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Differentiating the time-geography of recreational running

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes a relational time-geography approach to differentiate the geographies of recreational activities, whose place cannot be pinned down to a single specific infrastructure or area and therefore risks being marginalised in planning. Running is used as a case study. Based on diary-interviews, we have identified three different exercises/places used alternately by the respondents: the forest run; ‘the most boring route in the world’; and the tourist run. We argue that the time-geography of runners could be conceptualised as a rhythm of place dependencies, where different places afford complementary qualities. By allowing for a negotiation of the spatio-temporal constraints of everyday life, these different places (and their affordances) are of crucial importance for motivation and exercise.

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1. Introduction

Running, as Howe and Morris (2009, 308) point out, is ‘an inherently geographical practice’. Specific places not only elicit running, but also affect the quality of the exercise. However, the interplay between place and running is elusive, as this form of exercise can be adapted to a wide array of places. This dynamic trait, commonly expressed as ‘you can run anywhere’, is key to the popularity of running as an everyday exercise. As with many other outdoor recreational mobilities, which are not bound to a specific arena, the importance of the outdoor environment becomes elusive precisely because running is not a programmed activity, which maps onto a programmatic space. The ‘pockets of local order’ (Hägerstrand 1985; Ellegård and Vilhelmson 2004) for running (and walking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, cycling, etc.) are too flexible to the particularities of place to be easily charted. Consequently, while the mental and physical health benefits of recreational running are well documented, specific knowledge and advice on how to plan for recreational running is lacking. This points to a need for theorising and empirically exploring the elusive geography of recreational running (and other mobile recreational activities) to inform the way such activities are understood and mapped within planning.

The number of studies on recreational running within geography and related disciplines has expanded substantially over recent years. This includes studies examining the significance of particular events, for instance park runs and fun runs (e.g. Stevinson, Wiltshire, and Hickson 2015; Edensor and Larsen 2017; Larsen 2019) and the use of particular places, in case studies or assessments of trails and parks for running (e.g. Krenichyn 2006, Starnes et al. 2011; Borgers et al. 2016; Ettema 2016; Edensor, Kärrholm, and Wirdelöv 2017). While this research demonstrates the importance of fitness trails, (large) parks and social activities to encourage recreational running,

understanding of the geography of running nevertheless remains piecemeal, as individual places or events are studied, rather than the different geographies of running. For example, in a review of 51 papers aiming to uncover the importance of natural environments for outdoor recreation, the authors note that the studies '*necessarily* examine physical activity in a particular locality or place' (Andkjær and Arvidsen 2015, 28, italics added). Thus, the focus on individual places is so strong within this strand of research that it is not only taken for granted but described as inevitable. Furthermore, whereas the importance of green space for physical activity has been argued (see especially the discourse on green exercise), Ward Thompson (2013) and Bamberg, Hitchings, and Latham (2019) noticed the dearth of knowledge on what elicits physical activity. One of the few studies to examine urban recreational runners shows how their priorities in everyday life seem to relegate the outdoor environment to a marginal position (Hitchings and Latham 2016, see also Koohsari et al. 2015, on the interplay between place and recreation). That study represents another increasingly expanding strand of research on running, which focuses on the importance of the individual's experience of the exercise, the affects and the bodily sensations, usually using ethnographic or auto-ethnographic approaches (e.g. Wester-Wedman 1988; Lorimer 2012; Hockey 2013; Barnfield 2016; Cook, Shaw, and Simpson 2016; Edensor and Larsen 2017; Edensor, Kärrholm, and Wirdelöv 2017; Hitchings and Latham 2017b; Gillet 2018; McGahern 2019; Larsen 2019). These studies capture running as part of everyday life and try to get close to its mundane practice. By doing so, this research also provides detailed accounts of the geography of the practice. However, the methodological approach they apply tends to focus on the here and now, and downplay how rhythms and time constraints outside the practice of running affect the geography of the exercise and the relation between different places of importance for running. Hence, despite the increase in the number of qualitative studies exploring the interplay between runners and their environment, the current understanding of the geography of recreational running is still fragmented.

The aim of this study was to differentiate the geography of recreational running by taking the time constraints of everyday life and the rhythms of the practice into consideration. On a more theoretical note, it aims to examine how alternate uses of different places at different times can help to explain the seemingly elusive geography of some recreational activities. The present analysis draws on recent time-geography studies and discussions (Gren 2001; Latham 2003; Hägerstrand 2009; Schwanen 2007; Haldrup 2011; Scholten, Friberg, and Sandén 2012; Stjernborg, Wretstrand, and Tesfahuney 2015) and on a wider group of related studies found within various combinations of time-geography, time sociology, rhythm analysis and studies of social practices, which emphasise the value of detailing the time-geography of practices in order to understand their conditions better (e.g. Ettema and Schwanen 2012; McQuoid et al. 2015; Edensor, Kärrholm, and Wirdelöv 2017; Blue 2017; Wong 2018). These studies of the time-geography of everyday life examine the multiplicity of rhythms and mobilities in order to enrich understanding of the interplay between activity and place. The studies rely on a relational understanding of time and geography, whereby activities are not seen as ready-made time-geography prisms and time-space is not conceptualised as existing pockets of local order awaiting an activity. Rather, time-geography and activity are viewed as being co-produced. This facilitates the analysis of a dynamic situation in which the interplay, or the role of a specific place, is not decided in advance (Kärrholm et al. 2017). Consequently, a relational take on time-geography moves beyond the abstract space and disembodied actors of conventional time-geography graphs in order to acknowledge the complexity of the mobilities.

We also draw on the notion of affordance (Gibson 1986) as a way of developing a time-geography perspective and its focus on spatio-temporal restrictions. Gibson's affordance theory presents us with a relational perspective on use and the perceivable properties that enable us to do things. An affordance is, thus, what an environment provides or '*offers* the animal' (Gibson 1986, 127). It also describes the relation between the animal and the environment, a relation that is involved in the forming of the abilities of the animal as well as the qualities of the environments. We will later come back to a discussion of the recreational runner as such an '*animal*'. We would, however, already like to suggest that there is an interesting affinity between the notion of affordance and time-geography. If

affordance theory focuses on use in terms of possibilities, time-geography has often focused on its constraints, and as we shall see, the empirical findings of this article seem to suggest that these are co-dependent. The spatio-temporal constraints of everyday life often trigger us to investigate new affordances of our environment, and new affordances in turn rewrite our perception of what is possible. There is, in short, as Heft puts it, 'a co-evolution of animal and environment' (Heft 2001, 147); affordances are not pre-existing in the individual or in the environment, they are produced through continuous negotiation.

2. Material and method

Empirical material was obtained through diary-interviews with urban and suburban recreational runners in Sweden. This method (originally developed by Zimmerman and Wieder 1977) was used to obtain detailed knowledge of the everyday context affecting the interviewees' runs, but also to obtain the details and rhythms of the exercise itself (Latham 2003; see also Haldrup 2011; Stjernborg, Wretstrand, and Tesfahuney 2015).

The participants were asked to keep a diary of all their runs for three to five weeks. They were also asked to comment on the role of the outdoor environment, as well as anything else that affected their run, exemplified in the instructions as traffic, other runners, vistas, or being 'in one's own bubble' and therefore not noticing much of their surroundings. We also stressed that they were welcome to write as short or as long an entry as they wanted. In addition, we asked them to note the date and time, weather, place, roughly how far they ran and the duration of the run. The study was conducted in May-August 2016. We launched a call for participants via Facebook and targeted groups of slow runners or beginners in particular (e.g. 'Team Snail', a Swedish Facebook group for slow runners with several thousands of members). We framed the research as a study of 'jogging', in an attempt to attract beginners and slow runners, as a complement to more experienced runners. During the diary period, we kept contact with the participants via e-mail, with gentle reminders and encouraging messages in order to minimise the risk of dropout.

We received 48 diaries, of which 39 had at least three entries. The entries varied from concise run-logs (~500 words) to long essays (up to 11,000 words). In the interviews, we decided to concentrate on the 22 runners from the three main metropolitan regions of Sweden (Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö) who had submitted at least three diary entries. This resulted in a lower required frequency of exercise than in other comparable studies (Cook, Shaw, and Simpson 2016; Hitchings and Latham 2017b). However, this reflected our wish to capture recreational runners with different levels of experience of the exercise and with different ambitions.

Seven males and 15 females (aged 25 to 58) were interviewed shortly after they had submitted their diaries, in sessions lasting between 30 minutes and one hour. We initiated the interview by asking about their experiences with the diary-keeping itself. Only a few reported difficulties in keeping a diary (or making an entry relatively soon after the run), and several of the runners reported that the entire process had increased their awareness of their own run (cf. Milligan, Bingley, and Gatrell 2005). None claimed that the diary had affected their exercise. Prior to the study, we tried keeping a running diary ourselves and we had the same experiences of the method.

The interview questions were partly customised to the individual diary but aimed essentially to tease out the time-geography of the runner's practice (including time-constraints due to other activities, family, etc.), the affordances looked for, their ideal places for running, and how they perceived themselves as runners.

Two of the runners defined themselves as beginners and two as serious (or experienced) recreational runners. The rest of the runners ($n = 18$) used the term 'recreational runner' (*motionär* in Swedish). This is a wide category in terms of running skills, but it does mean that they share the same motivation for running: when asked why they label themselves as recreational runners the respondents stated that they run to maintain physical and mental well-being, and stressed the importance of this exercise for their general wellbeing. No one reported running in a club and only two

participated in running groups (on an irregular basis). The cohort was dominated by well-educated native Swedes: this unfortunate self-selection could be a result of the method of time-consuming diary keeping.

If the group is homogenous in terms of culture, it nevertheless holds a wide variety of recreational runners. The frequency of running varies between daily runs, those who run every third day, and those who run once or twice and then take a break for five to ten days. The speed varies between under five to over eight minutes/km on shorter runs (3–6 km). Some didn't report the duration of the run at all, whereas others provided detailed information on time, speed, wind and temperature, which in itself hints at different attitudes towards the practice. Yet, this difference in speed, experience, ambition and frequency does not translate to different patterns in terms of places used (and preferred) for running. As this paper focuses on the latter issue, we do not emphasise the differences between beginners and experienced runners in our analysis.

The full transcripts were coded, focusing primarily on details concerning the exercise, preferred environment, rhythms of the practice and time constraints in everyday life. The transcripts were anonymised, although age, gender and location are revealed here in order to aid in interpreting the material.

3. The time-geography of recreational running

The results from the diary-interviews are presented in four sections. Initially, the formative role of time-constraints on the practice, and the importance of family life for most of our runners are discussed in order to introduce the reader to our relational time-geographic approach. This is followed by an analysis of the three modes of running/places, which we have detected (see Haldrup 2011 for a similar presentation of a time-geographic analysis).

Everyday life, family and running

The time-spatial constraints of everyday life play a crucial role in when and where the interviewees go for a run. The interviewees were at different stages of life (students, parents of small children, middle-aged and retirees), but they all reported limitations in their daily geographical reach (due to time or mobility constraints), making their everyday geography key to their outdoor exercise. Most of the runners claimed they would do more running if they had the time. However, running was also appreciated precisely because it can be *adapted* to the time constraints and places within reach during hectic weekdays. In other words, the way of running was affected by the time and place available for the exercise.

Family, especially children, affected the rhythms of running. Most of the interviewees were parents and they appreciated running precisely because it could be adapted to their tight (and sometimes erratic) schedules. Matilda (45) felt guilty that her aerobics classes 'stole time' from the family and instead started to run early in the morning before the family woke up (and before the gym opened). Similarly, Emma (46) started to run once she became a mother and struggled to find the time to go to aerobics classes.

Adaptation of running to family life modified the rhythm of the exercise. Our interviewees exemplified how the balance of running and childcare differs with the age of the child, as one reported running with a pram, another runs around the playground, two run with their children accompanying on bicycles, one runs back and forth a few kilometres to check that everything is all right at home or in the playground, and several of the interviewees run together with their older children. An alternative strategy is to run when the child is asleep or at a leisure activity. These strategies affected the selection of place and the practice, which Tina (42) illustrated by reporting that she (unwillingly) runs on asphalt paths with limited topography to make it easy for her child to cycle along without interrupting her run:

'He does not like cycling on gravel, which makes him extra whiny ... actually the fact is that I don't want to be disturbed. So, he sort of has to manage on his own and just cycle along. If he's like "Oh no you have to help me, I can't get up this hill here" ... then I have to be interrupted as well ... '

This demonstrates how the exercise is not simply inserted in narrow time-windows but is part of a negotiation concerning a joint time-space that also affects the kind of exercise possible. As one of the interviewees said, 'I'm a father of three, and you use what you have.' (Anders, 41). This interviewee refers both to the time he has for running and, in effect, also its geography and what kind of running he does. In the case of Tina, these time constraints, and the struggle to coordinate everyday life, differ between weekdays, the weekend and holidays. This in turn affects the geography and affordances of her running path. A weekly rhythm was less clearly pronounced for other runners, especially those who were students.

The importance of the neighbourhood was evident in the interviews and diaries. All runners except one reported running from their own doorstep. However, for practical reasons, for the experience and/or for the sake of the exercise, the runners also run in other places beyond the neighbourhood. Mats (54) said:

'What I'm looking for is running in the forest ... [which makes it] a bit difficult in the environment where I am now, in Bjärred, that is, this suburban environment with asphalt roads in a square pattern and long straight sections where you can see 500 metres ahead and there is very little variation. So, I am looking for what I described first, and find the latter more difficult, but I go for that as well.'

This quote was expanded upon later in the interview, when Mats described his suburban neighbourhood in very negative terms (his preferred place close to home is called the 'damn swamp' in his diary), but he also reiterated his statement: if needed, he can run anywhere. However, when he has the opportunity (primarily during the weekends), he aims for other places for his exercise.

The rhythms of running for Irene (42), who lives in downtown Malmö, illustrates the divided geography:

'I would like to have more variation in my running, sort of, because it's also fun to get out and get to run in different places. But then there is a threshold for me, to go somewhere else in order to run there when I may as well just run straight out the door. ... [it] doesn't feel very ecologically or environmentally sustainable. ... However, I run in the countryside too. We have a house in the countryside ... an hour by car from here. There you get to run in the forest ...'

The diary and interview material revealed that Irene also runs in places she visits as a tourist, which she greatly appreciates. Three specific geographies of running thus came to the foreground in the diary-interviews. First, the importance of the neighbourhood for regular runs was emphasised. All but one interviewee ran in their neighbourhood or started running from home at least once. Secondly, primarily car-based travel to forests (or a second home) was mentioned and practiced by 18 of the runners during the time period. Finally, 11 runners reported a fun run in their diary and eight mentioned a run during a tourist visit (other than a fun run). While there was an almost even distribution between runs in the neighbourhood and forest runs, the tourist/fun runs comprised more than 10% of the reported runs. However, this was not just a matter of different places, but also of different and complementary practices. We will now look more closely at these three exercises and how they complement each other, in order to discuss how different places and temporalities are woven together through the activity of running.

'The most boring route in the world'

The participants mentioned the importance of a route for routine runs starting from home or from a place within walking distance from home. This stretch was frequently described as dull, and many runners stated that they would appreciate a less repetitive run, but there were also comments that revealed a certain appreciation of these mundane routes. Jens (34), who lives in central Gothenburg, returned several times in the interview to the need for a 'free flow' in running and claimed that he

does not have any other demands on the urban environment. When asked about the qualities of his neighbourhood, he replied:

‘There is a place where you can run alongside a main arterial road which, if you had to describe it, you would say it’s like the most boring route in the world, as an experience. But since there are no obstacles I run there very often, since, well because it’s possible and because I know that if I run there, I don’t have to think about traffic and things like that.’

This statement by Jens was made in comparison with other places and times which he runs, as will be shown in the following sections.

Mona (42) prefers to run in the forest but usually runs in her neighbourhood in a suburb of Stockholm. When she characterised the surroundings in interview, she focused on the topography:

- The most boring road in the world, it’s called Spångavägen, is a fairly wide motorway with quite a lot of traffic. Though the hill is good ...

So why do you find it boring?

- Well, there are so many cars and all the time there is this constant shuttle of cars just whooshing by. There are houses, asphalt, very, what should I say, sterile.

Do you sometimes run there? On that hill?

- Yes, I run there pretty often. It’s very good for workouts and you can cocoon yourself in music or a favourite app.

David (35), who ‘runs for fun’, to relax and to get his ‘own time’ described a similar geography. He frequently runs a route next to a motorway which has ‘no additional value except getting out and gathering my thoughts before a weekend with the family’. The advantage of this route is that it is part of his routine and he knows how much time it will take.

Anna (30) described her usual route in her diary:

‘It is my usual “I am out of ideas route”, it is an easy route, 100% asphalt, mainly just to get it done. So then, I go on this run which is actually the most boring one in the history of the world. I try to avoid it when possible, but it’s ok when I don’t do it too often.’

This comment was in stark contrast to other diary entries in which she described the energy boost of running in the forest. Still, her everyday route is valuable as she knows the distance and the time needed for a run, and it starts at her doorstep. So, while Anna, like the other runners, likes variation, the route around the neighbourhood is an important complement.

‘The most boring route in the world’ is a safe route in suburban neighbourhoods, along cycle paths or empty urban streets: there are no (or few) cars interrupting the run and no unexpected events or unknown terrain. Hence, the runner does not have to focus on the surface, on the traffic or even on the time. ‘The world’s most boring route’ is not just an expression characterising a site, but also a specific kind of exercise that is partly shaped by the time constraints of the day. The runners know the time needed for a run (some of them down to the minute), which is a necessity to fit it into their daily time budget. This illustrates how running, a flexible exercise, is ironically dependent on a kind of run that is controlled in detail. This was apparent in the diaries when participants tried a new route, which turned out to be longer than expected and thus intruded on subsequent activity. For instance, Richard (50) reported a run during a holiday visit with his family: ‘I thought the route would be about 5 km, but it was a bit longer [6.4 km], so a bit stressful towards the end in order to get back for breakfast and the programme for the day.’ This quote reveals the tight time margins for the activity, and hence the value of a well-known stretch.

While the experienced runners managed to use these routes as complementary exercise, this was not necessarily the case for the less experienced runners. Irene (42) stated in the interview that she

goes for ‘the simple places’ in the vicinity of her house due to a lack of time. Irene is a beginner, and for her, a ‘simple’ place is one that is not too challenging. The same goes for Gabriella’s route around her neighbourhood; it is a compromise during weekdays but is not ideal exercise, which could partly explain why her runs in the neighbourhood are only one-third as long as those she undertakes in her preferred environment. The stretch can be boring and mundane or, for the more experienced runner, a means for a certain kind of run focusing on free flow (as seen above). However, this was only one side of the participants’ running, or one piece of the geography of their exercise, and they described it in a different manner to their forest runs. For instance, Richard described his exercise in the city in a matter-of-fact manner, whereas his descriptions of his runs in the forest or in nature reserves reflected nature romanticism with comments on wild animals, vistas, smells, the fresh air and so on. Similarly, Mats (54) described his ordinary boring route and his preferred running environment (the forest) as ‘two entirely different worlds’. His diary revealed how he tries to create his own bubble when running in the suburban environment, while the notes on forest runs included comments on vistas, the beauty of the forest, berries and animals encountered. The word ‘inspiring’ appeared frequently in the latter case but was never used to describe his ordinary route in his neighbourhood. Hence, the everyday environment offers a certain kind of run, adjusted to limited time slots and to the urban environment. It might afford a free flow run but might also be uninspiring and unfulfilling from a longer-term perspective. Therefore, whether the everyday environment is perceived as a resource or a barrier is likely dependent on how easily accessible the complementary places for running are.

Running in the forest

‘[It is] Mother’s Day and my wish was to get to run in a beautiful place ... Hence I start the day with a cross-country run in the forest around the castle Maltesholm. This is a much more demanding route than my usual run in the park. Over wet meadows, steep hills and past small streams, the ground shifting between grass, pebbles and trails only walked by deer. Soft and nice, it feels good for the body to run here. I am running along winding trails through carpets of wild garlic and over soft beech wood hillsides thick with leaves from last year. On the way I meet grazing deer, small birds rising suddenly just ahead of me and, unexpectedly – another runner. I am running to the sounds of birdsong and my own breath, stopping only to snap a photo. When I am almost home again I notice how beautiful the wild garlic is, blooming on the hill, and then I stop. Satisfied after 6 kilometres, and I also get the chance to harvest some tasty wild garlic to use for garlic mayo.’ (Irene, 42, diary)

The forest run has a long tradition in Sweden, not least due to its historical connection with hiking and skiing (Qviström 2013, 2016; Svensson 2016). Despite our focus on urban runners the diaries and interviews clearly illustrate how the forest run is embedded in the Swedish culture of outdoor recreation and leisure. Sara (58), who is also involved in orienteering, said in her interview:

‘Why do I run in the forest? My dad used to run with me [in the forest], so that’s the way it was. He is the one who taught me to run or took time to be with me. And now my dad has been gone for a couple of years, so it’s a lot about that as well I think, to sort of think about my dad while I am running.’

Lisa (26) started to run with her father too and mentioned that in the previous year she and her father used to go to the forest ‘practically every weekend’ by car. Lisa does not mind running on suburban pavements, and yet she described the forest as the ideal place for running. As mentioned previously, a number of our respondents run with their children, which allows them to practice a forest ideal and develop the skills for running in the forest.

All of the runners referred to the forest run as a given or hegemonic ideal. Several of the runners reiterated, time after time, that it is the forest they are looking for when they are searching for somewhere to run. Only one of the participants described herself as an urban runner (which she explicitly and repeatedly compared to the forest runner). The other runners all preferred the forest, despite the fact that we aimed for a decidedly urban cohort in the interviews.

However, the forest also offers particular affordances and invites to another form of exercise than the urban environment. For instance, Mona (42) reported in her diary:

'The forest offers a resistance, demanding that you are present and alert. You have to plan your run. It is quite the opposite of asphalt and, worse still, the treadmill! The treadmill is decidedly king of monotony and humdrum. After a run in the forest, your body is tired all over. Since running in untrodden terrain, it demands the use of the entire body and not just the legs. You jump over rocks, step over logs, leap across ditches and run up and down slopes and hills, the whole body is engaged in running of that kind.'

In her diary, Mona characterised forest running by comparing it not only to trail running, but also to (long-distance) exercise on country roads. These practices were described as complementary and interrelated exercises. Another participant, Malin (40), was asked to elaborate on the difference between running on streets and in an urban forest. She replied:

'You have to be more present, in the here and now, when running in the forest. You have to be aware of every single little rock and root ahead because otherwise you trip. In an urban environment you don't have to think that way, you can just keep going. So, there's a pretty big difference.'

The forest can offer other qualities too. When asked why he prefers to run on forest trails in undulating terrain, Richard (50) answered:

'More varied underfoot, mainly, and then also more hilly country, it's ... , there's more variation – it's more ... it's more playful! Running on flat asphalt is about toiling in a sense, and it can easily become, well focused on speed, on performance etcetera. Without really wanting it to ... And even if you look at it from a strict workout point of view, if it is really hilly, it turns into a kind of interval training without having to force oneself to run faster or slower, and that's something I really appreciate.'

This aspect of the forest run was also mentioned by Malin in her diary:

'When I run in the forest, I drop the focus on performance and time goals and adapt the running to the body's feelings and what is happening around me.'

The forest is experienced through running with and through the feet. Smells, sounds and vistas offer impressions, but do not intrude or force themselves upon the runner as, for instance, traffic does. Therefore, provided that the runner does not have to focus on how to find their way back, they have the opportunity for full concentration on running and the terrain, with voluntary (mental) breaks for taking in the view.

While 'the world's most boring route' may afford a free flow, the forest affords resistance. The topography and the roots, stones and puddles on the trail require focus from the runner (cf. Brown 2017). This could explain why running beyond marked trails was not cited as the given ideal: the runners did not want to pay too much attention to finding their way. In addition, they worried about the risk of getting injured in the 'middle of nowhere'. Instead, marked trails with varied and challenging terrain and varying surfaces seemed to be closer to the ideal for most runners.

This forest ideal is thus as much a matter of quality of exercise as it is of an inspiring environment, although the two are interdependent: an inspiring environment can make the runner keep going for a longer time or run more frequently.

Running as a tourist

The diaries provided several stories of coping with running in the city, most of which focused on the difficulties of coordinating running within the weave of the urban rhythm (see also Cook, Shaw, and Simpson 2016; Barnfield 2016; Hitchings and Latham 2017b). Almost all of these stories described what the runners try to *avoid*. This partly explains why we failed to identify urban running as a specific exercise. However, fun runs and tourist runs differed; during these runs the participants had a much greater acceptance toward, or even embraced, the rhythms of the city. According to Larsen (2019), fun runs are designed for tourism, so the two categories could not be easily kept apart. However, tourist runs can also be relatively unplanned and individual endeavours, whereas a fun run

is a mass event which, for several of our interviewees, plays an important role as a source of motivation or inspiration months before the actual event. With these differences noted, we nevertheless lump them together as they create liminal places beyond the weekly routine.

The fact that tourist runs differ so markedly from ordinary runs gives runners an opportunity for experimentation. For instance, Elin reported that she always listens to the same music and prefers not to change her route (or routine). Her practice is so firmly established that she can measure her performance based on how far she has come in the music at certain places along her route. When on a holiday run, she wrote in her diary: 'I took the opportunity to try a different playlist, since everything else was also different.' A holiday run offered a possibility to try another music mix, but she also described it as poor exercise and a great (tourist) experience. At the hotel, she also tried a treadmill for the first time. Irene (42) noted in her diary that she easily gets stuck in a routine regarding where to run. However, she went for a run along the canals in London during a weekend trip, which inspired her to try out a new (more urban) route in Malmö when she came back. Other experiments or adjustments are perhaps less striking. Mats (54) doesn't usually run in the morning but did so during two visits to southern Europe to avoid the heat. The route of his run is also much more urban, which forced him to run on hard surfaces. Yet he appreciates the experience of running in new places, and after one of the runs, he notes in his concise diary that it was 'a run to remember'. Even more subtle is the shift in the running practice of Pernilla (34), who normally uses apps to measure and document her exercise. During a run on a weekend abroad, she only brought her watch. Such experiments, even if unintended, could spark changes in the geography of running or in the practice, even though we, as expected, only notice a few examples of this in a study that covers a few weeks.

For some runners this liminal role was more pronounced during fun runs. As noted above, most runners had either taken part in a fun run or had gone running during a holiday (or work-related visit) in another town. In both cases, new paths are trod, under conditions quite different from the routine at home. Fun runs were reported to be important for the runners, even if they only took part in one per year. The run can be an inspiring event itself or a goal for exercise, as was the case for Nils (43) who regards his annual competition as an 'excuse to keep in shape'.

Gabriella's experience of a city race illustrates the special role of the tourist/fun run. She was very clear about her preference for running in the forest and her aversion to running in the city:

'If I had to choose, I would choose the forest. I'm not that fond of the urban environment ... People are in the way and bikes are in the way and cars are in the way and it interferes, disrupting events and bad smells and combustion and ... and asphalt! Boring!'

However, shortly thereafter, she commented upon her experience of taking part in a city semi-marathon (in Berlin) for the first time:

- It was an experience. Urban environment, asphalt, flat and straight. A lot of people and so much fun.

What is the difference between running alone in an urban environment and running these races?

- From a runner's perspective it was not much fun, but as races go it was a very fun race! There is a difference!

So why do you run the races?

- Social. Meeting people, experiences, having a look around. It's fun! So, it's two different things. My running and then the races.

Gabriella was not the only one to make this distinction. Jens (34) wrote in his introduction on his demands on the surrounding environment:

'... I want few obstacles that demand a break in the flow. Traffic lights and the like are a good example of that. When I visit new places, I often use running as a way to discover the place, and then traffic lights can be accepted if it means I can see more of the city/the place.'

Some of the runners described tourist running as a poor substitute for their ordinary exercise. In general, the (urban) tourist runs were appreciated as tourism, whereas the exercise itself was deemed poor. Nevertheless, the diaries revealed that tourist visits inspired them to try out other environments that they usually wouldn't run in. Tourist runs and fun runs were appreciated as a way to experience new places or (when it comes to fun runs) as an enticement for ordinary exercise. More regular travel could, however, be regarded as an obstacle. Emma (46) had been travelling to Copenhagen on a weekly basis, which hindered her running. In her case, the new environment turned from tourism to everyday, with rhythms of travel and different environments that clashed with her ambitious exercise program:

'It breaks these habits one might have, such as these days I run intervals, these days there's only this type of nice exercise, these days I do fitness training or well that, that routine disappeared and the focus shifted a lot more to logistics. ... And that's when I dropped the whole long-distance running, because then I couldn't cope working the way I do, so much travelling and then running towards a race and then performing there.'

Her experience was also reflected in a number of other quotes, indicating that the search for a time-window is equally dependent on the place and the expected exercise. Thus, we cannot separate time constraints, the rhythms of the practice itself and the affordances of the place in an analysis of the potential for running.

4. Concluding discussion

In this study we identified three ways of practising recreational running, which in terms of the interplay between exercise and place, could not be more different. They varied in terms of the exercise itself, aesthetic preferences and bodily engagement with the surroundings and also in terms of their role in weekly or annual rhythms. Furthermore, we identified interplays between the three kinds of exercises. This interplay, and the complex time-geography of recreational running, has not been reported previously. In this final section we comment only briefly on the specific places brought to the forefront by our interviewees. While the results are likely to be coloured by the selection, in which well-educated and ethnic Swedes are overrepresented, we argue that the specific geography described is nevertheless of relevance in the Scandinavian context with its relatively small cities and strong forest ideal within outdoor recreation. Yet, the theoretical implications of our study have a wider reach. Therefore, we focus primarily on the time-geography of the practice and its theoretical implications for how to interpret the role of place for recreational activities, which are not bound to a specific site.

The three different geographies clearly fulfilled different needs. The home-area run is always individually recognised and stabilised, as the runner knows its material peculiarities by heart (and foot), which also makes it easy to predict the investments needed for a run in terms of space, time and energy. The forest run might also be well known but unfolds to a larger extent *through* running and by the means of a 'categorical recognition' (i.e. the recognition of a specific *type* of environment, see Brighenti 2010, 53), rather than through personal knowledge of every stone and branch. Different aspects of the terrain are recognised as a specific 'sort of situation' (Nilsson 2010). The tourist run is about the juxtaposition of the familiar and the unfamiliar, which enables the exploration and discovery of new affordances.

When aiming for free flow, the runners frequently mentioned the value of boring, mundane places. The lure of such an 'abstract world' in outdoor recreation could easily be interpreted to mean that place does not matter (Jackson [1957] 1958; see also Bale 2004 on the abstract space of the stadium). Our study suggests another interpretation. These 'boring' or uneventful routes have specific qualities related to running and to the rhythms of everyday life, although having only this kind of running/place would not be sufficient, at least not for a long-term commitment.

The practice of running is dependent on a combination of place, time and exercise. The respondents were recreational runners, and for them this rhythm of different places/exercise seemed to be primarily driven by the need for motivation through varying experiences and runs.

The study shows that time-geography constraints do not necessarily obstruct recreational running. In fact, some participants reported that such constraints had turned them into runners in the first place. However, the constraints interact with running practice and create a certain kind of run. The diary-interview approach revealed that running required planning *and* flexibility, both in terms of finding a time-space for the run and the exercise itself.

The relational co-creation of time-constraints and the practice can be further elaborated upon using affordance theory. From our findings, it is clear that the recognition (and thus production) of new affordances sometimes thrives on constraints. In other words, we identified a creative aspect of the absences required for a pocket of local order. When runners cannot run in a familiar place, they learn from new spots they try. It is because they do not have time to run in the forest that they get to know their 'home area run' to the point where they can predict it down to the minute, thus enabling short but regular runs during a busy working week. Moments or situations that previously did not afford running now seem able to do so, i.e. pockets of local order are produced by the way in which spatio-temporal constraints and specific affordances work in each other's favour. The different practices thus feed into each other, giving the activity of running a greater fluidity where continuity and change can be ensured through the subsequent recognition/production of new affordances. As people work through the time-spatial constraints of their everyday life, they explore and expand the possible niche/s of running. Differentiating the time-spaces of running might thus actually be the very thing that allows the practice to grow into a habit, and perhaps even into a life-long 'career'. Running is an activity that, like many others, depends on an ecology of places (or niches), which in turn help the individual to develop new sets of affordances and expand this specific activity both in space and time (by establishing different pockets of local order). The runner is produced together with their environment. However, this environment cannot be pinned down as a specific place but must rather be described as an ecology of interdependent places.

The need for complementary places poses a methodological challenge in its attempt to map urban qualities for recreational mobilities or ecosystem services for health and wellbeing. A complex array of different places and infrastructures is required, none of which is crucial, but the combined rhythm (or composite) is essential. Thus, while Blue (2017) notes the need for 'eurythmia' of exercise with other weekly practices, this study adds the need for a eurythmia of different kinds of running and their related geographies. We argue that other outdoor recreational activities also need to be examined from this perspective, in order to differentiate their seemingly elusive geographies. Recreational running, like any everyday activity, is about weaving together different situations and about exploring how affordances can be handled within, or developed, through the constraints of everyday life. It might thus be wise for planning to investigate the relations between the different time-geographies involved more closely and be careful not to prioritise certain spatial types before the ecology of their existence is better known.

Finally, as our elaborations on productive constraints, eurythmia and interdependent pockets of local order illustrate, applying a relational approach to time-geography facilitates a closer look at the interplay between the practice and its complex time-geography. Thus, we recommend further studies in which time-geography concepts and theories are used in a creative manner in order to capture the complexity of everyday mobilities. We suggest that one way to develop time-geography further (not least the bodily and material aspects that sit at the heart of the theory, cf. Hägerstrand 2009), would be to set up more studies of how space-time constraints and affordances co-evolve both in relation to recreational running and to other activities.

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