

# MY NEIGHBORHOOD FROM A REINDEER PERSPECTIVE

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Front photo: The reindeer herd on top of a hill

All photos in this paper are by © Lauri Kontula (Toisissa tiloissa, Other Spaces)

Reindeer Safari. My neighborhood from a reindeer perspective

## Öh!

I stand, facing an edge of bushes next to the sidewalk. Familiar bodies stand beside me or close by. A human walks by. I quickly turn away. I look into the leaves, as if to hide. One of the others lets out the sound of danger: “Öh!” We gather together. The human is a young, black man. His passing by triggers something within me and for a second I consider if he could possibly misinterpret our group behavior towards him as a sign of racism. I silently burst into laughter. This is insane! Then the black man is gone and I return to reindeer related concerns. This neighborhood is dangerous. There are humans and cars all over. I hear the noise from the main road on the other side of the edge of bushes. There is a hole in the edge. I hope we will not go that way. Someone starts moving towards the hole. I follow unwillingly. It is best to stick to the herd. Several legs walk through the hole and disappear. I stop in front of the hole. “Öh!” The heard spreads in two: those on this side of the bushes and those on the other side. The dogs are busy now, trying to keep us together. Finally I give up and go through the hole, towards the main road. Stupid herd! Why are we moving away from the trees?

## 1. PREPERATIONS

### About Other Spaces

*Other Spaces (Toisissa Tiloissa)* is a Finnish performance collective who develop and perform what they define as “*collective physical exercises through which people can visit “other spaces”, i.e. enter in contact with the modes of being and experience other than human*” (<http://toisissatiloissa.net/other-spaces-live-art-collective/>). Their work can be placed in a cross-disciplinary field of contemporary philosophy, experimental theatre, live art and artistic research. Their activities are based on a political manifest that seeks both to renew the field of theatre and to critically address relations between human and nature. According to themselves, the collective “*implements the dream of an equal, justified form of performance*” and through their work they aim to “*reduce planetary fear and to grant hope to survive*” (*ibid*).

The collective holds three fundamental working principles, consisting of “*continuous training*“, “*exercise as a mode of performance*“ and “*metamorphosis as a common theme of exercises*“ (*ibid*). The members meet regularly in Helsinki to do and develop the exercises. They have produced a series of participatory, experimental performances – one of them *Reindeer Safari*, a wayfaring performance<sup>1</sup> that won Finland’s Environmental Art Prize in 2011 and has performed in several countries. In April 2013 the Danish production unit *Secret Hotel* had invited Other Spaces to do *Reindeer Safari* in Denmark. The performance took place one time in the countryside of National Park Mols Bjerger, and the next day it was repeated in a semi-urban area in Aarhus, where I live. I experienced the performance on the second day.

### Knowledge and rules

On the day of the event we met in a room in a sports center in the suburbs of Aarhus Nord. We were around 20 participants, besides four Finns from Other Spaces, two people from Secret Hotel and a couple of other helpers. The Finns introduced the schedule for the day: first preparation time, then a four or five hour walk as reindeer around the surrounding area, then

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<sup>1</sup> I have lent the term „wayfaring performance“ from Other Spaces’ own description of Reindeer Safari (<http://toisissatiloissa.net/reindeer-safari/>). Throughout this paper I will mostly refer to Reindeer Safari as „the performance“ with the wayfaring part implicit, but also other categories will be used, such as the „walk“, „exercise“, „experiment“, „experience“, „event“, „travel“ and “concept”. This is done to show Reindeer Safari as a complex phenomenon and to underline the various possibilities of approaches to the wayfaring performance as a cross disciplinary practice.

feedback and food. There was a reindeer skin on the floor, and antlers. The scenery was contrasting in an odd combination of the local, commercial sports center and our group of performers and excited participants, getting in the mood for an experimental performance.

The preparations took around two hours. Other Spaces showed us pictures and a movie about reindeer and told us significant facts about reindeer life and behavior that we could use on the walk, such as: reindeer live and move in herds. While grazing they spread a bit, so that the



Figure 1. Me as a reindeer

ones in the middle of the herd can rest while the others stay on guard. They told us how reindeer do not see in stereo, because their eyes are placed on each side of the head. This means reindeer primarily notice movement, not visual details. In return they have an extraordinary sensitive nose and are able to smell lichen underneath one meter of snow.

Then we were told the rules for the following walk. We would have to stay together as a herd. There should be no eye contact and no talking, except we could use a sound that reindeer sometimes let out when they sense danger: It sounds like “Öh!”. The

Finns and the other helpers were dressed in yellow vests and they would function as reindeer dogs. They would help to keep us safe together when crossing roads etc. They would not lead us, though, for there was no planned route. It was up to the herd where to go. The reindeer dogs would keep track of the time and they would let us know when to go home.

I knew two of the participants and one of the crew. The rest were strangers to me. I wonder how many of us during the introduction engaged with the curious thought: *How will our group be able to decide a walking direction if we have to stay silently together and cannot talk or look at each other?*

Each of us prepared ourselves for the walk. I put on layers of warm clothes (it was an unusually cold day for April). I packed lots of nuts and dried fruit provided by the organizers. I also brought some toilet paper (we were allowed to sneak away from the herd to do our business during grazing if needed). Each participant got a photo taken with the antlers (see figure 1). Then it was time to leave.

## Levels of travel and intentions behind them

In the phase of going from preparations into in the main part of *Reindeer Safari* – the safari itself - it might be appropriate to look a little more into intentions connected to what has already been presented – first of all intentions behind Other Spaces in general, and *Reindeer Safari* in particular and secondly intentions behind my own participation in the performance. In addition it might be good to underline intentions behind the process of reflecting on the performance and my experience of it in this essay. As a starting point these three levels are all possible to address and discuss in the light of *traveling*. Already the title “*Reindeer Safari*” and the introduction to it as a wayfaring performance suggests the performance as something connected to travels. The title naturally brings up associations to practices of watching and hunting wild animals in big nature areas around the world<sup>2</sup>. From there one can associate further, perhaps to tourism, maybe even colonialism, and to theories of the exotic. And so it might be obvious to begin an analysis of the concept of *Reindeer Safari* by critically asking: What kind of safari is this? The answer is as crucial for the experience of the performance as for the experience of writing and reading about it.

Closely connected to the character and experience of any travel is the motivation for going on that travel. And closely connected to the motivation is the anticipation. As the British writer Alain de Botton has pointed out, there tend to be a collision between the anticipation of a travel and the travel itself, especially if one forgets oneself in a romantic imagination of a place before going there (de Botton 2002, 26). Speaking of modern safaris, anticipation and imagination can perhaps be linked to fascinations of the exotic, which de Botton defines as a strong longing for something that cannot be found at home, but only in countries far away. The ideal of the exotic is the ideal of “*finding camels where at home there had been horses*” (ibid, 78). Connecting de Botton’s definition of the exotic to a common understanding of a safari, the title “*Reindeer Safari*” would indicate traveling far away, to an arctic area with an anticipation of watching the fascinating phenomenon of wildlife reindeer – or, within the classical theatre genre, at least representing such a journey as a play or story. A travel experience that can perhaps be linked to an experience of a conventional safari can be exemplified in De Botton portrait of the young Gustave Flaubert who travels to Egypt out of boredom and fascination of the orient. In this, for Flaubert, exotic place, he finds that “*I am a*

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<sup>2</sup> The origin of the term „safari“ appears to be the Arabic *safara*, which means „a travel“. In common use of the term today the definition is: *an expedition to observe or hunt animals in their natural habitat, especially in East Africa* (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/safari> )

*soul brother to everything that lives, to the giraffe and the crocodile as to man*” (de Botton, 2002:100). Curiously, Other Spaces seem to work from a similar philosophical approach to human-animal relations as in Flaubert’s statement, but they arguably show their approach in action by following an opposite travel mode. In the wayfaring performance the understanding of a safari is turned around. I have already roughly presented some intentions behind the collective’s work, one of them being the goal of visiting other spaces than our usual, human-centered space, by changing one owns *mode of being*. In other words, the travels Other Spaces stage are mental more than physical. On their web page the main point and intention with *Reindeer Safari* is articulated in the introduction to the performance:

*The performance is intended to take place in a semi-urban landscape where authentic reindeer might also visit. The participants of Reindeer Safari form a herd, which moves according the natural rules that correspond to the group behavior of reindeer. [...]The goal is to restore the urban landscape to a state of nature by observing it from the point of view of a semi-domestic, semi-wild herd animal“ (<http://toisissatiloissa.net/reindeer-safari/>).*

Here a turn from conventional to experimental travel evolves from a radical approach of bringing nature into to culture, not, as in the conventional understanding of a safari, the other way around. Opposite the young Flaubert, the other participants and I did not travel far away to escape our bored lives in the place we were familiar with. Instead Other Spaces took us on a slow walk in a landscape that for a Danish citizen like I might seem the least exotic of all compared to a safari in Egypt, Africa or Lapland: the local suburbs and outskirts of my own city. It is said the location could be a place where reindeer would visit, but naturally there were no real reindeer to look for. Instead our own human bodies adopted the movements of reindeer bodies. Roles were switched around twice: the humans became the animals and the animals went on a safari to explore the human world. Furthermore, this travel had no fixed, anticipated destination, like Flaubert’s Egypt. Wherever the reindeer chose to go became the destination.

Contributing to the theoretical level of *Reindeer Safari* as an unconventional travel concept is the element a personal travel story consisting of my own experience of the event that day in April. In this case my motivation for participating was a mix of several elements that can add to the intentions of the performance articulated by the inventors. First of all I was present that day because I was curious towards a performance mode that to me sounded quite mysterious. I also participated out of a general interest in walking performances and experiences connected to sensorial perception. And then, I admit, I found a pleasurable appeal by the thought of having an excuse to spending a half day outside. Knowing I little about the

structure of the performance exercise beforehand, I anticipated the experience of walking in a semi-urban landscape to provide some sort of meditational state of mind. As the American author and environmentalist Rebecca Solnit states, “*walking, ideally, is a state in which the mind, the body and the world are aligned [...] walking allow us to be in our bodies and in the world without being made busy by them*” (Solnit 2000: 5). For me a harmonic, meditational state of mind happened on the walk - briefly. At other times the exercise provided challenges, surprises, boredom, tiredness, frustration, stress and concern - like in the opening situation of this essay, where urban surroundings led to several unpleasant feelings. I will come back to that. For now it is sufficient to state my own experience of *Reindeer Safari* as a personal travel with many aspects, reflections and phases, like every travel.

Another level of travel is connected to reflections of the event by writing about it. As such, the representation and recreation of my experience of the performance can be stated to be a form of travel in itself. As an intentional mirror of the experience as an inspiration to write, this paper seeks not to be strictly structured and organized, but to emerge out of partly rational, partly irrational movements in the landscape of my memory. This is also how we moved in the wayfaring performance. Writing about a cross disciplinary experiment like *Reindeer Safari*, calls for wandering around in themes and disciplines as well as letting the words find themselves at times. If the following empty sheets can be seen metaphorically as a random place, my intention is to travel through this place with curiosity in one hand and theoretical tools in the other, in an attempt to test Solnit’s belief that “*the random, the unscreened, allows you to find what you don’t know you are looking for, and you don’t know a place until it surprises you*” (ibid, 11).

Of course it is an ambitious goal for a writing process to surprise the writer. While waiting for surprises one needs also to move. To continue the metaphor of the essay as a travel, it could here be fitting to reveal my motivation behind the act of writing about the performance. Besides portraying *Reindeer Safari* as a kind of travel, I intend to investigate the wayfaring performance on a basis of recalling my own, immediate experience. With the concept of the safari in this case framed as a form of travel that values process over destination, I wish to use a mainly phenomenological approach of perception and landscape theory in addressing several aspects of the experience as a process. The following chapter will thus be a search of bringing out the significance of transformations in movement, senses, mindset and social behavior I experienced took place during the walk. An underlying theme of relations and connections motivates the writing process.



## 2. THE WALK

*This is not about “pluralism”, or “diversity” as a value in and of itself, instead, it is an experience of the birth of oneself and of other beings. Thus the encounter between different beings is no longer based on binary opposites of me and the others, subject and object, audience and performer [...] This reaching outside of the human figure is neither progress, nor a project. It is encountering something unfamiliar and non-human and opening up to it. It is openness towards other forms and shapes and experience in the universe, some of which are less complex compared to the human form of existence, others far beyond it in complexity (Kirkkopelto, 2004).*

### Metamorphoses

In the above excerpt from Other Spaces’ manifesto, the founder of the collective uses a birth metaphor to symbolize a powerful metamorphose that can take place in the encounter between beings – human as well as non-human. The belief of such an encounter as a movement towards abolishing the old division of subject and object, or *me* and *the other*, can likewise be found in the philosophy of phenomenology. In its origin phenomenology renounces the idea of pure objectivity by pointing out how the subject and the world are closely weaved together (Abram 1997:33). Because we all encounter the world (with all its beings) by our experience from a first-person perspective, there can be no real distinction between the outside and the inside, as the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty points out: “*All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless*” (Merleau-Ponty 1962, viii). As described by the American phenomenologist David Abram, the world is not a static or mechanical object, but “*a living field, an open and dynamic landscape subject to its own moods and metamorphoses*” (Abram 1997:32). As the world goes through constant changes and processes, so do all the beings in it, including the landscape, the humans, the animals...

We left the sports center. The transition from humans to reindeer was marked by the ritual of forming a circle on top of a hill. Then the wayfaring began. Naturally I did not transform completely into a reindeer, neither literally or mentally. Still some significant change in my perception and natural encounters happened by walking and moving with the newborn performative identity as a reindeer herd guarded by dogs. The fictional framing of the walk led to a strong awareness of myself, of the others and thus of the landscape we walked through. Throughout the next four hours I found myself in a constant shuttle between my human and my reindeer perspective. One example of that shuttle can be my experience in the

streets where the black man passed by, as described in the beginning of this paper. Noticing both the man and my own behavior towards him as a reindeer led to a double awareness. One part of me related to him by an immediate reindeer reaction, whereas another part related by self-reflection of the performative aspect of the fiction I inhabited. As such, the transformations that took place during the walk were not only an exercise for us participants to experience, but also a performance for the lives and beings we encountered – intentionally or unintentionally – on our way.

## Limitations

A phenomenological approach to the experience of *Reindeer Safari* takes its beginning in a description of the experience itself, based in a focus on “*the world as it is experienced in its felt immediacy*” (Abram 1997: 35). A central element here is the significance of direct, sensorial perception as the ground for knowledge and analysis. In Merleau-Ponty’s words, phenomenology is “[...] *a philosophy for which the world is ‘always already’ there before reflection begins – as an inalienable presence; and all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with a philosophical status*” (Merleau-Ponty 1962:vii).

By encouraging radical changes in our habits of movement, orientation, human relations and communication, *Reindeer Safari* suggested precisely a shift in perspective from human reflection to primitive, animal-like contact with the world. The change in perception happened mainly through a series of limitations that were given in the rules based on reindeer behavior. For me three elements of limitations led to significant change of perception and behavior. The first consists of walking in a group with the absence of verbal communication. According to Solnit, the act of walking as an investigation mode in itself “*returns the body to its original limits again, to something simple, sensitive and vulnerable*” (Solnit 2000: 29). Phenomenologically speaking, the act of walking *silently* in our experimental travel mode situated the body in the world as even more vulnerable and sensitive to its fellow beings. Referring to my concern about how to decide a direction on a non-existing route, it *was* actually hard to decide where to go as a herd sometimes, and the lack of communication created several situations where some went in one direction and others followed reluctantly - like in the before mentioned situation where I went through the whole in the bushes next to the ring road instead of following my impulse of going back to the trees where we came from. Both in this example and in more pleasant situations the silence between us provided a growing potential of re-achieving a personal contact with direct, irrational encounters, as

Merleau-Ponty mentions above, or as Adam pictures here: “Whenever I quiet the persistent chatter of words within my head, I find this silent or wordless dance always already going on – this improvised duet between my animal body and the fluid, breathtaking landscape that it



Figure 2. Together but apart

*inhabits*” (Abram 1997:53). Perhaps my encounter with the hole in the bushes, the traffic on the ring road and the frustration towards the reindeer in front of the herd better serves to illustrate a wordless fight than a dance with my surroundings. Luckily, in other situations the reduction of words gave way to brief feelings of “of ‘wonder’ in the

*face of the world*” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: xiv). This happened for instance during a break where we were had placed ourselves in a small grove in the area. The forest floor was strewn with little, yellow spring flowers, the trees were still naked in their winter coating and then it started to snow. Had that moment been filled with chatting and talking, I might not have had a chance to let the surroundings calm my mind like they did in the silence. The silence also meant that instead of getting to know my fellow participants by talking with them, I got to know them mainly as living, walking and moving bodies. And throughout the walk these stranger’s bodies became more and more familiar.

Another limitation I likewise found both limiting and opening is the downgrading of sight. As mentioned earlier, we were encouraged not to use our stereo sight, which meant that we could not look at each other directly. This led to a sometimes funny, sometimes frustrating and sometimes relieving contrast of a group of walkers staying together but always looking in different directions (see figure 2). This created a mixed feeling of belonging to a herd but at the same being apart and distant from the others. At times I felt like I walked in solitude, being “*both present and detached from the world around, more than an audience but less than a participant*” (Solnit 2000:24). Still this contributed to the complexity of the experience and challenged my habitual perception. At times I played with attempts of not focusing on anything, as to test how reindeer must perceive. When sight was downgraded, sounds, smells,

temperature and movement became much more felt. The spring weather was typically Danish (unpredictable) and changed from sun to snow to hail to cloudy. Moods changed with the environment and temperature, and while walking and engaging the surroundings with our human/reindeer bodies, the route we chose to walk became what the Icelandic anthropologist Katrin Anna Lund symbolically describes as a landscape “*mapped with emotions*” (Lund 2010:98).

A third limitation I found simultaneously frustrating and relieving is connected to the restricted freedom of having to stay outside and keep the exercise going until someone else decides it should end. We knew we would walk for between four and five hours, but seemed to have no influence on the decision on when to end. The fact that we left our cell phones and watches behind before the walk, and were thus depending on the reindeer dogs to gather us when time was up, changed my sense of time so that I quickly could not sense for how long we had been moving. In the beginning the knowledge that we would be on our way with no destination for what seemed like the whole day felt paradoxically relieving and brought a sense of freedom to explore and investigate the area as long as wanted. Throughout the development of the walk we passed the same area twice and the excitement of testing a, for me, completely new perception mode as a reindeer, naturally lowered. Slowly, the dependence on the dogs’ more or less discrete guidance and their position in decision making in the end of the exercise felt more and more like an intervention in my personal freedom. This feeling became especially clear when the herd after several hours started to feel tired and cold and some of us more or less intentionally led the herd back towards the sports center in the hope that the dogs would let us inside. They did not, of course, and I felt quite powerless in that situation, sitting against the wall of the building and waiting for something to happen.

## Rhythms

As a contribution to the phenomenological approach, theories of walking, perceiving and traveling as certain expressions of *rhythms* can be connected to the concept of *Reindeer Safari*. In connection to the analysis of the performance walk as a mix of mental and physical travel, one can once again point to Solnit’s theory of walking:

The rhythm of walking generates a kind of rhythm of thinking, and the passage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts. This creates an odd consonance between internal and external passage, one that suggests that the mind is also a landscape of sorts, and that walking is one way to traverse it (Solnit 2000:5)

Though Solnit's combination of walking and thinking seems to illustrate an ideal relation, I will state that this may only be part of a solution to the existential human challenge of uniting the internal with the external. The Latvian geographer Edmunds Valdemars Bunkse's addresses the same problem with a similar terminology, as "*Finding harmony between inner and outer landscape*" (Bunkse 2007:221). His solution of a way to restore harmony - or, in other words, to find a rhythm - between the internal and the external landscape, goes through reconnecting to a childlike way of sensing the world (ibid: 225). For Bunkse, this reconnection is achieved partly by awakening imagination and partly by engaging not only the dominant sense of objectifying sight, but all the senses on an equal footing to perceive an "*ineffable wholeness of land and sky*" (ibid:223). Perhaps the mixing of imagination and senses in Bunkse's phenomenology is more fitting to describe the experience of *Reindeer Safari* as I recall it. This connects to my experience of the performance walk, where precisely the imagination (of being a reindeer) and the downgrading of orientation by sight (for the benefit of the other senses) helped to establish a bridge between my inner "naïve", childish and animal being and the outer beings of trees, earth, bushes, buildings and fellow bodies. Not so much from thoughtfulness, but more from immediate sensations and instincts did I perceive connections between what was felt inside and outside me. At one crucial point we were crossing an open field in the area when a series of gun shots were heard. This resulted in a breathtaking scene: all the reindeer gathered instinctively in the middle of the field (see figure 3). Behind us were the city and the ring road we had just encountered (and escaped).



Figure 3. Trapped in the field

Ahead of us was the grove where we had earlier encountered a group of kids doing live action role playing. Instinctively it did not seem wise to head that way and risk meeting them again. In a third direction were a company of humans going on a walk - and from the last direction came the sounds of shooting. So we were

situated in the middle of the field, trapped in the suburbs, and thus did the only thing that from a sudden feeling of alarm seemed most obvious to do: we stopped, gathered closely together and froze on the spot. In this vulnerable position our fellow senses and awareness sharpened like I have rarely experienced it in a group of walkers. We stayed in that position for so long that one of the reindeer dogs decided this was a break and sat down. I noticed a couple of the other dogs observing us and exchanging a few words of what was happening. This immediately created a distance between my perception of the dogs as more human-like and the herd as more animal-like in our in bodily feeling of the gun shots. Thus the character of the noises and disturbing elements around us evoked an inner disturbance and alarm that at least in my experience did not show itself as a fictional pretending-to-be-a-scared-reindeer, but as an actual, felt experience of my own body being alarmed by the character of the landscape I engaged. Perhaps this felt experience can be defined as a kind of harmonized perception of the internal and the external, or with Abrams terminology, as “*an attunement or synchronization between my own rhythms and the rhythms of the things themselves*” (Abram 1997:54).

In my experience of the performance the unstructured shuttle between human and reindeer perspective can be seen as a rhythm between a “real” and an “imagined” mode of being. Another fundamental rhythm was established between two main modes in the reindeer behavior, by shifts between walking and resting, or wayfaring and pasturing, to be loyal to the concept. The wayfaring was generally slow, and like a meditational state the slow speed helped opening the mind and the senses towards a deeper, more rooted perception. If anyone wanted to rest, they stopped. Then eventually all of us would stop in order to stay together. During pasturing some sat or lay down and entered into a pause mode



Figure 4. Pasturing

while others stayed on guard (see figure 4). Some pasturing was short, some quite long. In the

longest pause several reindeer succeeded to take a nap. Perhaps it was after this long break in the movement of walking that the cold weather started feeling colder and the slow walking more heavy. Though it generally felt good to walk slowly I was considering possibilities of changing the rhythm of the herd several times during the walk, when I got a feeling of boredom. But since we all had to stay together, and there was no official leader of the herd, it was difficult to make sudden moves and anticipate that the others would follow. After the discouraging experience of heading back to the sports center without being let in, the herd started moving very slowly again. I did not want to leave the hope of getting into the building. But again the rule of sticking to the herd made me move. We walked for a bit and then I decided to run a few meters and see what would happen. After doing that a couple of times others followed. Although this sudden change of movement and position from my side made the herd spread more than usual, it also felt good to experience the relief of running and thereby breaking physically with a mental state that had been colored by seriousness and loyalty towards the herd as a more or less fixed structure in the slow shifts between modes of walking and resting.

A third rhythm in the walk was established literally by the steady sound of a bell carried by one of the reindeer dogs. The sound functioned as a sign of the location of the back end of the herd, and thus it became both an orientation mark and medium to mirror the herd's constant rhythm between doing and dwelling.

### **The unpleasant**

A general temptation in using a phenomenological approach to a given subject or theme is to become lost in poetic descriptions and naïve fascination of the unspeakable beauty and wonder in the phenomenal mode of subjective perception. Engaging the most grounded and primal contact with the world and with one self also requires engaging the unpleasant. Elaborating on the metaphor that a landscape can be subjectively mapped with emotions, Lund asks how a walker's physical conversation with landscape can question „*how people may fall in and out of rhythms*” (Lund, 2010:97). Applying this to a study of “*slipping, tripping and getting lost*” (ibid:98) she tells the story of a dangerous falling of a mountaineer and argues that the fall in this case created a powerful way of “*slipping into landscape*” (ibid:106). In her analysis the slip shakes away the anticipation of the mountaineer and opens the opportunity for her to fall into the rhythm of the landscape instead of trying to expose the landscape to her own rhythm (ibid).

Applied to the concept of *Reindeer Safari* it is crucial to notice how my representation of the walk has so far created a written reflection with more emphasis on the unpleasant and frustrating situations in my experience than the times on the walk where I felt at peace. With the gun shooting situation in mind, one can perhaps state that irrational feelings of being trapped, threatened, lost and alarmed did not only serve as an inevitable part of a reindeer's encounter with the urban landscape. Already in the main concept of metamorphoses and transformation lie implicitly the painful and the unpleasant as significant factors. During the walk the presence of unpleasant feelings and situations participated to create a body-landscape relation where I generally had to let go of my own anticipations of "a meditational state of mind". This did not make the walk less interesting or giving. Quite the contrary.

On the walk the significance of the unpleasant both connected to my perception of the natural and urban surroundings as "*charged with subjective, emotional and intuitive content*" (Abram 1997:34) and to relations within the reindeer herd. As the American anthropologist Michael Jackson has pointed out, a phenomenological approach should be careful not to romanticize the subject but remember to include the back sides of both being alone and being together (Jackson 1998:3). With anthropological references from field studies of tribal cultures Jackson concludes that neighborhood is not just easy and sweet, and thus "*compassion and conflict are [...] complimentary poles of intersubjectivity*" (ibid). Returning again to the described situation with the hole in the bushes it may be clear that my relation to the other reindeer was not free of conflict. Luckily, it was not free of compassion either. In the beginning of the walk we went up a steep and muddy hill, just to go down again. The herd consisted of bodies of quite different age and health, and in this situation it was obvious that some reindeer struggled to climb up the hill. We did not help each other by lending out a hand – seemingly because that would have been crossing the rules of animal behavior. But I still felt empathy with the ones that struggled and slipped, and from the feedback session after the walk it became clear that I had not been the only one with such mixed feelings. As such, this situation depicts an example where my experience of the difficult terrain as collective and shared landscape simultaneously led me through compassion (with the ones who slipped) and conflict (with the rules of the exercise, and as such implicitly with the organizers that had set the rules).



### 3. RETURNING

#### Narrating the walk

Finally the dogs gathered us. The transformation back from reindeer to human was marked by forming a circle again, looking at each other and each saying one word out loud. This ritual somehow touched me deeply. On the walk back to the sports center there was chattering among some of the people ahead of me. I felt a strong wish to remain silent for a little longer, to contemplate and process the strange state of mind and unusual behavior I was slowly returning home to myself from. In the building someone had prepared dinner for us. While eating I returned fully to my usual love of words and started talking a lot. We shared our feelings and experiences from the walk, and I felt how these people and I had now something special in common. This was the beginning of my verbal narration of the walk.

After dinner we gathered in the room where the introduction had taken place and Other Spaces continued the verbal process of narrating by showing pictures from the walk. They had also traced our route on GPS and made a graphic drawing of it (see figure 5).



Figure 5. Mapping the walk

In the end we had an official feedback session where each of us could share our thoughts and reflections on what we just had experienced.

And now when I have re-narrated *Reindeer Safari* once more and situated it in this written frame, it may be up to the reader to continue the narration. With Lund's reference to the British anthropologist Tim Ingold, "*There is no point at which the story ends and the life begins*" (Lund 2008:138).

#### A philosophy of openness

A short conclusion on the analysis of *Reindeer Safari* as a phenomenological travel could be:

From a travel perspective it is clear that *Reindeer Safari* as a concept has no intention of being a journey to watch and hunt wild animals as something objective and disconnected to the

traveler. More than applying the concept to classical tourism and ideas of the exotic the performance calls for a travel mode based on changes of mindset and habitual perception. From the structure and intention of the performance, a significant point can be made about the philosophy behind *Reindeer Safari*, with a statement from de Botton's thoughts on habits:

*The pleasure we derive from journeys is perhaps depending more on the mindset with which we travel than the destination we travel to. If only we could apply a traveling mindset to our own locals, we might find these places becoming no less interesting than the high mountain passes and butterfly-filled jungles of Humboldt's South America (de Botton 2002: 246)*

In *Other Spaces's* manifest, the collective takes this thought a big step further:

*How on earth could a human being expect to get response from space when s/he does not even manage to get it from her/his close living surroundings? Is it not the same desert that s/he finds time and again? The liberation that we are calling for does not result from crossing limits and boundaries or from respecting them. It is the outcome of opening up to that which is not limited and bound. That opening up is in itself dramatic and invites all creatures to gather around it because it is opening up to being in all its diversity and uniqueness. The phenomenon of human is the phenomenon of the stage, theatre the place of encounter for that phenomenon. (Kirkkopelto, 2004)*

And so a conclusion could be: Traveling the outskirts of the city as a reindeer is not mainly staged for the pleasure or interest of humans. According to the collective's ecological philosophy, the performance exercise aims higher than human-centered thoughts of how to enjoy our surroundings better. As an environmental piece *Reindeer Safari* addresses the relations between all beings, human and non-human, and suggests the radical belief that if we want nature to survive, we must restore a mindset that connects with beings outside the human sphere.

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