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# **Forest-Walks – An Intangible Heritage in Movement: A Walk-and-Talk Study of a Social Practice Tradition**

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## **Introduction**

The right of public access in the countryside in Sweden entitles people to walk in the forest, to pick berries and mushrooms, and to engage in outdoor recreational activities irrespective of forest ownership. This right has benefitted many generations of Swedes. However, the right of public access requires both knowledge of and affection for the natural environment and its wildlife in addition to familiarity with forestry practice. According to the Swedish Forest Agency (2007), half of the Swedish population visits the forest once a week and interests in outdoor recreation, tourism, and outdoor education are increasing. The forest is Sweden's most important outdoor environment and covers about 70 per cent of the land area in Sweden; comparatively, forests cover a third of all land in the world. According to Statistics Sweden, 78 per cent of the Swedish population walk in the forest at least once a year, and the percentage of people who often walk in the forest increased sharply over the years 1990–1999. Thus, there is reason to look into *why* people choose to walk in the forest and *how they experience* the forest-walks, which is the main purpose of this article.

Using a walk-and-talk study with 12 participants, this article explores people's sayings, doings and relatings regarding the practice of forest-walks. We aim to expand on practise theory, building on the work of Stephen Kemmis and through the lenses of the phenomenological concepts of intersubjectivity and intentionality. Drawing on Laurajane Smith's previous work on intangible heritage, we claim that forest-walks are to be recognized as such.

The history of how to define intangible heritage starts out in 1972 when the World Heritage Convention was embodied. The website of the UNESCO World Heritage List displays this definition (November 12, 2018):

Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritages are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. What makes the concept of World Heritage exceptional is its universal application.

This convention has undergone critique lately within the emerging field of critical heritage studies for its claims of the “universality” values represented in the convention. Laurajane Smith (99, 3) sees the principle of universality as part of the World Heritage Conventions authorizing heritage discourse (AHD), which both lists and defines heritage in a narrow and specific way through a lens of a Western European tradition (Smith 99; Smith & Akagawa 3) However, Rodney Harrison (114-117) argues that it is because of its claim to representing universal heritage values that allowed the possibility for the Indigenous, the minorities and the marginalised people to take place within heritage practises. The world heritage committee has constantly sought to redefine its definition of heritage since it was adopted in 1972. This process has had a profound effect on global practices of heritage management over the intervening decades and on contemporary definitions of heritage where heritage increasingly has shifted away from a concern with “things” to a concern with cultures, traditions and the intangible. In 2003 the UNESCO Convention of the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was initiated (ICHC). This new convention extended the commodification of heritage as a visitable spectacle which had been initiated through the World Heritage list to emphasise the *cultural spaces* of intangible heritage instead. Discussion of the relationship between the tangible and intangible heritage has been vivid and will probably continue indefinitely.

A crucial difference between the intangible and tangible heritage is that the intangible is a bearer of a living heritage. It might rely on ancient traditions, but is still in use and probably changed over time in a way that prevents the future from being predicted. In this article, we draw on Laurajane Smith and Emma Waterton (292) claims that all heritage is intangible and cannot be defined by its materiality or non-materiality. Instead, it is what is made through performance and negotiation of identity, values and a sense of place that matter. We follow this line considering what the

participants do while walking in the forest and consider forest-walking as a living heritage and as a heritage in movement.

Smith (49) develops these ideas in the publication, *Documentation of Intangible Cultural Heritage as a Tool for Community's Safeguarding Activities*, where she claims that heritage should be deemed as a moment of action: "It is a cultural process concerned with making the present meaningful and providing individuals, societies and communities with a sense of place" (49). In Smith's understanding, intangible heritage is a personal negotiation of identity, place, and memory. Seeing heritage as processes or performances includes the creation of meanings and values. These perspectives will be used in our study as we examine how the present is meaningful for the individual discovering a sense of place.

Within ICHC (Article 2), definitions of intangible cultural heritage encompass practices, representations, expressions and knowledge "that communities, groups and in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage." The same message is also expressed in Article 12. The ICOMOS Burra Charter from Australia says, "Conservation, interpretation and management of a place should provide for the participation of people for whom the place has significant associations and meanings, or who have social, spiritual or other cultural responsibilities for the place." In this article we will argue that forest-walking is heritage making, a personal negotiation of identity, place, and memory, and a performance of a sense of place. Also, forest-walking is in line with the above mentioned articles as it is part of a community practise as well as an individual participation in "heritage making."

### **The relationship between humans and forests in a historical perspective**

The importance of forests as a natural resource for the daily life of humans cannot be overestimated: wood for building, different plants such as berries and mushrooms as a source of nutrition, medical ingredients, and for fossil-based energy and renewable energies like biofuels. Forests also came to signify power, being a place for authorities, royalties, nobilities and the rich. By extension, people and even countries, which had forest resources, could build up a fleet, start wars and create empires, Ritter and Dauksta (vi) highlight.

But the forest has also been engendered with other values of a more religious and mythical character and people's relationships with forests and trees are often connected with spiritual and religious traditions and values. Not only in Sweden, but in many parts of the northern hemisphere, paganism and religion have followed each other and transformed during the epochs. This is seen in natural environments as former living and working sites, sites of sacrifice and rites, graveyards, fortresses, ancient routes and rock engravings. Agata Konczal (190) claims that the forest can be the key to understand a society and to find its impact in beliefs, legends, songs, worldviews and places. Mythical creatures, good and bad, have been situated in forests and therefore the forest has been perceived as both a safe and a dangerous place. Konczal (192) also points out that forests ought to be regarded as an ambiguous environment since it is shaped by human and nature. These two different interests of the forest (the economic and the spiritual) have collided at least since the 1600's and the conflict has been kept alive today.

On the one hand, there was central power, the national interest, which coincided with forest companies. They wanted the forest for farming and distribution, later for the export of timber. On the other hand, there were the common people. They considered the forest in the perspective of the individual and the village. Hunting and food for sheep and cows and as forage food were more important for their freedom and independence. In the 1600's, the forest was not regarded as significant but known for its darkness and gloom, mythical beliefs that go back to pagan times. The tendency continued into the 1700s and does not turn until the beginning of the 19th century when the romantic movement makes its way. In poems and paintings, the Swedish forest is now presented as something crucial for the national identity (Sörilin 130) A third way of using and looking at forests and landscapes begins through the impact of changing working conditions which enables leisure life.

In 1815, the Napoleonic war ended and throughout Europe, new romantic, nationalistic ideals were fashioned. The wild and untouched nature and folklore culture became an ideal and was regarded with emotions. This bourgeois way of seeing the forest and the landscape is different from the farmers', the hunters' or the fishermen's. Instead the view of an outdoor leisure life is growing and developing. As industrial society emerged, leisure life also becomes more and more important. The romantic

values of forests, wilderness and a recreational outdoor life is strengthened both in the personal lives of the urban people, but also in the national myth of what was regarded as a typically Swedish (or rather Scandinavian) way of life.

At present there is an increasing awareness, both internationally and nationally, of forests' positive impact on human beings which can be viewed in Liz O'Brien's and Eva Ritter's and Dainis Dauksta's articles. The connections between forest values and human well-being has been highlighted in international research by Eeva Karjalainen et al as well as in national studies in Sweden by Ylva Lundell and Ann Dolling, and Eva Ritter & Dainis Dauksta, as is documentation and utilisation of forest-related traditions. According to Elisabeth Johann (9), there is a need to provide society with missing or omitted data about social awareness, knowledge and understanding of forests. This includes cultural dimensions such as myths, ideologies and identities. Likewise, in the continuing debate of sustainable forestry, we need to take into account the ancient cultural and spiritual link between forests and human beings, Dauksta and Ritter (vi) claim.

Today, people's relationships with forests are strongly connected to wellbeing, physically and mentally. In Sweden, social values of forests have recently been given new consideration through in the policies of Swedish Forest Agency (2013). In line with the agency, social values are formed by people's experiences of forests. This includes recreation, leisure and tourism, education, health and wellbeing, aesthetic perspectives, heritage and identity and good environment.

Regarding children and young people, the healthy aspect of outdoor activities is emphasized. Even at the end of the 18th century, Jean Jacques Rousseau claimed that children have a natural way of moving, and that their capacity to learn successfully comes mainly through their experiences of reality. Accordingly, he considered nature to be the ideal place to raise young people to become free and independent individuals. These thoughts about outdoor life and the good impact of the fresh air on the younger generations motivated outdoor life during the 19th century. The curricula for schools in 1865 stated that children, even in rainy and harsh weather, should spend their leisure time outdoors (Quennerstedt 181-192). Ellen Key (1899, 1996) followed these tracks, inspired not only by Rousseau but also by the Arts and Crafts movement with central figures like John Ruskin and William Morris. Key believed children to be individuals

dependent on creative activities, and that adults have a responsibility to create such environments. Today's leisure movements (scouting, agency of outdoor life etc.) still follow these ideas. The impact of childhood experiences is also shown in our case studies together with ancient connections with forests. This is still to be seen in people's relationships with forests and, in particular, people's informal behaviour in forests such as forest-walks which we will discuss further on.

### **Folklore tradition's impact on people's experiences of forests today**

There is a long tradition of folklore related to the forest in the Scandinavian countries. Some of the most widespread tales are the ones of trolls and the little elves (called Tomtenisse), the forest-wife (called Huldra), the evil spirit of the water (called Näcken), and the fairies. Tales of these different creatures have re-emerged and transformed through the years in, for instance, *The Lord of the Rings* (John Ronald Reuer Tolkien, 1954-55). In Sweden, authors of children's books have used the folklore tradition. The well-known Astrid Lindgren uses some of the creatures in *Ronja Robbersdaughter* (1984). The most famous for using trolls, elves, and fairies in Swedish children's books is John Bauer (1907) in his widely reproduced pictures. These pictures have had a great influence on people's view of forests. Our study's twelve participants all related to the forest as a "troll-forest" (*trollskog*), and all of them could describe a troll-forest – large, old fir trees with moss all over the ground and covering big boulders. The forest is embedded in silence and mysticism. Notions of forests in Sweden are transmitted in various ways, and the rich tradition of children's books that include forests, trolls, elves, and fairies derived from folklore might bring a sense of magic and mystique to the experience of the forest among the population in general. However, there are also ongoing trends of detective stories and thrillers in TV, movies, and books, quite a few of which take place in or nearby the forest, thus replacing the sense of magic with a sense of fear, or of delight mingled with terror.

### **Theorizing forest-walks**

International and national research on social values of forests has hitherto mainly focused on outdoor recreation in urban forests, Bjärstig and Kvastegård claim (17). Our study differs since it was carried out in a large rural forest outside an urban

environment, but still close to numerous villages. From the aforementioned statistics, we know that Swedes are a forest-loving people who like to walk in the forest. This study investigates *why* people are engaged in forest-walks and *what* they experience while walking. The aim is to understand the individual motives for walking in the forest from a heritage perspective and thus to raise awareness of forest-walks as traditions of social practices and thus to broaden the perspectives of intangible heritage.

In order to understand forest-walking as an intangible heritage, we consider forest-walking as social practice, drawing on practice theory as framed by Stephen Kemmis et al, in *Changing Practices, Changing Education*. Communities of practice, a term coined in *Situated Learning Legitimate Participation* by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, were summarized by Etienne Wenger-Trayner in 2015 as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.” Social practice cannot merely be understood as people’s “doings.” Theodore R. Schatzki (70) argues that social practice involves both doings and sayings and is future oriented, although influenced by former and present actions and processes. Through a phenomenological view, this describes historicity, i.e. the whole range of temporality that we experience while experiencing. Historicity is referred to as *lived time* by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, experienced through the *lived body* in a *lived room*. Hence, actions are temporal and spatial and appear through the site of the social, which are specific places where social practices occur in relation to specific arrangements. We share the world as it is an *intersubjective* world. That includes shared social and cultural experiences from the past, the present and the future. It also includes places, environments and the more-than-human world (Häggsström 88).

A phenomenological approach to practice theory will strengthen the life-world existential dimension. That is to not only focus on the human practice, but also on the subject (of an individual) as an embodied being. Individual behaviour, patterns of social interactions and intentional actions are of interest both in practice theory and in phenomenology. We direct our attention to the participants’ experiences of the world. Through walk-and-talks, we deal practically with the world by experiencing it before reflecting upon it. Phenomenologically, this means to experience the forest as it is in its own being, and using it as such. We do this with our lived body, which includes both internal and external experiences, meaning that we embrace multi-sensory information



such as temperature, smell and sound together with bodily reactions to these connected to emotions. All this will probably affect our bodily experiences of being in the forest. Bringing the two theories of practice theory and phenomenology together is to look at how different perspectives are interrelated.

We recognize forest-walks as specific social actions (walking) in a specific place (the forest) within specific arrangements (paths, trees and other plants, and forest terrain). These arrangements support the establishment of this particular practice. From the phenomenological perspective, the lived room (of the forest) is regarded as the chorus of a space integrating the summation of all events, actions and its horizon of possibilities. In Kemmis' (24) reason such practices always exist within contextualised arrangements, which in turn affect the actions within the practice and thus the doings, sayings, and relatings. Arrangements are, in Kemmis et al's (31-33) conceptualising, referred to as *practice architectures*, which are described as practice traditions shaped by the actions of sayings, doings, and relatings. These actions function together and are formed by the following arrangements:

1. *Cultural-discursive arrangements*. These arrangements appear in the medium of language and they enable and constrain the sayings that are characteristic of the practice, e.g. what is relevant and appropriate to say.
2. *Material-economic arrangements*. These arrangements appear in the medium of activity and work and they enable and constrain the doings that are characteristic of the practice, e.g. what can be done within the physical set-ups.
3. *Social-political arrangements*. These arrangements appear in the medium of power and solidarity and they enable and constrain the relatings of the practice, e.g. practical agreements and rules about what to do (32).

In this study, the practice architecture may include political policies of forestry, cultural heritage, and conservation; physical infrastructure; municipal arrangements; or other mediating preconditions. Social practice is always culturally and discursively structured and determined by prevailing social norms and cultural conceptions and ideas. Practice theory, as Kemmis et al. frame it, concerns professional practice and how

individuals encounter each another in “intersubjective spaces” (4), and how these encounters are shaped by the arrangements that are to be found there. In this study, social practice is used to understand practice as leisure activities, which differ from the writings on professional practice. Still, we find the notions of practice architectures valuable to understand why and how people walk in the forest. We also see the characteristics of communities of practice as useful in interpreting our data, although our focus here is not the one of a learning perspective per se. We also interpret practice architectures as entangled with people’s life-worlds, historicity and intersubjectivity. That is, in phenomenological terms, being-in-the-world as a lived body.

Forest walks, as a social practice, are temporal, and thus they are historical activities from the past, still occurring in the present-day, and will most likely continue to exist in the future, which might be the distinguishing characteristic of intangible heritage as UNESCO frames it in Article 2. Furthermore, forest-walks are spatial and are performed in a particular environment. Different environments enable or constrain specific approaches of activities. A dense overgrown forest constrains accessibility, while established and clear trails enable walks. Such arrangements affect the practice and how the tangible/intangible heritage proceeds and develops or declines and ceases to exist.

Bill Green also argues that practice is always contextualized, and that context is part of practice (8). However, context itself needs to be problematized and not taken for granted. What is considered as context and what is considered as text (the *activity* in this case) is often indistinct. Therefore, looking at forest-walking from both a historical and social point of view might bring integral aspects of this particular practice that offer a more complex image of forest-walking. Walking in the forest is a concrete behaviour that can be passed on to generations just by walking together. In doing so, sensible experiences and feelings can be transferred indirectly amongst people which can be seen as typical for intangible heritage. If this heritage were not pleasant or positive in some way, subsequent generations would not pass it on to their children and grandchildren. Forest-walking is a practice that forms and prefigures opportunities and potentials for continuing and transferring forest walking and the creation of new actions. According to Merleau-Ponty (399-400) actions – i.e. forest-walking – leave traces of human activities in nature and these actions will sediment in things beyond

the active subject and then adopt an anonymous existence. Together, a range of silent existing phenomena/things arrange for a place's cultural and geographical profile. This is evident also in different countries, cities and villages.

Ideas of and relationships with forests are transferred in several ways through various cultural activities and artefacts. These representations and preconceptions form the images of forests and build the arrangements of relatings, doings, and sayings. Additionally, these arrangements shows that forest-walks are historically formed and structured. In other words, they are a product of local history and they will shape the history of tomorrow. These practice architectures also prefigure the actions in a particular practice. For instance, people who do not walk in the forest might have chosen to abstain because of the arrangements. Changes, because of a hurricane, for example, would probably affect the social practice considerably. Fallen trees, broken branches, and shattered canopies would no longer provide the same feelings of silence and fairy-tale atmosphere, and the walks might not continue there. When arrangements change, actions will too.

### **Method, data collection and analysis procedure**

A growing number of social scientists have been using methods where researchers walk with participants (e.g. Jon Anderson, 2004; Richard, M Carpiano, 2009). Walking interviews generate richer data, Jon Anderson (255) claims, as they are conducted in the specific environment that is of interest to a particular study. It seems sensible to talk about that specific environment while actually being in that environment. Consequently, we believe that walk-and-talk interviews in the forest are the most appropriate method to investigate people's experiences of forest-walks. Walk-and-talk interviews are an intimate way to involve and participate with the surroundings. Rebecca Solnit argues in *Wanderlust: A History of walking* (2001) that walking as such is a bodily aesthetic and a social and political act that includes memory and the joy of walking (4). Walk-and-talk interviews might thus offer deeper insights into place and into one's identity. Hereby we see an opportunity to better develop our understanding of how intangible heritage is created by the routes people take in the forest. The approach of walk-and-talks is relational, and in our study grounded in phenomenological insights, drawing on the work of Merleau-Ponty concerning the

connection between the mobile body and the landscape. Therefore, the forest is regarded as relational through the practice of walking.

This study is based on twelve walk-and-talk interviews. All interviews were conducted in the forest and lasted 1–5 hours and took place with one participant at a time together with the first author. The participants were selected from a previous survey based on one questionnaire distributed from a box placed along a walking trail in the forest and one questionnaire distributed to households near this forest. The selected participants had answered both the place-based questionnaire, which was anonymous, and the distributed questionnaire, which was not anonymous. Participation was voluntary: participants could choose to mail the filled-out questionnaire, which asked if they would like to participate in a subsequent study. Notes were taken manually during the interviews because technical recording equipment was considered inappropriate in the particular environment. There was time for deeper discussions and explanations on all occasions. The notes were then written out on a computer and sent to each participant to read and confirm or to make changes if they so wanted. This procedure was a way of ensuring the validity of the study. All names of the participants are fictional.

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used, influenced by Jonathan A Smith, Paul Flowers & Michael Larkin. IPA is anchored in hermeneutic phenomenology, and the interpretative work corresponds to the structure of a hermeneutic spiral, thus the interpretation alternates between the parts and the whole and between pre-understanding and understanding and on several levels, departing from concrete to more abstract theoretical levels. The analysis process was entrenched in continually reflective work that had already started at the meetings with the participants (or had started even earlier with the questionnaire distributed in advance of the walk-and-talk interviews).

Data analysis carried out through 4 key steps: participants' narratives were read thoroughly; 2) data were organized in representative sub-sections emerged from the reading, revealing an aesthetic point of view, activation of the senses and childhood traditions; 3) these sub-sections were reflected on through the theoretical framework, i.e., practice architectures, a phenomenological viewpoint and the notion of intangible heritage and in relation to the aim of the study; and 4) the analysis was arranged on the

basis of the concepts of sayings, doings, and relatings together with the emerged sub-sections in addition to the cultural point of view, highlighting forest-walking as a cultural process.

### **Findings – inheritance of cultural phenomena**

The findings from the walk-and-talks below are presented through excerpts from the participants in order to illustrate the result accompanied with a few photographs in order to contextualize the environment and quotations. The excerpts are reflected upon and annotated in relation to practice theory, phenomenology concepts highlighted in the text and the notion of intangible heritage. The excerpts were chosen on a representative ground and are presented below under the three headings *Sayings*, *Doings*, and *Relatings* interpreted with regard to practice architecture.

#### **Sayings - From an aesthetic point of view**

Peter and I meet at a road junction and walk together into the woods. He usually takes his dog, and this is also why he has come to enjoy forest-walks. Peter pays attention to different sounds, and he stops now and then to just listen or look in certain directions. I don't want to disturb him by constantly asking questions. He points out his favourite views and sceneries while we walk and he speaks:

There is stillness in the forest which is relaxing. It is easier to be passive and just be in a quiet environment like the forest. I register the surroundings and enjoy the visual aspects. It is both educational and healing. When I see something extraordinary, I photograph it, whether it's a view or the bark of a tree. You become aware of different signs around you, for example, when blue anemones bloom. I also think of the illustrations of John Bauer. The trees give peace and quiet in the woods, just by the fact that they are not moving. The stillness together with birds singing and the wind in the trees makes everything so serene. The quietness of the forest is relaxing.

Figure 1: John Bauer's image of the Swedish forest.



Figure 2: A photograph of a Swedish forest in 2017.

The arrangements shape the experiences of the practice. Thus, how Peter describes the forest and his experiences in the forest shows the impact of his culture. As stated by Kemmis, social memories are “stored in the *logos* of shared language used by people in a particular site” (32). This means that within a culture, we share a collective memory that creates a collective mind. Hence, Bauer’s images correspondingly shape a collective mind. Forest-walks are somewhat composed in collective social-relational ventures that are prefigured and shaped by the culture, i.e. by the practice architectures, and thus the present arrangements or the arrangements that are brought to a site. The quotations of Ingrid and Ingmar below are examples of how sayings and relatings function together with the doings and are formed from both cultural-discursive arrangements and material-economic arrangements:

It is the green colour in the forest that provides the serenity. Maybe because you've learned to associate it with the forest. The wind in the trees. Some trees can be completely amazing! Old, old trees and the moss underneath – great!

My father taught me how to read signs in the forest, like how ants build their ant-hills facing south. He also taught me to be respectful to all life on earth. I learned to be careful with flowers and small plants. See where I put my feet!

The material-economic arrangements are those that enable or constrain the activities in the dimension of physical space-time. The forest is obviously a specific

place, and it also contains many different places, or “rooms.” Ingrid describes it as green, and she describes a feeling of space between the winds up in the trees and the moss below. At the same time, she says that she has *learned* how to perceive the forest, so this is something that has been mediated by some means; the intersubjectivity is clear: we share the world. Ingmar describes how his father had taught him different things in the forest. Looking at the rooms of the forest, they enable practices of learning and teaching, according to Ingrid and Ingmar. The third arrangements Kemmis et al. outline are the social-political. In relation to this study, the policy documents mentioned earlier are examples of such arrangements. The social-political arrangements deal with power and solidarity. Access to forests and access to cultural heritage concern power and solidarity, not least regarding intangible cultural heritage. Whose heritage is worth preserving? Ingmar talks about the relations with plants and animals, i.e. with non-human organisms. The forest is a place that enables such relations and solidarity beyond humans.



Figure 3, 4 and 5: Different rooms in the forest

### **Doings - Activating the senses**

I meet Mary in her garden, not far from the forest. She is carrying a lunch bag, and off we go. She asks if the blue anemones have started to blossom yet and if we can take a look near the lake. As we walk through the oak forest, she tells me that she loves everything about the forest – the trees and other plants and the smells, sounds, and colours. She has brought her camera to photograph blue anemones. They are rare and

protected. She too tells about her childhood and how her family used to walk in the forest all the time.

Sometimes friends of my parents thought that it was kind of strange when my parents suggested a walk in the forest after dinner.

I like to observe and follow different plants during the seasons. It is really lovely this time of year (springtime). It feels like a miracle every year when everything starts to bud and grow here. Listen! Do you hear that bird? The warble of birds and the wind in the trees – it makes me calm inside.



Figure 6. Mary photographing blue anemones

Mary's quotation might show a tradition of doings that seem to be decreasing in current times – such as noticing the plants. James Wandersee and Elisabeth Schlusser have coined the term *plant-blindness* (3), which is defined as the inability of humans to notice, appreciate, and understand plants and plants' functions in ecological systems. Mary takes in the big picture of the forest as well as the details, and her way of practicing forest-walks shows a compound integrative practice that among many other aspects includes knowing and learning through the senses, appreciating nature as such, and walking in the forest especially. She also talks about her childhood and how forest-walks were an integral part of her life. Her experience is clearly an embodied experience, and she is a doer; she is observing and using her camera as a mediating tool to look really closely at plants, and she has brought coffee and homemade cake and wants to stop for a picnic. Being-in-the-world is for Mary to embrace the chorus of the forest including the calmness and the beauty of the environment. She turns to the forest intentionally



aware of the horizon of possibilities that the forest offer; the summation of the forest's happenings, milieu and actions. She share her intersubjectivity with the next generation too:

I used to walk with our children in the forest when they were younger, and we liked to lie down and close our eyes and just listen to the wind, smell the sweet moss, and fantasize.

### *Walking with dogs*

I meet Anne and her dog near a stream in the forest. The dog has no leash and looks energetic and enthusiastic.

I only walk in the forest if I have my dog with me; I would never go here alone without him. I am not really a forest and outdoors person, but I like to be active. Here it is also amazingly nice, calm and quiet, and not many people. It is perfect. I am used to walking here now, and I like these paths. Different seasons have different benefits, and there is always something to appreciate – new paths to discover. Sometimes you can see deer, and if you do, you have to get hold of the dog. But the forest is clearly the best place to be; I can relax, there are no cars, and usually no other people.



Figure 7. Walking with the dog.

This example shows how sayings, doings, and relating hang together and are interconnected. To Anne, they form a multifaceted structure of connections that shape

her doings. She does not identify herself as a person who in fact walks in the forest, and she would not do it if it was not for her dog. Therefore, we can presume that forest-walking has not been a heritage that her family transmitted, or that it was transmitted in a way that she was opposed to or just did not care for. However, the forest where she is walking her dog shows tracks and paths that have been there a long time; hence, she is now part of a network of actions and social connections. According to Kemmis (26-27), practices can be understood as external relationships between words, actions, and social connections that form a linkage of related sayings and doings. Anne's sayings when she describes her experiences of forest-walking are the same as the other participants, though she first gives the expression of someone who does not like forest-walking. Nevertheless, she is familiar with the concept and the practice. This might be said about other examples of tangible/intangible heritage as well. We grow up with them whether we like it or not. Looking at Anne's example, we might dislike it, but we can still appreciate it.



Figure 8, 9 and 10. Different forest trails and footpaths build a web of connecting tracks.

### *Looking for treasures*

Simon and I meet at the bus stop and then take his car to a forest where he often goes for geocaching, which is an outdoor activity in which people look for hidden treasures. You need a GPS to locate the treasures, and they can sometimes be hard to find. There are different kinds of treasures, and Simon has decided to show me three types this day.

I specifically like this forest because there are many ancient relics here and the terrain is varying, and there are quite a number of caches here. You can easily spend three or four hours here and find not just caches, but relics and nice scenery too (...) I'm interested in history and places where people have lived a long time ago, how it looked then, and how people lived in the past. I do like biology as well. That's why it's fun to be able to combine geocaching with natural and historical interests (...) It is a bit like an adventure when you are out and looking for caches.



Figure 11, 12, 13: Looking for treasures.

Simon's way of practicing forest-walks is both rooted in traditions and creating new practice. Kemmis suggests that some practices include different kinds of "bundling of sayings, doings and relatings" (27). Simon shows here how this might work. He involves his interest of history and biology together with his interest in geocaching and being outdoors. His experience of forest-walks thus demonstrates a network of arrangements that build his unique viewpoint on this practice. His sayings are realized in his doings, and they hang together in a way that is shaped by, and simultaneously shapes, the practice traditions of forest-walks.

### **Relatings - Childhood traditions**

Memories of childhood play in the forest are strong, according to the participants. As soon as we enter the forest, David shows me an important spot in the forest:

I remember how we used to play here! Summer as well as winter. And we were a whole bunch of children, trying out our ice skates. We could stay here forever. Always back late for supper. Warm and cold at the same time. Cold winters, we could skate on the stream, all the way from the little pond up in the woods, how lovely it was. Ever since I was little, I love to be in the forest and feel the adventures around every corner.

David is smiling, looking into a coppice where there is no water at the moment, due to it being summertime.

You know, we had different names for different spots in the forest, like hazel-woods and the upper marsh. Those were the most popular places to be. I do not live here anymore, but every time I visit my mother I like to take a walk here.

As we can see here, practice is not just what individuals do; it always has features that are extra-individual, and practices build on interactions in one way or another. These interactions make up the practice, and the interactions are shaped by mediating preconditions. David's experiences build on generations of children playing in different places in the forest. How they have been interacting with each other and with the specific places have shaped David's memories and emotions. This builds a network of relationships not only between people, but also between actions and emotions. Playing in the forest has been meaningful and sense making in a way that still has an impact on David's life and how he reflects while walking in the forest:

Still today, I like to climb in the mountains, thanks to my childhood play, competitions, and events.

I meet John quite far in the forest, at the spot where my questionnaire and mailbox were placed. He has brought his two sons, aged 20 and 6 years. He is dressed in camouflage clothes, and so is his older son.

I have been walking in the forest since I was very small. My grandmother forced me to walk along and to pick blueberries and cow-berries, and mushrooms too. Then we stopped for a picnic, drank tea, and ate Swedish crisp-bread. It was cosy. Lovely

memories. I am happy for that now. Ever since, I have returned to the forest. Now, I bring my sons here too.

Practice is, as we see here, culturally formed, as is intangible heritage. John is using the word *forced* to describe how forest-walking became part of his and now his sons' lives. This might imply that he as a child would not have chosen forest-walks if he had had a choice, but at the same time he shows how this heritage was maintained by social customs. In our interpretation, this example also shows that cultural behaviour and cultural expectations are strongly patrimonial, hence it is a form of behaviour that one will probably transmit to the next generation. One way of understanding this is to look at the social values behind a tradition of practice and who one relates to when adopting a cultural behaviour. John refers to lovely memories and cosy moments when he and his grandmother drank tea in the forest. He is connecting the past with the future, mentioning both his grandmother and his children. He also describes some characteristic arrangements of the practice of forest-walking that he has been conducting with his closest relatives, such as picking berries, the closeness with his grandmother, and having a picnic in the middle of the natural environment of a forest.

Practices are, according to Kemmis, composed of sayings, doings, and relatings that are intersubjectively intertwined in a specific practice. However, in this paper the sayings, doings, and relatings are presented separately, although they do hang together. Forest-walking might appear as a simple act of doing, but when analysed and interpreted as a practice of intangible cultural heritage, a more complex image arises. A prominent aspect is that forest-walks are inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants as an intangible cultural heritage.

### **Forest walks – an intangible heritage in movement**

This study has discussed how practice architectures, especially the cultural-discursive arrangements, shape the practice of forest-walks. Also, this study looked at forest-walking as an intangible heritage which includes, for example, oral traditions, social practices, and knowledge and practices concerning nature. In *Heritage and Beyond* from the Council of Europe, Graham Fairclough discusses the concept of place shaping, contending that

The big 'important' (national) heritage sites are not always very relevant to place. In place-shaping, other things are valued: the local, ordinary, contextual, typical, every day, small, personal, intangible things that creates a daily sense of place for the vast majority of the population. The character of a place in conventional terms frequently hinges on minor, commonplace, personal and marginal things, and on the intangible; context rather than innate significance is most important (153).

This has been proven in our study and it shows that this kind of heritage is continuously re-created, and evolves through the years and generations. In this study, the participants confirmed that forest-walks as a social practice are passed on from previous generations and that childhood memories are crucial to forest-walking in adulthood. There are many reasons for conducting forest-walks, but the overall motive likely has to do with identity and a sense of belonging in a community and a context – in other words, in a culture which responds to the ICHC and the ideas of place shaping presented by Fairclough.

The results presented in this article show that the participants walk in the forest primarily because it makes them feel good. The beauty of the forest's scenery and greenery are frequently mentioned, as is silence. Combined, these aspects induce feelings of peace and calmness, which all participants highlighted as the main feeling one gets from being in the forest. Two strands of reasoning can be distinguished – to *act* or to just *be*. The actions mentioned included picking berries and mushrooms, walking the dog, jogging, orienteering, geocaching, rock climbing, photographing, and painting. To most of the participants, these actions lead to a sense of contemplation. Expressions of just being are connected with sensory perceptions, such as hearing the silence, the wind rustling, and birds singing; watching the colours, the changing of the seasons, the variations of flora; and sensing the moss, grass, fir tree, resin, and ponds. All of these experiences are in accordance with what Smith and Waterton identify as intangible heritages: practices through performances and negotiations of identity, values and a sense of place.

Seeing forest-walking as an intangible heritage implies that, even if an individual is conducting her first forest-walk, this walk is shaped by arrangements that create the

mediating preconditions of practice. These preconditions shape and prepare a foundation for new forest-walkers in a particular forest or part of a forest. Various paths in the forest are examples of how preconditions mediate the practice of a forest-walk. There might be obvious places that invite you to sit down and relax, spots where you just have to look at the view or maybe a fireplace where you can have a picnic. How people before you have behaved and performed in the forest you are walking in will guide and direct you, and how people have been talking and thinking about this place will affect you. Other people's established relationships with the forest shape a pre-constructed infrastructure that will enable and constrain your actions. It is obvious that this kind of view is still not common since it is absent, for example, in the inventory list compiled by Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Sweden carried out within the frame of UNESCO's Convention. The countries that have joined in the work create one or more inventories of *living*, intangible cultural heritage in their own country.

We therefore find it useful to broaden the definitions of what intangible heritage might be and how the intersections between cultural identity and landscapes can be developed. Moreover, we have found that intangible heritage has, according to the participants in our study, become something new: for example dog-walking and finding treasures, both reveal that forests are constantly made and remade as a space. We found that the participant's perception of specific places in the forest discloses a sense of belonging and identification. A majority of the participants have a favourite place or two where they like to sit down for a while and just feel the forest. They also like to bring coffee and sandwiches. All of the participants are suitably dressed with proper water-resistant shoes and jackets and in some cases gloves and knitted caps. These people are obviously curating their heritage in the landscape, and they are persistently developing and creating new meanings of spaces visited. In other words, this is an intangible heritage in movement.

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