only cover the city of Malmö. This was done to provide more in-depth material, as well as to enhance the chance of receiving submissions covering several individuals' perspectives on the same place. Furthermore, as part of the aim of this study is to explore what is understood to be urban nature, personal knowledge on the area and the opportunity to visit any unknown places was of primary importance. On the other hand, the term *urban nature* was in no way delimited to only cover certain types of green or blue areas in cities, a choice which will be further elaborated on in the next chapter.

## Outline

The next chapter will present the concepts applied in this study and a literature review summarizing takes of current studies on relations to urban nature in the Nordic context. The methods and methodology of this study are introduced in chapter three, followed by the presentation of results in chapter four. In the following chapter, the results are analyzed, while conclusions are to be found in the sixth chapter. This study is then summarized, followed by a list of references, and finally, the call for participants, the survey form, and a map of the results are presented in the appendices.

# Theoretical framework

## Theory

### *Urban nature*

While the concept of urban nature is central to this study, a conscious choice was made not to define it. For the sake of simplicity, one understanding of urban nature could be that it is equal to *urban green space* (primarily parks) and *blue space*, a term that is commonly used for bodies of water, such as lakes, coast, rivers and canals, but that could also refer to sky (Thomas 2015:187-8). However, for the purpose of this study, defining the term *urban nature* was left to the participants to allow for their free interpretation.

By questioning the dichotomies of nature-city and urban-rural, academics have striven to deconstruct these strict divisions (Harding & Blokland 2014:11) and reveal the blurred nature of the borders they are supposed to encompass (Dymitrow & Stenseke 2016). Brenner's understanding of *the urban* as a "structural product of social practices and political strategies, and [not] their presupposition" (2013:109) suggests that these categories should be seen as a construct rather than an essence in itself. These titles are reinforced through the unconscious ritual of repetition in everyday language. However, the assignations still depend on the material dimensions of reality, as landscapes are intuitively recognized as one or the other through lived experience rather than formal criteria (Dymitrow & Stenseke 2016).

"in the early twenty-first century, the urban appears to have become a quintessential floating signifier: devoid of any clear definitional parameters, morphological coherence, or cartographic fixity, it is used to reference a seemingly boundless range of contemporary sociospatial conditions, processes, transformations, trajectories, and potentials" (Brenner 2013:90)

Simultaneously, services such as agriculture, leisure, raw material and energy extraction and production, nutrients, and ecosystem services demonstrate the profound part 'nature' plays in urban survival every day (Brenner 2013:103). Meanwhile, 'natural' elements penetrate cities through the growing popularity of urban community gardens, rooftop beekeeping, cultivation boxes, and green city programs. The City of Malmö has specifically expressed that through its Green City initiatives, it is ensured that "[n]ature is present through the city thanks to conscious planning" (Malmö stad 2016). These planning initiatives bring natural elements into the city by branding them into concepts such as the "green space factor" (making use of ecosystem services) and "green points" (environmental planning guidelines to promote biodiversity in selected areas). Moreover, Malmö provides 'nature' for its residents through planned nature spaces listed on the city's official website on 'nature and parks' in the city (Malmö stad n.d.-a). While this kind of nature may seem highly controlled by humans, the global climate crisis makes us question whether there is 'nature' anywhere that is still unaffected by the actions of people.

Therefore, I argue that the concept of *urban nature* is not at all as paradoxical as it might seem at first glance, but rather something that could be either a reinforcement or contestation of the crude dichotomies, depending on the way it is understood. White et al. (2013:49) show that experienced positive effects of nature may not differ significantly based on whether nature is 'urban' or 'rural', benefit from different types of environments diverging greatly within both categories. The starting point of my exploration into urban nature is thus that there is no single right conception of the meaning of urban nature, whether it is 'worse' than rural nature, or whether it constitutes 'real' nature.

### *The nature of nature*

Perspectives on the dichotomies of ‘country-city’, ‘urban-rural’, ‘wilderness-civilization’, and ‘nature-society’ have been varied. Castree (2001) has mapped three broad approaches to society-nature relations in existing literature on geography: the social approach, the ecocentric approach, and the technocratic or ‘people and environment’ approach. The latter is understood to stem from the early days of geography, with ‘neutral science’ being carried out on nature that is the distinct object of human inquiry. Today, similar views suggest that ‘the environment’ and ‘resources’ need to be managed by humans (Castree 2001:3). The opposing ecocentric approach to nature-society relations is presents a more critical view, suggesting that the dominant understandings of nature and the associated social and ecological injustices must be addressed on a more fundamental level. This perspective symbolizes a profound respect for nature, that people need to ‘save’ or ‘get back to’. However, Castree (2001) argues that both these views still conceive society and nature as distinct units. The *external nature of nature* then implies that nature, as ‘the environment’, is something inherently nonhuman and nonsocial. It is *intrinsic*, having a true, unchanging essence. The nature of nature can also be seen as *universal*, general and encompassing all that exists (Castree 2001:5-9).

As an alternate view on the nature of nature, the understanding applied in my study is that of a *social nature*. A uniting thought in the variety of perspectives on nature as social is that the very “ideas of nature as either external, intrinsic, or universal are themselves social constructions” (Castree 2001:10). Instead, it is believed that there is no objective knowledge or single truth of nature, but a multitude of diverse, socially constituted understandings. When these understandings are communicated further, they only *represent* that which is being communicated (Castree 2013). However, our experiencing and knowing, and how we communicate about these experiences and knowledges, are mediated through the lens of the discourses we are part of (ibid.).

Central to this idea, nature does not exist in a vacuum, ‘as it is’. This becomes clear when it is understood that ‘nature’ is in reality largely affected by social, political, and economic forces that shape how nature is experienced and frame how these experiences are understood (Castree 2001). This is disturbingly apparent in examples of how natural hazards, disasters, and fluctuations disproportionately affect vulnerable groups in society, and how these vulnerabilities are often the result of systemic oppression and exploitation – not ‘nature’ (Castree 2001; with reference to Lakshama Yapa & Amartya Sen). Instead, those benefiting from the fundamental inequalities declare ‘nature’ guilty of the damage and respond with superficial policies to divert attention from the root cause of problems (Castree 2001; with reference to David Harvey, Neil Smith & Kenneth Hewitt).

This shows that “knowledge on nature (even scientific ones) frequently express social power relations, and ... that these knowledges have material effects, insofar as people may believe and act according to them” (Castree 2001:13). When analyzing discourses

of nature, knowledge and language are seen within a context of social norms and images. These determine the frame through which reality is perceived and communicated, meaning that there is no objective truth separate from one's discursive context, and no means to understand the world beyond these socially naturalized understandings. Therefore,

*“all claims about nature are discursively mediated. Knowledge and language are the tools we use to make sense of a natural world that is both different from us and yet which we are a part of --- different individuals and groups use different discourses to make sense of the same nature/s. These discourses do not reveal or hide the truths of nature but, rather, create their own truths. Whose discourse is accepted as being truthful is a question of social struggle and power politics. Furthermore, many nature discourses become so deeply entrenched in both lay and expert ways of thinking that they themselves appear natural”* (Castree 2001:12).

Accordingly, in my study, each understanding of nature is regarded as its own truth. At the same time, communicating these truths are only representations of them. In line with what has been established in this chapter, these understandings and representations cannot be assumed to exist outside the power relations embedded in dominant discourses of nature. Nevertheless, and consequently, looking at the multitude of knowledges on urban nature provides an opportunity to analyze both how urban nature is being represented, and what are presented as its personal meanings.

## Literature review

To situate my study within a wider academic framework, a selection of examples in previous research will now be reviewed. Some of their findings will be lifted to lay ground for understanding relations to urban nature in the Nordic context.

Departing from the connections between urbanization, sedentary lifestyles, health issues, and gender, Felicity Thomas' (2015) study built on therapeutic landscape literature to examine women's health and wellbeing benefits from green and blue spaces in Copenhagen. These were studied through four focus groups and semi-structured interviews with policymakers and twenty-five women aged 18 to 60 living in two socio-demographically differing areas of Copenhagen. The study aimed primarily to “understand the ways that women from different socio-demographic backgrounds interact with and give meaning to diverse natural spaces in terms of their physical health and psychological wellbeing, and to develop understanding of the socio-cultural issues that impacted upon women's use or non-use of such spaces” (2015:188).

Perspectives on urban nature within a Nordic context have also been mapped by Katriina Litola (2018) in Oulu, Finland. Seeing urban nature as a hybrid of culture and nature, the study explored emotional and aesthetic perspectives into urban nature that city governments often see as an economic and technical object. Litola conducted discourse

analysis on material from two focus groups, online forum discussions, and one public planning document to compare the narratives of citizens opposing building developments in a recreation area and of public officials working towards these developments.

Another study from Oulu, conducted by Katariina Joutsen (2015), recognized different meanings that urban nature carried for students at Oulu university. Theoretically, understandings of urban nature were categorized into ecologic, functional, and experiential to examine how urban nature was defined and whether it was thought to have health benefits. This was executed through theory-based content analysis on material from four focus groups consisting of altogether 16 participants.

Thomas' study in Copenhagen showed that different sites of urban nature and the activities performed in them were associated with different social groups based on age, sexuality, ethnicity, and other factors. For instance, for younger participants, cemeteries were sites for running and occasional social activities, while many older respondents felt that a more appropriate use would be calm reflection. Urban nature provided space for physical exercise, reflection and feeling closer to 'nature', sustaining good family relations, and relief from stress and anxiety. Joutsen's (2015) study also presented that urban nature was connected to physical activity, as well as social and psychological health benefits. Both Thomas and Joutsen found that urban nature was considered to be more artificial or polished than 'real' nature. Litola's (2018) work showed that the essence of urban nature was considered to be somewhere in between the ideals of nature and city.

These studies provide some interesting insights into the uses of and relations to urban nature in the Nordic countries. Firstly, both Thomas and Joutsen showed that nature experiences are found in places that have not been planned as recreation areas. Such include graveyards and uncared-for spaces within cities. Joutsen discovered that water elements were a vital part of urban nature in Oulu. Secondly, Litola revealed that depending on the viewpoint, urban nature can be considered a resource, or an experience. Moreover, nature can be seen as a hinderance to urban development, while urban development can be seen as a threat to nature. Enforcing Litola's findings that for some, urban nature may be something negative, Thomas pointed out that socio-political associations affect people's use of nature in cities. Being in urban nature was associated with bodily norms on how 'healthy' in outdoor environment looks, which caused negative psychological effects to people whose bodies differed from such norms. Lastly, all three studies suggested that while dualistic understandings of city and nature persist, in practice, there are no clear boundaries between them. Neither are there any absolute or universal definitions of what 'urban nature' is.

## Methods & methodology

To provide answers to the posed questions, a qualitative research design was assessed to be suitable. The method of investigation is here called ‘semi-structured GIS’, meaning that participatory GIS is used to obtain qualitative data. Discourse analysis was used as the method of analysis, resulting in a ‘discursive map’, where cultural mapping meets discourse analysis (Huovinen et al. 2017).

By relying on these qualitative methods and focusing on a relatively small sample, this study answers to a call for “more in-depth discussions and understanding” on urban green and blue spaces (Thomas 2015:188). It is argued that

“the very nature of the methods required to elicit and analyse the large-scale data that tends to characterise research on urban public health and on the health benefits of natural settings invariably means that green and blue spaces tend to be analysed as distinct and separate entities from their urban, ‘grey’ surroundings ... [But] people do not experience these spaces in a vacuum, and the activities and emotions that take place there are not necessary[il]ly confined within them. Rather, such spaces form a part of an embedded and interconnected matrix of settings through which people move and experience their daily lives. --- Similarly, observational studies commonly used within research on health-environment connections, tell us something of the activities that take place within particular settings, yet tell us little of the ‘quality of connection’ (Petersen, 2013) or the ‘personal and social meanings’ (Burgess et al., 1988) that that space or feature holds for an individual, [and] little about any other spaces that may be deemed important to them” (ibid.).

Therefore, the chosen methods were hoped to broaden our understanding on the subjective meanings of urban nature, the relationships with it.

Because reliability (as possibility for later reproduction of study with identical results) and validity (as measuring exactly what is pre-defined as the object of measurement) may as such be more suitable for quantitative than qualitative research (Widerberg 2011:18), these criteria are met through other measures. This manifests in precise and continuous documentation of the research process and reflecting on each choice made, which facilitate evaluating the execution of the study and examining the accuracy of findings (ibid.). Therefore, each step of the research process will now be explained, choices motivated, and limitations assessed. The last section of this chapter will then provide a comprehensive reflection on research ethics in relation to this study.

### Semi-structured GIS

The method of investigation, here called ‘semi-structured GIS’, meant collecting primary data from participants through an online survey combining geospatial data collection with

a semi-structured questionnaire. The geospatial information would be used to recognize specific places, examine their characteristics, and to present findings.

First, participants chose a point on an online map representing a place they go to when visiting urban nature in Malmö. The participants were then asked to specify in text which place their map pinning represented. This was done to identify any technical issues with tagging the right place and to allow for choosing only a small point of a larger area that could be difficult to communicate using a street map application.

Participants then answered three open questions about their relationship with the place:

What function does this place have for you?

What does this place mean to you?

Which feelings or emotions are connected to this place for you?

Under each question, some hints were given as to what the question could mean. This was done with the intention of making answering easier and less frustrating to those who might not know how to answer. The survey content, including these hints, can be viewed in Appendix 2.

The participants could then voluntarily submit an image to specify which place they mean or to symbolize its meaning to them. This was hoped to make answering more accessible by providing means of answering other than text. In addition, it was thought that analyzing images in general might provide insights not visible in text.

To enhance the chances of having sufficient material to analyze, participants with interest for possible later semi-structured interviews could enter their email address at the end of the survey, where they were also assured it would not be connected to their answers. After the first week of data collection, it was assessed that the submissions to the online survey were sufficient in quantity and quality and no additional interviews would be conducted. While conducting these interviews could have provided more detailed and in-depth material to analyze, the time constraints of this study were deemed to motivate only working with the data that was already collected.

As the questions were presented in the form of an online survey, there was no direct interaction between the researcher and the respondent during the participation situation. Therefore, no follow-up questions on emerging themes could be asked, and no impressions of the participant could be had besides their answers. This probably led to a stronger sense of anonymity, but disallowed reading nonverbal cues. The participants could answer whenever they wanted to, take their time when answering, easily discontinue their participation, and see the questions before deciding whether to participate. This was deemed a fitting primary method for this study also due to health risks of face-to-face interviewing in the current pandemic situation.

## Selection

The call for participants accompanied with the link to the online survey was posted in the Facebook group *Malmökärns*.<sup>1</sup> By clicking the link, anyone in the group could choose to participate in the survey. No maximum number of replies was defined, as it seemed unlikely that too many replies to analyze would be received. If the number of replies would be fewer than 15 and would not provide sufficiently analyzable material, 2-3 semi-structured interviews would be conducted.

The choice to distribute the call through this platform was made because of financial and time constraints of the study, and because invitations to participate in academic studies are commonly shared there according to my own experience. The group consists of approximately 6 000 members and has the purpose of “providing a space for knowledge exchange and a virtual meeting place for Malmö and surrounding areas” (*Malmökärns*, my translation). While the group cannot be said to be representative of whole Malmö population, as it is only for persons that are female, transgender and/or non-binary, the strength of this group in this matter was perceived to be that personal and analytical discussions are abundant.

Moreover, the large number of women in the group makes it a motivated choice in the context of Thomas’ (2015) remark on the limitedness of research on women’s use of natural spaces in cities. Such studies are especially motivated considering the potential health benefits of urban nature, and city-dwelling women’s disproportionately high level of affectedness by mental health conditions and non-communicable health issues such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes (*ibid.*). Even so, Thomas points out that the work that does exist is often focused on safety issues, or the norms portraying the urban as inappropriate or restrictive to women, and not the positive aspects. The choice of distributing the call for participants in the mentioned Facebook group can thus also be seen as an answer to Thomas’ call.

It should be acknowledged that the rather uncontrolled way the study sample was composed is prone to bias. It is possible that mostly those who were positively inclined towards urban nature took the time to answer, which may have affected the results. Moreover, there is also the risk of survey replies being skewed to overemphasize the importance of urban nature and the strength of feelings toward it, as it was apparent that these aspects were of interest to the researcher.

While the results cannot be argued to surely represent Malmö as a whole, let alone urban population globally, the purpose of this study was to map *some* understandings of and relations to urban nature in Malmö, and not *all* of them globally. However, the findings

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<sup>1</sup> The name of the group, *Malmökärns*, derives from *kärns* being used as a gender neutral variant of the Swedish colloquial word *gärns* meaning girls. *Kärns* could connote *kära*, dear, in which case *Malmökärns* roughly translates to ‘Malmödarlings’.

of this study can still be put into a larger context, which will be seen in the later analysis and conclusion chapters.

### Discursive mapping

The submitted entries were exported from the survey application, examined for any issues, and then printed on paper to perform an initial thematic analysis. Through this first look, impressions were noted on paper, and dominant topics and especially expressive statements were highlighted. In line with tradition within discourse analysis (Huovinen et al. 2017:23), no themes were predefined before examination of the material.

The analysis then sought to identify discourses, “a form of meta-discussion comprehending structured beliefs, rationalities, logics, and ways of knowing” represented by a given “picture of oneself in relation to something” (Widerberg 2011:156-7, my translation). By making visible implicit meanings behind words (and other forms of communication), discourse analysis allowed me to explore *how* urban nature and relations to it are represented by the participants. Initially, the participants were informed they may reply in Swedish instead of English if they wish to (Appendix 1). This was done to make answering more accessible, and to allow for more expressive responses from those less comfortable with English. Although it should be acknowledged that translating may impact analysis, own interpretation is inevitably part of analysis to begin with.

Visual images, argue Simpson and Mayr, “can be equally ideological [as language], can shape our world views, and negotiate social and power relationships” (2010:87). However, the way the image reply option was presented in was later realized to be potentially problematic. Because pictures could be used to “specify the exact place ... or to visualize its meaning” (Appendix 2, my later emphasis), it is impossible to know if the image was meant as a mere clarification of spatial point, or a conveyer of deeper meaning about the participant’s relationship with the place. However, an image could be argued to provide insight even when not consciously used for communicating a specific meaning. As the number of image responses comprise a minor share of all replies, I assume this problematic was not of great relevance from the analytical perspective. Nevertheless, to respect the difference between making sense and imposing meaning, the findings based on image responses will be clearly identified in analysis.

Inspired by Huovinen et al.’s (2017) method exploration into urban place identities in Helsinki, Finland, the discourses recognized in the participants’ replies were in the end compiled into a discursive map. *Discursive mapping* is a form of cultural mapping where a concrete map is drawn based on findings from discourse analysis (ibid.:23). According to Huovinen et al.,

“Discourse analytic thinking helps to bring cultural mapping to a deeper level and concentrate on peoples’ mental imageries, memories and attitudes. It emphasizes time and space as they are imagined ... and lets impressions and stories come to

light as a legitimate part of building place identities. A discursive map can be used to highlight individuals' and the community's ideologies and values" (2017:27).

The discursive map that is the result of this study will then visually represent spatially imagined meanings of and relations to urban nature in Malmö.

## Research ethics

### *Confidentiality, consent & credit*

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw their participation at any time, and that the submissions were voluntary and anonymous, both in the call for participants (Appendix 1) and in the survey introduction (Appendix 2). An exception to anonymity was made if the participant specifically requested this. This was done to give due credit to the contributor if their reply was quoted in the final study. Lastly, the survey introduction contained contact information that could be used for questions, comments, critique, or requests for a copy of the finished study. All submissions were stored electronically and were only accessible through my personal password-protected account at the survey host site used by Lund University.

### *Positionality & responsibility*

Emphasizing that the participant's own understanding of what urban nature is was 'right', it was stated that urban nature means "whatever that is to you. That could be any place in Malmö that feels like nature to you, or any spot that you go to when you want to have a nature experience ... anything that you associate with urban nature" (Appendix 2). It was hoped that this (lack of) definition would prevent the participants' answers from being led into any certain direction and prevent the participants from feeling confused or retaining from answering due to not knowing what was expected from them. However, as seen in Appendix 2, some examples were given to ease answering and to inspire, which could have affected the answers.

Another aspect of responsibility towards participants is being aware of any psychological, social, and physical health consequences one's study might cause, and having a plan for how these could be responded to. Not all relationships with public places are 'positive' and being asked to reprocess previous experiences can bring difficult emotions to the surface. According to the Swedish police's survey, 39% percent of people in Malmö are concerned about being attacked in their own neighborhood, while 35% feel a "concrete feeling of being unsafe when outside late at night" (2019a, my translation). Simultaneously, intensive police operations are targeting "criminal environments" (Polisen 2019b) by occupying residential neighborhoods in Malmö for months on end (Palmkvist 2020), and excessive police violence takes place in public areas (Sandström 2018a; 2018b; Larsson, T. 2014; Sundberg 2019a; Sundberg 2019b). Furthermore,

hundreds of cases of sexual violence in Malmö are investigated yearly (Ahlqvist 2020), some of them having happened in the city's parks and playgrounds (Larsson, Y. 2018; Svenska Dagbladet 2018). It is therefore motivated to believe that urban nature in Malmö may carry negative associations for some. While none of the received entries caused such worry, the subject seemed to be very personal to many, and some difficult emotions were expressed in general. Afterwards, I feel that any risks should have been addressed directly by providing contact information to help lines and care providers already during participation.

In my role as researcher, I also needed to outweigh the ethical aspect of confidentiality, benefit to my study, and possible benefits to the public. I chose to make the survey entries visible only to myself, and not the public or the other participants. This choice was motivated by the sensitivity of the subject – both from the perspective of the participant (as to not publish their personal experiences for anyone to see), and for potential benefits to the study (participants' increased willingness to write more personal entries from knowing nobody else would see them). On the other hand, if the map results would have been made public, the participants might have benefited from their participation, for example by discovering sites of urban nature previously unknown to them or hearing others' experiences of the places. Then again, some might not have wanted to reveal their hidden pearls of urban nature. Nevertheless, the relationship between me and the participants now remained the conventional one of a study conductor extracting data from its study subjects.

## Results

Altogether, 18 entries were received. There were two places that were most commonly depicted as urban nature: the Ribersborg beach and the St Pauli graveyards. A map of the places recognized as 'urban nature' in Malmö can be found in Appendix 3.

As expected, most entries were submitted in the days following publication. Regardless of a reminder to participate sent after the first week, no replies were received after this time point. Two persons expressed their interest in participating in possible later interviews about the subject, and one person requested to be sent the finished work after the study would be completed. Three of the entries included images.

The required field for stating name for the place indicated by the map pinning turned out to be useful in three different types of cases. Firstly, this option was utilized by some respondents that submitted an entry on a specific part of a larger outdoor facility that would not have been possible to communicate only using map coordinates. Such were, for instance, a certain part of a park that was more 'rugged' than the rest of the park, a certain pier on the seaside, as well as a certain part of the beach that has a specific function. Secondly, the place name information turned out to be beneficial also for entries

that pinned points on maps that may not commonly be considered to be public outdoor facilities in Malmö and could therefore have been difficult to identify when analyzing the results. These were a wild-grown place with abandoned community gardens, and different parts of a cemetery.

Lastly, the name specification revealed to be useful also for identifying technical issues. This is because one survey entry had clearly been pinned in the wrong place. The pin was placed on the default point where the map was centered when opening the survey, while the textual specification stated a completely different place. Later when analyzing the results, this entry was assigned to be in the point stated in writing rather than the spatial coordinate. This choice was made as it was deemed to be highly unlikely that the author had written the wrong name rather than pinned the wrong place, and this was also clear based on the participants' longer answers about that place.

## Analysis

The discourse analysis progressed with the help of a mental framework used to distinguish discourses of urban nature. This framework arose from the initial impressions from thematic mapping and was compiled in groups of questions that the participants' replies had provided answers to. While the themes certainly overlap and intersect, this mental map was employed to make sense of the results in a way that allowed them to be presented for the purpose of this study. The following figure should therefore be seen as an orientation aid guiding the process rather than any absolute categorization.

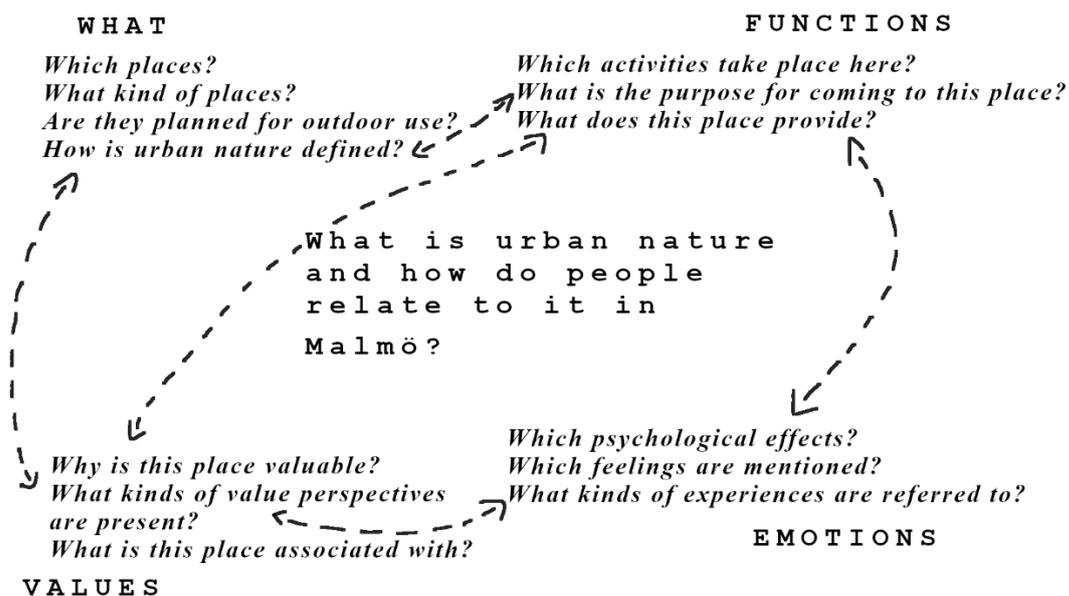


Figure 1: Author's depiction of the thought process behind the analysis.

Based on this mind map, the material was organized into four different aspects connecting to the research questions: the nature of urban nature, functions of urban nature, emotional connections with urban nature, and value perspectives into urban nature. Answers to these research questions were looked for in all replies, meaning that the question stated in the survey form did not restrict the replies' use in answering other questions. This is because the questions and answers somewhat overlap, and also because, for the purpose of this study, the answers themselves were deemed to be more relevant than any strict structures in finding these answers. As many of the answers were quite personal and included some sensitive subjects, they will not be published in their totality. This is done to protect the integrity of the participants. Instead, quotes will be provided in connection to each theme.

The replies will now be analyzed by dividing them into themes relating to the sub-questions of this study:

What is perceived to be urban nature in Malmö?

Which functions are attributed to urban nature?

How do people represent their emotional connections to urban nature?

Why is urban nature considered to be valuable?

Lastly, the findings will be compiled and presented through a discursive map.

## The nature of urban nature

### *Places of urban nature*

To identify what the participants mean by urban nature in Malmö, I first examined the geotagged locations and responses to the short text field asking to specify place name. The places presented as urban nature were one large public park (Slottsparken), two smaller parks (Rörsjöparken and Enskifteshagen), parts of large parks with a pond (Ankdammen in Slottsparken and the smaller lake in Pildammsparken), a beach (Ribersborg) and specific parts of it (the dog beach and pier 8 at the end of the beach), the seaside beside a residential area (Västra hamnen), a large recreation area at the outskirts of the city (Bulltoftaparken) and a specific part of it (Bulltoftakullen, the large hill), the St Pauli graveyards, and one wild-grown abandoned community gardening area. In the following analysis, some identifying details on the places will be left out in connection to sensitive subjects.

These places of urban nature can be roughly categorized into green and blue spaces. Seven replies represented blue spaces (meaning that water features were presented as primary), while eleven answers were about mainly green spaces (vegetation aspects were highlighted). This shows that blue spaces are a significant part of urban nature experiences in Malmö, just as they were in Joutsen's (2015) study in Oulu.

Of the places that were associated with urban nature, only three are mentioned in Malmö city's list of parks on a section of the official website of Malmö where 'nature and parks' in the city are presented (Malmö stad n.d.-a): Slottsparken, Pildammsparken, and Bulltoftaparken. A closer examination of the list of 'Parks from A to Z' ("Malmö's parker A-Ö") shows that it is only a 'selection' of parks in Malmö (Malmö stad 2017). While the list is thus implied not to be exhaustive, it contains no less than 21 parks, and the section on 'nature and parks' in general reviews 10 additional nature features in the city. Choosing to present one site instead of another can be considered a value-laden deed in itself (Castree 2013:51-2).

This is connected to three interesting findings. Firstly, few places presented on Malmö's official website on nature and parks were mentioned by the participants. Secondly, some of the centrally located, most popular parks in Malmö, such as Folkets park (Malmö stad 2019), were not among submissions on places of urban nature. Finally, most of the places described as urban nature by the participants are not listed on Malmö's official site on nature and parks (Malmö stad n.d.-a). Interestingly, neither of the two places that the most participants reported as urban nature are present on the site. Ribersborg beach is instead introduced amidst places to 'bathe and swim' in, such as spas and public pools, rather than 'nature' (Malmö stad n.d.-b). The St Pauli graveyards are not to be featured anywhere within the parent category of things to 'experience and do' in Malmö, that the sections on nature and bathing are under (Malmö stad n.d.-c), nor the Malmö website in its entirety.

The contrast between the popularity of these places as sites of urban nature experiences and the lack of their official recognition as such is intriguing. Similarly so, the fact that there were four responses that required nine or more words to explain which place was meant displays how the importance of places in urban nature experiences is not tied to their official recognition. For instance, a place titled

*"The walk along the sea and the little stone stairs that lead down to the water"*

was experienced as a reliever from the hardness of living in the city and used for recovery from anxiety attacks. Likewise,

*"The abandoned and overgrown community gardens by the ... graveyard in [a Malmö subarea]" (my translation)*

was a place to escape the city, get a feeling of hope from observing how nature was taking over, and to cry and come in touch with one's feelings.

Similarly to the findings of Joutsen (2015) in Oulu, urban nature in Malmö thus consists of both areas planned for human recreation and spaces that are used for nature experiences even though they have not specifically been planned as such.

### *Near nature but not real nature*

Urban nature was often suggested to be nature-like but not real nature. It is the closest one can get to nature while being in the city – it is a substitute for something that is missed.

*“I get a bit ‘stuck’. It’s not the ‘real’ nature, ... I am still in the city”  
(my translation)*

*“I grew up in the forest so living in urban Malmö is hard sometimes.  
Being on the beach and by the water is **the closest I can get to the feeling of being alone in the woods.**”*

While one participant assessed Bulltoftaparken to be

*“the only place in Malmö that feels like nature”,*

the notion that it *feels* like nature leaves unclear whether it *is* nature, or if it only feels like nature but is not wholly it. In contrast, at an old community garden,

*“It’s like... abandoned and untouched. I think it’s so nice that **nature has just gotten to take over.**” (my translation)*

In this vision, wild nature is taking over the city. This could be understood to insinuate that ‘untouched’ nature is real nature, untouched meaning that humans have not planned for it to be there. Instead, nature is winning over city space when the humans are not looking.

Participants suggested that ‘planned’ nature was not authentic nature, rather a representation of nature. The planned ‘nature elements’ mimic real nature.

*“This place is a mix between nature and horticultural gardening which I like. It’s ‘clean’, with some ‘messy’ nature like details. So many green spaces in Malmö is not very closed off from the traffic and city life and has also a very ‘cleaned’ expression and **the real nature areas are too far away** for everyday recreation without car... This area gives me a bit of that, but not really enough though. Also **the bird life here gives a nice touch to the place.**”*

This interesting comment reaffirms Litola’s (2018) suggestion in Oulu that urban nature is a hybrid between nature and city. The organized elements of society meet unorganized elements of nature in order to provide a simulation of nature experience into city life. It is not fully there, but it is something that works to fill the hole left by ‘real nature’. Simultaneously, birds serve as a *touch* of nature, that could be meant either as a planned detail, or a small piece of true nature reminding of its existence.

The sense of urban nature as planned, clean, unreal, and maintained nature was quite commonly shared among the participants. Urban nature in Malmö is green, as an aesthetic element, but mostly artificial.

*“A **green, pretty** area where you feel good” (my translation)*

*“I miss more leafy and wild greenery in Malmö – most parks have big open lawns and a couple of trees and/or bushes. It’s very trimmed. I want urban nature to feel less **fixed and planned**.”*

Similarly, a picture response shows lush green trees surrounding a green pond. A small bridge with a symmetrical rounded form is showing between the trees. On the foreground of the picture opens an even field of grass and small white flowers, and a few carefully organized plants break the scenery by the edge of the water.

While urban nature was necessarily not considered *real* nature, its virtue is that it is *near* nature. In line with Thomas’ (2015) study in Copenhagen, an important aspect of urban nature was that it is a part of people’s everyday environments.

*“I am actually maybe not that attached to this place, it is mostly very **accessible** to me and often not that crowded” -Frida (my translation)*

*“**Easy to come to from my home**. That is, easily accessible.” (my translation)*

*“It is **close to where I live** so I mostly come here when I want to go outside.”<sup>2</sup> (my translation)*

*“I live close by so walking around [here] ... is my **routine** walk.”*

*“It feels safe and nice and **vardagligt**.”<sup>3</sup> (my translation)*

A common reason for using the St Pauli graveyards for urban nature experiences was stated to be its proximity to participants’ homes and its central location in general. As mentioned before, the graveyards seem to make an excellent near-nature destination even though they have not been primarily planned as such.

## Functions of urban nature

### *Refuge from the city*

Urban nature was considered to be a part of the city but at the same something that is not really city as such. Instead, it is an escape from the city, within the city. It is

*“a nice environment **away from traffic and city life**”*

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<sup>2</sup> Original entry is “...*det är hit jag oftast går när jag vill komma ut*.” Literally translated, *komma ut* would be to ‘come out’, association being going outside in general or into nature in particular.

<sup>3</sup> *Vardagligt* is a Swedish word that could be translated as ‘mundane’ but is here left untranslated due to a lack of English translation that would capture the entire meaning of the word. It is an adjective highlighting the ‘everyday’ nature of something, deriving from the word *vardag*, ‘weekday’.

*“refuge in the urban landscape.”*

Urban nature thus is *away* from the city but *in* the city. One picture response shows a view of a calm sea blurring into the horizon behind large, grey stones. The picture is taken so that the photographer is facing the sea, while the city is left behind the back of the observer and cannot be seen. Another picture response shows a relaxed-looking dog off leash, laying in the sand. The dog has sand on its snout and paws and is surrounded by large piles of sand, with the symbolic skyscraper Turning Torso blurred and barely seen in the background. One is still in the urban but can rest in pretending not to be there.

At a site of unmaintained urban nature,

*“It’s so overgrown now that **you can almost pretend you’re not in the city** and right next to a highway.” (my translation)*

Therefore, while urban nature is in one way separate from the city, it is not fully outside of it. Urban nature acts as a barrier between the human and the city, providing a retreat from noise, pollution, and the restless city life.

*“I tend to come here ... **when I need to get fresh air.**”*

*“I take walks, **‘breathe’ in the nature**, enjoy the green”*

*“This place makes me calm, so often **when I’m so stressed that I have difficulty breathing I go there**” (my translation)*

*“It’s far enough from the streets that **it can be completely quiet sometimes**”*

Urban nature is then also a barrier between people, in a positive sense.

*“Not as crowded as the other parks ... **Really enjoy the lack of people.**”*

*“I like it most during spring and autumn when **there are no or very little people here**” -Batman*

*“It feels a bit **less crowded and exposed** than the part of the beach that’s closer to the city center”*

*“I am actually maybe not that attached to this place, it is mostly very accessible to me and **often not that crowded**” -Frida (my translation)*

At the same time, spaces dedicated for the ‘self’ and visited to escape the crowds can also connect those who have found the same hidden gem.

*“Really enjoy the lack of people. **When there’s others there it almost feels like we’re sharing a secret**, knowing this spot and it’s magical vibe”*

Some even felt that crowds of people enjoying the same space is something positive. Urban nature is then a common refuge providing shared relief from the city.

*“It is **nice that this place is accessible in a city like Malmö and that so many people come to use it.** It is a nice refuge in the urban landscape.”*

### *A social and an active arena*

In participants’ answers, urban nature provided space for a variety of activities. Participants brought up walking, jogging, running, swimming, reading, playing games, listening to podcasts, napping, sitting on benches and laying down in the grass, relaxing, collecting plants, and talking on the phone.

Often, urban nature is a place for social activities: meeting with others, chatting, sharing meals, or playing. This was especially true for Rörspjörparken, that participants presented almost solely as a social arena, that is “fun”, and “practical” due to its location.

*“I maybe have a **picnic, a bag of chips and friends with me and just hang out on the grass in the sun.**” (my translation)*

Also the Ribersborg beach, Pildammsparken, Enskifteshagen and Bulltoftaparken are social places according to the participants. Time in urban nature was spent with human friends and family as well as dogs. More indirectly social, Slottsparken was a place for “watch[ing] the birds and people”. Here, others were the target of attention from a distance rather than directly engaged with.

### *Sensing nature*

Generally, urban nature was presented as a site for engaging with ‘nature’. It was being observed, sensed, and enjoyed. For some, urban nature is mainly a sensory experience.

*“I walk here to **feel the sea and the sun.**”*

*“I come here to **see the sea and to feel its scent.**” (my translation)*

*“I go there and just walk around or **lay me down in the grass and look up at the trees.**” (my translation)*

*“I take walks, **‘breathe’ in the nature, enjoy the green**”*

*“I come here both to take a walk for fitness and also to relax and **appreciate nature.**”*

*“I get very excited when **seeing all flowers and blooming trees.**”*

*“I lay me down in the grass and try to **hear the birds.**” (my translation)*

Seasons were commonly mentioned by the participants. While the aspect of observing seasons change was not directly brought up, the frequent mentions of seasons hint that urban nature may be central to people’s experiencing of cycles of ‘nature’ and passing of

time in cities. As the seasons' changing may not be as visible in the 'built', 'non-living' features of cities, urban nature perhaps reflects the passing of time and seasons in a way that cannot be clearly observed in the 'grey'.

*“pretty in different ways during the seasons ... The vegetation ... is what is important” (my translation)*

*“I associate it with pre-summer and I have good memories from here”*

*“It is a calm and beautiful place. With lots of flowers and trees. Especially now in the spring.” (my translation)*

*“I associate this place with spring, summer, and calm.” (my translation)*

*“it's a special place I value in the summer”*

*“[Important here is] To get to be among the vegetation in the spring and the summer.” (my translation)*

*“My associations are good times with friends and having a cooling swim on a hot summer's day --- here I often feel relaxed, just enjoying the moment.”*

These comments show that seasons were often connected to memories. Spring and summer were brought up in connection to nostalgic memories, where friendship, ease of being, and enjoyment were emphasized. Imaginations of nature in spring and summer were presented with a warm, hopeful tone. It was almost as if these seasons reminded of something that was deeply missed, and that the return to nature's bloom would again bring something positive. The provision of restoration and healing will now be explored more deeply in connection to emotional relationships with urban nature in Malmö.

## Emotional connections to urban nature

### *Restoration and reflection*

Based on the participants' answers, urban nature in Malmö seems to be highly important for mental health. Urban nature was often mentioned to provide relaxation and restoration.

*“[It is] Calming but also healing” (my translation)*

*“It's a place for me to relax and be present together with my dog. He is happy and free and it helps me be the same.”*

*“It gives [me] calm and also a feeling of safety.” (my translation)*

*“it brings me calmness.”*

*“I can **relax** a bit more because the roads are a bit further from the park” (my translation)*

*“I feel **harmony**.”*

*“[I feel] Mostly **calm** I think and ‘**nöjd med livet**’”<sup>4</sup>*

The ‘calmness’ of urban nature or the feelings of calm it brings up were mentioned in most of the answers. Urban nature also provides space for reflection, the self, and first aid in recovering from difficult feelings and experiences.

*“There’s a specific vibe and atmosphere, very **calm**. Great for **reflection and thinking**.”*

*“This place makes me **calm**, so often when I’m so stressed that I have difficulty breathing I go there, lay me in the grass and try to hear the birds. In some periods this is that only place where I manage to **come in contact with my feelings** enough to be able to cry.” (my translation)*

*“Since it’s close to my home I tend to come here late summer nights, or **after anxiety episodes**, or when I need to get fresh air.”*

These descriptions present that while difficult emotions were present, urban nature was not the cause of these but rather provided space for dealing with them. Even though the places were associated with difficult experiences, the relationships with these places seemed warm. Urban nature was there to help people rather than to cause fear. However, the fact that no negative relations with nature were reported probably tells more about which experiences participants wanted to bring up rather than that no negative experiences of urban nature exist in Malmö.

As noted in relation to descriptions of seasons, urban nature is also a source of positive imaginations. It provides gratitude and hope and reminds of past moments with important people.

*“It’s like... abandoned and untouched. I think it’s so nice that nature has just gotten to take over. It **almost gives me some hope**” (my translation)*

*“My associations are **good times with friends** --- here I often feel **relaxed, just enjoying the moment**.”*

*“The view of the city and bridge always **makes me feel grateful** that I have made this place my home. I brought my partner here on our **first date** and **I think of him when I go there**.”*

However, understandings of urban nature as something ‘emotional’ or strictly ‘material’ are not clearly distinct between different people. Personal experiences of urban nature are simultaneously sensitive and practical.

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<sup>4</sup> *Nöjd med livet* means approximately ‘content with life’.

*“I grew up in a forest so living in urban Malmö is hard sometimes. Being on the beach and by the water is the closest I can get to the feeling of being alone in the forest. I also love to swim.”*

The participants presented graveyards as places for both jogging and calm reflection, exactly as Thomas’ (2015) participants in Copenhagen did. But in contrast to those interviewed by Thomas, participants of my study were not divided in these opinions – whether it was okay to do physical activities in the graveyard or if it was only appropriate to use them for reflection. There seemed to be no contradiction between these uses in Malmö.

*“[The graveyards are] Calming but also healing, I often jog here.”*  
(my translation)

The practicality of urban nature seemed no less important than the restorative functions. As described earlier, sites of urban nature were near and central, part of everyday lives. Urban nature is also fun and exciting, making participants feel good, “interested, entertained, fresh, healthy”, joyful, and happy. Moreover, it is an aesthetic element appreciated for its beauty. While urban nature may not be ‘real’ nature, it is near nature and dear nature.

## Values of urban nature

The understandings presented by the participants showed that *urban nature* was often seen as a separate environment – something that was *visited* to appreciate it as it is, or because it provided something. Nevertheless, in the words of Castree (2001), it is then *external*, distinct from the human. Simultaneously, it was not necessarily distinct from everyday life or strictly separate from the city, but rather an integral part of them. The viewpoint of my study is that urban nature is *social* in the sense that these understandings are *representations* presented to communicate personal, socially constituted meanings of urban nature (Castree 2013). These perspectives will now be applied to examine the value bases urban nature was approached from.

### *Intrinsic value*

In participants’ replies, urban nature was sometimes presented as something that is good ‘in itself’. When asked what was valued in the chosen place, some answers were

*“The sea is what is important”* (my translation)

*“I value it because the sea.”* -Ribban

No further explanation is then needed for which aspects make the sea important. It is valuable because it is.

Urban nature was also stated to be visited in order to be ‘appreciated’:

*“I come here both to take a walk for fitness and also to relax and appreciate nature.”*

Here, ‘appreciation’ can be understood as valuing urban nature as it is. In a wider meaning of the word, ‘appreciation’ could also be observing nature as a (provider of a) sensory experience.

### *An experience*

The multiple replies highlighting the experiential nature of urban nature presented it as something to be observed or felt. In this way, it could be ‘appreciated’ in the previously mentioned sense of the word, or ‘visited’ in order to experience certain sensations. The “green”, “beautiful” urban nature is then an aesthetic experience, and the “calm” of nature a state of being that can be attained within oneself when being exposed to. The feelings of hope and gratitude symbolize ‘perspective’ to be gained from observing urban nature. Simultaneously, no further reason for feeling, seeing, smelling, listening to, or “breathing in” nature was provided – the experience of nature is good in itself.

### *Provider of health*

Urban nature was commonly said to provide direct or indirect mental health benefits. Whether it was to recover from specific difficult experiences and emotions, or to relax and escape city life in general, urban nature was an *instrument* aiding mental health restoration. At the same time, it was ‘routine’, an integrated part of everyday life that was not further reflected on but that provided space for physical, mental, and social health enhancing activities.

### *An environment and a resource to be used*

As seen before, urban nature is an arena for a variety of activities. It is then something that is ‘used’ as a space. Once, it was also directly mentioned as a material resource.

*“Because it is an abandoned community garden area, I go there sometimes and **pull out plants to take home and plant on my balcony.**”*  
(my translation)

In these understandings, urban nature is again valuable as an instrument. However, moving ‘nature’ from the public into the private has no specified meaning – it is perhaps a source of food, or simply nice to have it on the balcony, as it is enjoyable in itself.

## Discursive nature

The discourses of urban nature in Malmö are here presented in a map format. While this *discursive map* is neither to be understood as an exhaustive look into understandings of urban nature in Malmö in general, or even the understandings of the participants in particular, it provides a spatial view on common discourses of the places of urban nature covered in this study.



Figure 2: Discursive map of urban nature in Malmö.

Green areas symbolize the places presented as urban nature by the participants.

Map design: Haikku Arosuo 2020

Map data: Haikku Arosuo & participants of this study

Basemap data source: Danish Geodata Agency, Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, NGA

## Conclusion

From the planning perspective, it is important to acknowledge that urban nature in Malmö seems to be greatly significant for mental health and everyday survival. It is both a replacement for ‘real’ nature that is experienced to be absent in the area, and something that could not be substituted by nature areas outside the central city, as immediate proximity to residence seems to be of great importance in everyday use natural spaces in Malmö. Similarly to urban nature in Oulu (Joutsen 2015), urban nature in Malmö was also perceived to be important for social health. In addition to being an arena for a wide range of activities, urban nature in Malmö is a highly sensory experience: visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory, in addition to being abstractly ‘felt’. Urban nature is integral to the ‘city’, while not being ‘city’ in itself. Instead, it provides shelter from the city.

A common concern amongst participants was the lack of ‘wild’ and ‘messy’ nature in Malmö. Many greenspaces were experienced as too ‘trimmed’, ‘fixed’ and ‘planned’, which was expressed to be something negative, while especially more varied or ‘wild-grown’ environments were emphasized to provide space for reflection, restoration, and other positive psychological effects. This is connected to usage of spaces not recognized as recreation facilities in experiencing urban nature. The observation is fully in line with the findings of Fuller et al. (2007) suggesting that biodiversity and “biological complexity” in urban greenspaces are an important factor for psychological benefits. This leads me to believe that further research on associations between mental health benefits and biodiversity in urban nature in Malmö needs to be conducted, the results of which should then be used in future urban planning.

As to the present situation with the Corona pandemic, research on any changes in relations to urban nature could be a salient area of examination. By conducting similar studies at a later timepoint, it could be explored whether restrictions relating to the pandemic have increased the significance of urban nature in urban existence. Finally, the reported benefits of urban nature motivate research on access to urban green and blue spaces in Malmö in order to guarantee that urban nature will not be yet another site where social inequalities are reproduced.

## Summary

This paper departs from the notion of urban green and blue space as a provider of health benefits by aiming to map *other meanings of urban nature* in Malmö. These meanings are explored from the perspectives of 1) how urban nature is defined by people in Malmö, 2) which functions urban nature is said to have, 3) what kinds of emotional connections to urban nature are presented, and 4) which kinds of values are attributed to urban nature. This is achieved through ‘semi-structured GIS’ – online participatory mapping combining

geospatial data collection and open questions to participants – and ‘discursive mapping’ – discourse analysis applied on cultural mapping (Huovinen et al. 2017). The approach on nature is based on Castree’s theories on the social nature of nature (2001) and representations of nature (2013) arguing that the concept of ‘nature’ is a socially constituted phenomenon unavoidably understood through discourses and varying between individuals. In line with previous findings in the Nordic context (Thomas 2015; Litola 2018; Joutsen 2015), urban nature in Malmö is understood as something that is central to mental restoration, part of everyday lives, between and beyond ideas of city and nature, important part of social health, an environment for activities, and both ‘green’ (vegetation) and ‘blue’ (water). Urban nature in Malmö is also presented as a space for reflection, a sensory experience, and valuable in its mere existence. The significance of urban nature as a ‘refuge from the city, in the city’ is emphasized. In Malmö, urban nature is near nature and dear nature but not real nature.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Call for participants

#### KARTLÄGGNING AV RELATIONER TILL STADSNATUREN IN MALMÖ // MAPPING RELATIONS TO URBAN NATURE IN MALMÖ

Hej alla! Jag skriver min B-uppsats i samhällsgeografi och skulle uppskatta det jättemycket om du ville delta i en liten undersökning. Målet är att kartlägga stadsnatur i Malmö och människors relationer till den. I undersökningen väljer du en plats på kartan och sen svarar på tre frågor om din relation till den. Min förhoppning är att det kan bli lite roligt för dig också. För att delta och för mer information klickar du på länken här under. Alla svar är anonyma och du kan avbryta ditt deltagande när som helst. Själva undersökningen är på engelska men du är välkommen att svara på svenska om du hellre vill det. Tack så mycket i förväg, önskar dig en trevlig helg!

[link to survey]

// I'm writing my B-essay in Human Geography and would appreciate it a lot if you could participate in this survey. The aim is to map urban nature in Malmö and people's relationships with it. Participating consists of choosing a place on the map, and then answering three questions about your relationship with it. I'm hoping that it will be fun for you as well. To participate and for more information, click on the link below. Answering is anonymous and you can withdraw your participation at any time. Many thanks in advance and have a good weekend!

[link to survey]

## Appendix 2 – Survey content

### Human relations with urban nature

*Where do you go in Malmö when you visit nature?*

To participate in this study, you will first choose one place on a map. You can then answer three questions about your relationship to this place. Answer just as much, or little, as you want to. There are no right or wrong answers.

*Urban nature* means here whatever that is to you. That could be any place in Malmö that feels like nature to you, or any spot that you go to when you want to have a nature experience. That could be anything from parks, community gardens, and beaches to small grassplots, bushes, and individual trees - anything that you associate with urban nature.

To add multiple places, you are welcome to answer this survey as many times as you wish. If you are not comfortable replying in English, you can also write in Swedish.

#### **About the project, anonymity & confidentiality:**

Answering is anonymous, and your answers will not be connected to you unless you specifically request to be quoted by name in the final work. The entries will be used for a B-essay in Human Geography at Lund University. The aim of the study is to map the meanings of urban nature in Malmö.

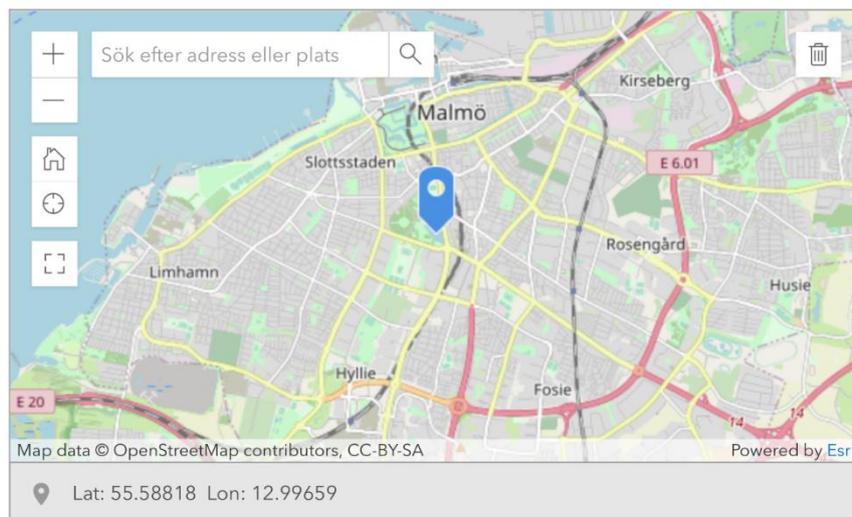
The submitted answers are not visible to the public, other participants, or anyone else but those working with this project. Your participation is voluntary, and you can terminate it at any point by personally deleting your entry or sending an email to the address below.

For any questions, comments, critique, or requests for receiving the finished study if you have participated in the project, please contact [haikku.arosuo.0536\(at\)student.lu.se](mailto:haikku.arosuo.0536(at)student.lu.se).

*Many thanks for your interest and contribution!*

### **Where do you go when you want to visit urban nature in Malmö?\***

Click at a point on the map to place the pin. You can drag the map, zoom in and out, look for a specific place name in text, or use your current location.



*[continues on the next page]*

## Appendix 2 – Survey content

### What is this place?\*

For example, "Beijers park", or "the big crooked pine tree in Slottsparken".

### What function does this place have for you?\*

For example, what you do here, or what your purpose for coming to this place is.

3000

### What does this place mean to you?\*

For example, what you associate this place with, why you value this place, or what might be important to you here.

3000

### Which feelings or emotions are connected to this place for you?\*

For example, what you feel when you are here, how you feel when thinking about this place, or what kind of relationship you have with this place.

3000

### (Optional) Picture

If you want to, you can attach an image to specify the exact place you mean, or to visualize its meaning to you. You can only upload a picture you have the copyrights to.

Tryck här för att välja en bild-fil. (<10MB) 

*[continues on the next page]*

## Appendix 2 – Survey content

### (Optional) Name for referencing

If you specifically wish to be referred to by name in case any parts of your answers are directly quoted in the study, state your name or nickname here. **If you want to stay anonymous, please leave this field empty.**

### (Optional) Contact information for interviewing

If you might be interested in participating in a phone or chat interview about this subject, please leave your email address. This does not bind you to anything. The answers you have given will **not** be connected to your email address in the finished work.

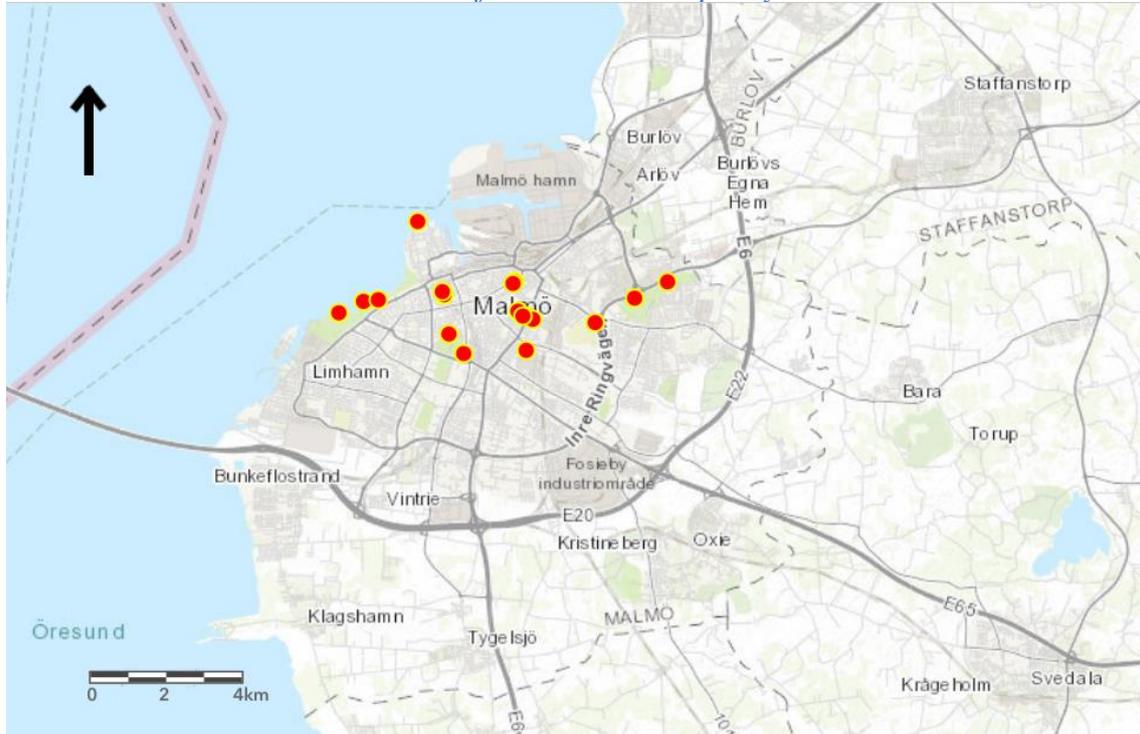
Submit

Powered by [Survey123 for ArcGIS](#)

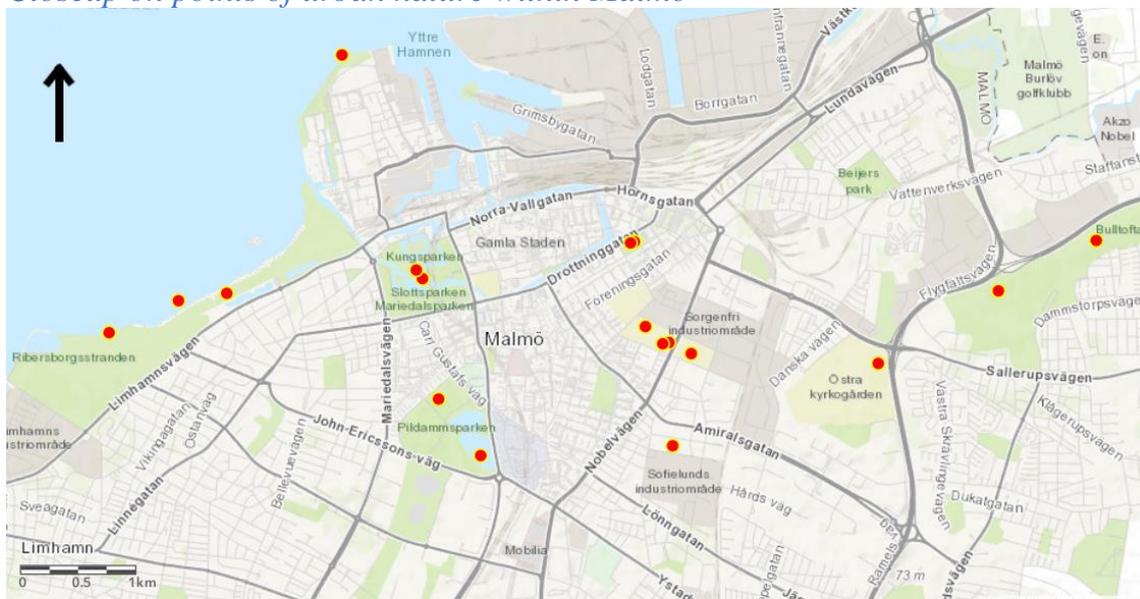
### Appendix 3 – Places of urban nature in Malmö

● = Urban nature

#### Urban nature within the context of Malmö municipality



#### Closeup on points of urban nature within Malmö



Basemap data source: Danish Geodata Agency, Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, NGA  
Points of urban nature source: Haikku Arosuo & participants of this study

[Maps not adjusted to correct the placing of the pin marked wrong due to technical issue: one of the points in Pildammsparken signifies Ribersborgsstranden]