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Shovelling snow in Finnish Lapland: Social and aesthetic perspectives on an everyday activity

Hannah Strauss-Mazzullo

Arctic Centre, University of Lapland, PL 122, 96101 Rovaniemi, Finland

Research Article

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Author for correspondence:
Hannah Strauss-Mazzullo, Email: hannah.strauss-mazzullo@ulapland.fi

Abstract

For residents of Finnish Lapland, snow frames outdoor and indoor activities during the entire year, both in its presence and in its absence. This article focuses on people's social and aesthetic perspectives on what is commonly referred to as "snow work", *lumityö*. In ethnographic tradition, the aim is to understand "doing living with snow" in contemporary urban society – with snow that falls and, unlike other forms of precipitation, stays around for many months to come, thus creating physical, mouldable obstacles that have mental, social and environmental consequences. The shovelling of snow is considered an important physical activity that allows people to practice their individual expert knowledge and lets them socialise during long annual periods of potential isolation. Hence, apart from its restricting features, snow and ice enhance the meaning of homeowners' dwelling in the open. In this context, aesthetic and creative concepts are essential where they draw on people's gardening and artistic skills, and bring satisfaction to those engaging with this mundane and unavoidable activity.

The case for researching snow shovelling activities

During half of the year, the shovelling of snow can last several hours in the daily routine of a person living in Arctic and sub-Arctic conditions. According to its day-filling potential, the shovelling of snow is a frequent topic of conversation among Arctic residents, as well as an important market sector where tools and services can be purchased, and a health concern where accumulating snow on roof-tops is dealt with single-handedly as this article will introduce the reader living outside the region of concern. Despite this apparent relevance academic, and in particular, sociological research on this mundane activity is almost non-existent. The aim of this article is, thus, to suggest a direction for future research and to provide initial groundwork through the description of snow shovelling as a significant part of Arctic livelihood in the context of Finnish Lapland.

In ethnographic tradition, research for this article has been collected through participant observation between 2007 and 2020 in different living circumstances in Finnish Lapland and the Province of Alberta, Canada. Knowledge has been derived from direct engagement with the physical task as well as conversations with residents about snow work in apartment building blocks, holiday homes and detached housing in the urban sprawl. Extensive fieldnotes have been kept regarding the "doing living with snow" over the past winter season (2019/2020), together with photographs, drive-through videos and drawings of yards and particular situations and items. Insights from the empirical work will be summarised in this article, while newspaper discussions are used to illustrate this research piece and to indicate the importance of snow work in the Arctic living. The aim is to initiate discussion and provoke research on this understated field of daily activity. Theoretically, this article focuses on the socialising capacity of snow work, the communication of identity through front garden respectively snow work, and the common engagement in aesthetic practices. Harvesting an extensive literature on gardening and aesthetics, parallels are drawn between summer and winter activities overlapping in the same physical space. The case for additional and comparative research on research is made.

The economic importance of snow

The importance of snow in the Arctic's biggest tourism centre Rovaniemi in Finnish Lapland has been described previously (Falk & Vieru, 2019; Valtonen, 2009; Veijola & Strauss-Mazzullo, 2018). The commercial benefit is derived from the availability and accessibility of snow in traditional skiing centres across the Fennoscandian and Russian North. In addition, Finnish Lapland's economy thrives on many other small and medium-sized businesses utilising the snowy landscape, during northern lights watching, trips through the landscape in organised safaris on skidoo, reindeer and husky sleds, visits to snow castles, ice hotels and restaurants, fun parks as well as overnight stays in glass igloos. Snow and ice are the background, surface and building material, providing a tangible, vast outdoor scenery within established transport routes. New ideas for winter tourism development are regularly explored by small and medium-sized enterprises, and the range of activities is ever broadening, thereby offering a

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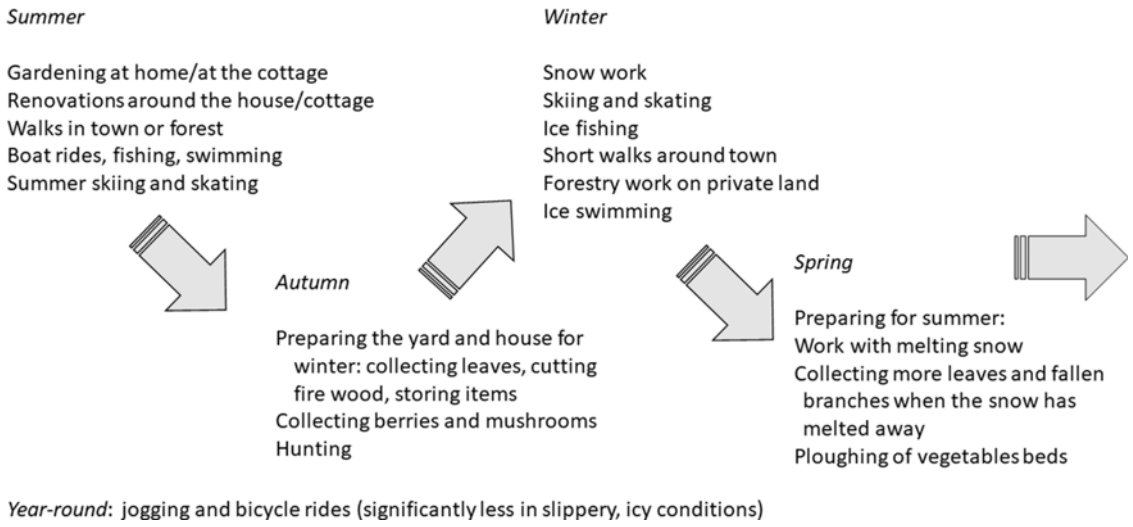

Fig. 1. Common outdoor activities of home and garden owners in Finland according to the season.

livelihood or at least additional income to many. Because of this economic dependency, the impact of climate change on winter tourism has been observed closely (Grenier, 2007; Tervo-Kankare, Hall, & Saarinen, 2018) and counter-measures have been sought: the absence of snow in early winter has provoked businesses in Lapland to take precautions, for instance, by storing snow from the last season (Grünewald, Wolfsperger, & Lehning, 2018; Kaján, 2014). On the other hand, the warming climate has turned regions in Central Europe completely snow-free, creating additional demand for travel to snowy destinations, especially around Christmas time (Tervo-Kankare, Hall, & Saarinen, 2013).

The most recent experience of the 2019–2020 season has turned this abundance–absence relationship into a domestic phenomenon in Finland. While measuring record snow levels all across Finnish Lapland, the South of Finland has remained snow-free over the entire season. In Lapland, unusually warm temperatures, with short-term melting conditions in almost weekly frequency created hazardous conditions for pedestrians, cyclists, drivers alike, while residents of the Finnish South have been deprived of a snowy winter experience despite the increase in precipitation, a sign of climatic changes. While mild weather conditions with increased snow fall are beneficial for tourist enterprises in the North, other livelihoods struggle to adapt to frequent changes (Rasmus et al., 2020). Already in November 2019, reindeer herders were worried about several ice layers forming on the ground, knowing that reindeer would have difficulties to dig for plants under the snow (personal communication with reindeer herders). Yet, in comparison with the current lockdown of touristic activity in winter resorts due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the uncertainties entailed in climatic changes seem more manageable. Snow can be stored and (at least some) reindeer can be transported and fed, but without tourists, an important source of income has broken away.

Mental and physical health impacts

The first snow fall is a longed-for and thus important moment in Finnish society. In traditional as well as social media, the moment is celebrated, documented and shared by everyone, most frequently in the latter with short expressions ("*ihana lunta!*"/"wonderful snow!"). Very much appreciated winter leisure activities are anticipated and cheerful words exchanged between strangers, which could otherwise be considered intrusive behaviour. In late November, early December, when the snow has settled and skiing slopes and tracks as well as ice rinks have been prepared around town, when a lake or river ice is thick enough for ice fishing, regular outdoor activities are again pursued by all ages. Around town, many women and elderly couples enjoy walks with hiking poles. Along ski tracks, shelters with firewood are provided by the forest administration, while in town, shopping malls and cafés are popular destinations on cold days. Thus, on average, people cannot be considered less active in winter (Fig. 1). Only during the period of transition, wet and cold, often slippery road conditions and bad visibility decrease the range of movement and outdoor activities.

During that darkest time of the year, in November and December, the sun hardly reaches above the horizon at 66° latitude and higher. A continuous snow cover, however, reflects the little light that is there, and turns the landscape white, and after dusk, blue. This time of blue light in Finnish Lapland has been termed *kaamos*, and besides giving a name to the physical environment the term also functions to depict a potentially depressive period in life (Brunn, Karjalainen, Küller, & Roinila, 2004). Kaamos is often used to describe the heart of the winter (*sydäntalvi*) all over Finland, and a web camera from the northernmost town Enontekiö reaches an increasing number of visitors from all over the world. The arrival of the sun after the end of the polar night is an important, officially celebrated social institution ("21 Minutes of Sunshine", 2019). The time of blinding sunlight reflected by snow admittedly changes people's perception: "at the end of kaamos time, light floods through doors and windows, and the mind is in a welcoming, receptive state" (Vasara, 2020, own translation). To mitigate tiredness and depression due to the lack of sunlight, many homes feature daylight simulation lamps. It is widely understood that darkness, and especially the period with little or melting snow causes people to feel tired, move less and eat more.

Therefore, from a medical perspective, winter conditions are considered a hazard for people's mental as well as physical health. Slippery conditions are dangerous for all age groups, but especially so for the elderly as they experience delays in reaction time, loss in muscle mass and bone density (also due to staying indoors and lack of exposure to the sun), as well as the loss of flexibility of joints, altogether turning injuries from falling on the ice more frequent and severe (Bulajic-Kopjar, 2000; Campbell, Spears, Borrie, & Fitzgerald, 1988;

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Ytterstad, 1996). Improved medical treatment of other illnesses encourages "elderly people to lead more active lives than in the past" (Flinkkilä et al., 2011). Because of a generally improved health and rising life expectancy more elderly are out on the streets than before, increasing the number of accidents not in percentages, but in absolute numbers. This again is a growing economic concern, especially because of slow healing processes. Considering this aspect of improving medical care, resulting in activity levels and demographic development together with climatic changes in the circumpolar North, the problem of winter-related accidents among the elderly is likely to increase in the years to come (Lépy et al., 2016). In urban areas, efforts are made to improve safety on sidewalks and shoes with anti-slip soles or metal studs have been promoted to make walking safer (Sylvestre, 2016), albeit the latter increasing the risk of falling indoors on stone surfaces, which has turned many shops and public buildings to bar people from entering with studded shoe soles. At the same time, a possibility to sit down at the entrance of buildings in order to change shoes is hardly ever given (Tennberg, 2020).

Across the world, research tackles various aspects of health-related problems associated with snow fall. Accidents related to the removal of snow can be severe, for instance when people fall from the roof of their own homes (Fujikawa & Tanaka, 2019), or suffer cardiac arrest following shovelling activities after heavy snow falls (Franklin, McCullough, & Gordon, 2004) for which in the Finnish North, the term *lumilapiokuolema* has been coined, "snow shovel death". In the attempt to remove accumulating snow from the entrance, driveway and roof-top, homeowners regularly go beyond their physical capacities. Despite being aware of the risk to overstrain oneself, it is difficult to realise that a limit has been reached.

In remote areas, formal and informal care providers struggle to reach their customers because of roads blocked by snow (Skinner, Yantzi, & Rosenberg, 2009). Being confined to the house due to unstable weather conditions has been observed to cause social isolation, depression and prevent an active lifestyle (Hjorthol, 2013). In addition, environmental changes entail an influx of new viruses and bacteria, with more possibility to spread in humid, mild weather conditions (Rautio, Emelyanova, Eriksen, & Magga, 2017).

Snow removal in public and common areas, Finland

Winter road clearance constitutes a considerable factor of expenditure in Finnish municipalities' budget, and the service is constantly subject to discussion and assessment, sometimes even criminal investigation in case of road accidents. In addition to the lanes used by cars, making sidewalks and residential roads without sidewalk safe for pedestrians and cyclists is a priority, involving the grading and distribution of sand. For instance, the winter road maintenance plan and safety strategies for the cycling network of the city of Helsinki, including decisions on priorities, are available for public perusal (City of Helsinki, 2019). When weather conditions and infrastructure allow, it is recommended that half of the sidewalk or part of the residential road remains sand-free so they can be frequented with sleds and kick sleds (Laki Kadun Ja Eräiden Yleisten Alueiden Kunnossa- Ja Puhtaanapidosta [Law on Road Maintenance and Clearance], 1978/669, §3), the latter mostly used by elderly women. Sand getting stuck between the studs of pedestrian's winter boots, and thus turning the sole flat again on the ice, has an impact on users' safety (Tennberg, 2020).

Communities of apartment owners in multi-storey houses usually rely on small businesses that service entrances and parking lots by a small tractor. In most places, however, the minor, manual part of the work is still considered shared neighbourhood responsibility, or *talkootyöt*, to be done by volunteers. Similarly, along residential roads, mailboxes of four to six homeowners or entire multi-storey buildings are grouped together and placed along the road for quick access. To clear the space in front of the mailbox for access by car is a shared responsibility.

As a strong community concept, *talkootyöt* nowadays refers to the general maintenance of the local environment, including the collecting of leaves in autumn as well as the cleaning up of roadsides from litter after the snow has melted in spring, but it can also describe the unpaid, common effort to build a cottage for community gatherings. National campaigns had promoted the concept during and after WWII. Regarding snow work, the older generation seems to remain dedicated to the idea of the common effort as conversations in the context of this study have revealed. This can lead to a situation in and around apartment buildings where physically able, young people remain elusive during their turn, but older people diligently go about their task, often struggling with the rough surfaces as a result of snow work left undone for a week. Unfulfilled expectations towards the common effort are frequently debated among like-minded people, that is those elderly living in apartment blocks speculating and making fun about their younger neighbours: "Have you seen how the guy cleared a tiny path from his entrance all across the yard up to his car during his turn?" (two female elderly neighbours chatting and laughing). The frequent non-fulfillment of snow work then becomes a topic during one of the regular apartment owner gatherings where decisions are made regarding the purchase of additional snow clearing services by usually small, local entrepreneurs. To pay such services, the common maintenance charge (*yhtiövastike*) of apartment owners has to be raised, which is what especially the elderly with small pensions seek to avoid.

Critical assessment of road clearing services

The work of the large snow plough that clears the road after snow fall is subject to critical assessment by residents. When pushing the snow along the road, towards snow banks on the side, the entrances to the private property allow large shovels to discharge their load. While the impact can be eased up by the driver by way of lowering the speed, the discharge is not completely avoidable as the snow plough has to push through with considerable momentum and serve hundreds of other houses in the area in order to make the road accessible by car. Interviewed by the regional newspaper *Lapin Kansa*, the driver of a snow plough in Rovaniemi described that he is frequently met by anger especially by physically able people, some homeowners turning violent and hitting the plough, but never receives a sign of appreciation: "'It's a great feeling to get work done as it should be. I enjoy very much to get the clearing of an area done nicely'. It even does not hurt to never receive praise, but complaints. 'During my work shift I usually get shouted at several times. But if you know that you have done your job right and as agreed, the barking of people can be disregarded [*haukkumisen voi jättää omaan arvoonsa*]'" (Kärki, 2020).

In the same medium, elderly homeowners have posted pictures and comments on the impossible task of removing snow and ice walls from their entrances. Some take it with humour, such as the reader of *Lapin Kansa* who submitted a picture in the section "weather picture" (*sääkuva*) and titled it "pensioner's daydream" (Ruonakoski, 2020). The picture depicts the side of a residential road after the snow plough has passed through around midday, leaving several approximately metre-high lumps of compressed snow in front of the mailboxes which have to be cleared for mail

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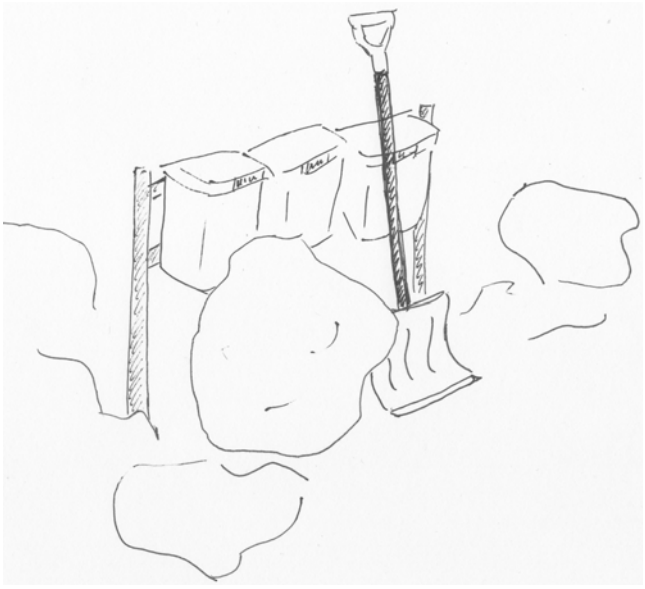

Fig. 2. A pensioner's daydream, redrawn from a photograph in the local newspaper.

car access. The way the picture is taken, with the biggest lump up front, the plastic shovel with a wooden stick leaning against the mailboxes further in the back seems a feeble tool regarding the size and hardness of the snow lumps (Fig. 2).

Others choose more drastic words and reflect the emotions the snow plough driver describes in the interview above. "Should we owners of detached houses organize ourselves against the city/contractors when snow is compressed and thrown into our cleaned entrances? *payer of residential taxes*" via text message to the regional newspaper ("Pitäisiko Meidän", 2020).

These statements, extracted from ongoing public controversy, show that the organisation of snow removal in Finnish Lapland's capital bears unresolved issues, regarding the prioritisation of roads and the servicing of the boundaries between private, shared and public space under time and financial constraints, and considering the physical capabilities of homeowners.

Contextual examples: the case for further comparative research

Contextual examples add further categories to the phenomenon of urban dealing with winter precipitation in cold climates. In 2016, the city of Stockholm promoted "gender-equal snow cleaning", later criticised as "feminist" snow removal, in a policy that prioritised the clearing of sidewalks before roads so that women can jog and cycle (Weatherbe, 2016), and probably push strollers, although the text does not mention this as to not determining it as a mainly women's activity. Another contextual example from the Canadian city of Edmonton illustrates a rather different approach despite similar amounts of annual snow fall. There, residential (i.e. non-priority) roads are rarely cleared, and residents are regularly forced to dig out their cars after being stuck in slush and snow. Sidewalk maintenance is similarly organised, often relying on residents' own initiative to provide passage to passers-by. So-called "snow angels", volunteers for instance through the website snowanglecanada.ca, provide relief to impaired persons by shovelling in front of their houses, but also on sidewalks. Despite efforts to reorganise and improve winter road maintenance, the city of Edmonton and its subcontractors continue to struggle with a lack of resources. These examples aim to illustrate some of the contestations involved in snow removal in public areas: for who, by whom, how often, how thoroughly and efficiently are roads and sidewalks cleared? While these considerations are not the focus of this article, they give a general impression of the communal effort devoted to the task.

Doing snow work

In the Finnish North, temperatures allow for snow fall from early September to the beginning of June. The period in which there is a need to shovel snow in front of the door however is shorter. Households are well equipped with snow shovels of various sizes and shapes, and many have turned to gasoline-fuelled snow blowers or ordered professional services to clear the space in front of their street entrance from manually accumulated snow.

Local architecture and snow storing strategies

The past winter of 2019/2020 with record snow levels across Lapland had pushed established strategies to the limits, and the yard seemed to have become too small to fit additional snow, *Lapin Kansa* journalists reported homeowners' experiences (Haapakangas, 2020a). In the same issue, the regional newspaper published information about the duty to observe the borders of the private property. Snow has to be disposed of within the limits of one's own garden, not on the street, ditch or parks nearby. Precipitation is supposed to be absorbed where it has touched the ground in the first place, "snow becomes private when it touches the ground", the headline titles [*Lumesta tulee omaisuutta, kun se osuu maahan]* (Haapakangas, 2020b).

The arrangement of houses, garages and other buildings, the location of the entrance and the size and slope of the roof all have an impact on the amount of space that needs to be cleared from snow. In addition, significant changes in architecture, land use and building material over the last 70 years need to be considered. Architectural paradigms show a move away from detached houses with two floors and a basement that left much garden space as well as a separate garage and storage buildings to the single-building option of semi-detached housing that hosts front access and includes carport, cold storage and sauna under the same roof. In the area of observation, the most common detached housing in the urban sprawl dates back to the 1950s when Rovaniemi was rebuilt during "reconstruction time" (*jälleenrakennuksen aika*) following the German destruction of the town (Kivimäki & Hytönen, 2015; Tuominen & Löfgren, 2018). The so-called "veteran's house" (*rintamamiestalo*) was produced on a mass scale since the 1940s across Finland, introducing new living arrangements for "modern family" life (Saarikangas, 1993) in a time of rapid urbanisation and post-war reconstruction. "On the outskirts of towns, residential plots were quite large: subsistence agriculture, fruit trees, and berry bushes were important aspect of habitation, particularly after the war, and continued rural lifestyles in an urban context" (Saarikangas & Horelli, 2018, p. 53). Most of the plots still in their original state accommodate a garage or carport at the opposite end of the plot, meaning that a sometimes 50-m stretch of the driveway has to be maintained and cleaned regularly for road access. In addition, the entrance to the main house is located in the back or on the side of the house (as seen from the road), and the plot hosts additional buildings for wood storage, sauna etc. to which a path is usually maintained throughout the winter. In contrast, later housing paradigms, starting to emerge in the 1960s, tend to unite all different

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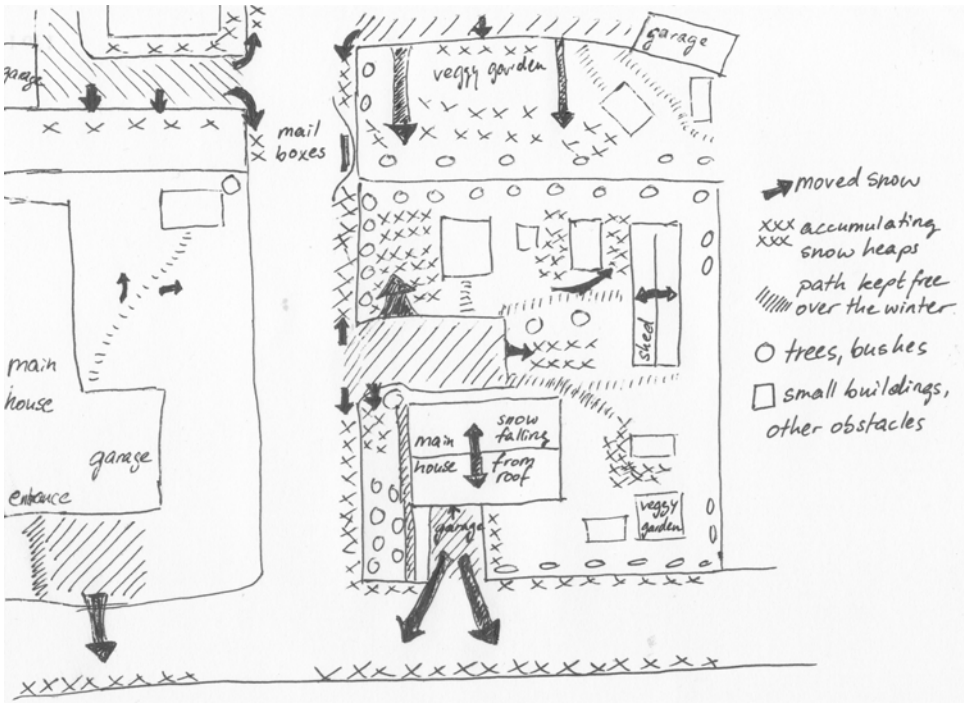

Fig. 3. Moving snow in the neighbourhood.

purposes under one roof, with direct street access of both garage/carport and entrance, hence requiring only minimal space to be cleared from snow. The difference this makes in terms of snow work is visible in Figure 3, with a building from the 1990s on the left, featuring all used areas under a single roof, while the surrounding buildings are veteran's houses from the 1940s.

The areas developed with veteran's houses in the 1940s and 1950s were generous regarding the size of the garden around the house, and the large plots have since been attractive for so-called infill development (*täydennysrakentaminen*). During the following decades, houses were enlarged, replaced or plots divided in order to host another detached house (see graphics in Könönen (2018), 64, on how plots were filled in with new development). Heininen-Blomstedt (2013) describes how infill construction was the effort to adapt the model family veteran's house to an individual, and changing needs. A garage (if possible with street access) is considered an example of "natural need for enlargement" (Könönen, 2018, p. 94, own translation) in an increasingly motor-dependent living style. In addition, many main entrances to the house have been moved from the far back to a more easily maintainable spot in terms of snow work, either through additional construction or by simply breaking the outside wall and adding a door.

In the old times (*ennen vanhaan*) as people refer to, snow was used as an insulation material, loosely piled up against the foundation of the house. This technique can still be observed here and there around town, and perhaps more so in the rural areas of Lapland, but is widely regarded obsolete considering the improved insulation of contemporary housing. In fact, it is often argued that the snow increases the possibility of mould when melting water and a blocked air circulation create favourable conditions, especially where rainwater drainage around the house has not been installed. These and other snow-related technical details are frequent topics of conversations between laypeople and experts, and between different generations of snow shovellers.

With the restrictions of having to dispose of the snow within the own residential plot, only the regular snow shovelling, and the strategic emptying of the sleigh shovel will allow for the necessary space to be kept snow-free. What space is needed also depends on how many cars a yard has to fit in this highly car-dependent urban environment (Tennberg, 2020), as well as other activities (soccer games, space for dogs and fireplace). The individual systems people have developed in their yards are further determined by the position of trees, bushes, sheds and other permanent features, around which a path for the sleigh shovel can be established. The path for the sleigh shovel should not be too steep, but slowly reach a plateau so that the shovel can still be emptied by lifting it up. A path that can be walked on requires compressed, or overfrozen snow (*hanki*), otherwise the shovelling person sinks in. The dumping of snow has to be dealt with inside the private property (see above), so the experienced snow shoveller starts piling the snow around the outskirts of his or her private garden and yard, forecasting the increasingly limited space as winter progresses.

Machine-aided and manual snow work

Where the sleigh shovel or snow shovel requires careful use of personal strength, the snow blower is easy to move for extended periods of time (an hour or so). They have become more and more common in private yards in Finnish Lapland. Snow blowers have to be driven across the snow-covered ground in a specific way in order to make sure that the snow is not thrown into an area that has already been cleared. To remove snow from a wider area or path, one starts from the middle or the place where snow cannot be disposed, adjusting the stack outlet in a wide angle so that it throws the snow as far as possible towards its intended site, and then moving in line by line

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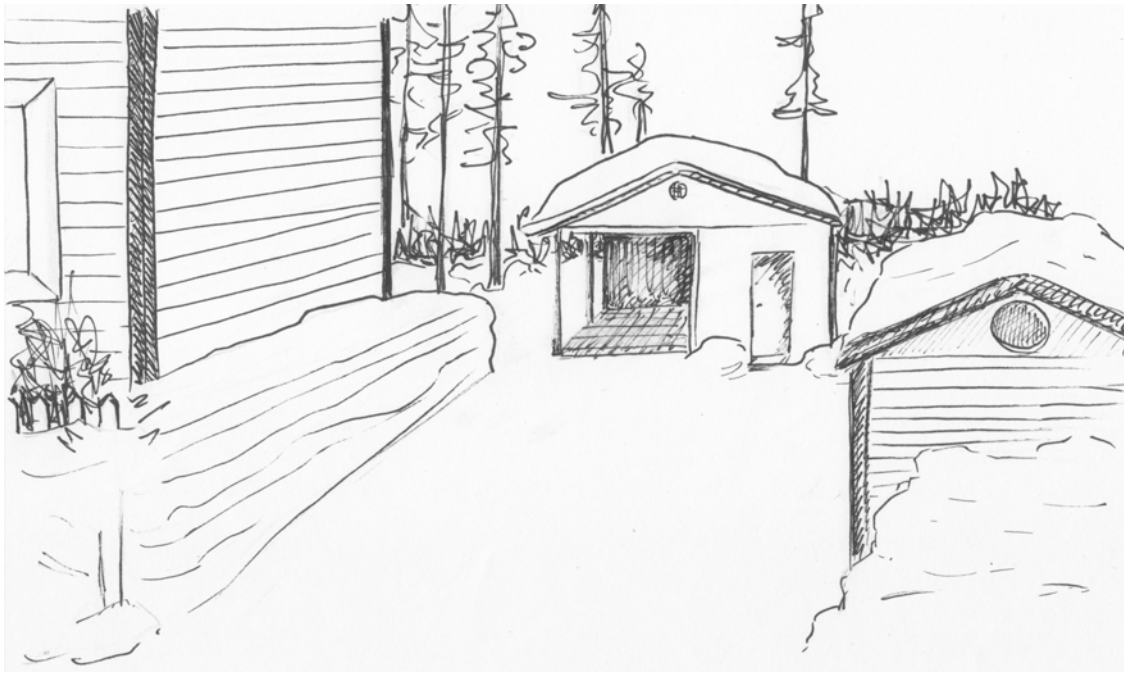

Fig. 4. The shovelled landscape around a detached house with snow at a height of 1 m and more.

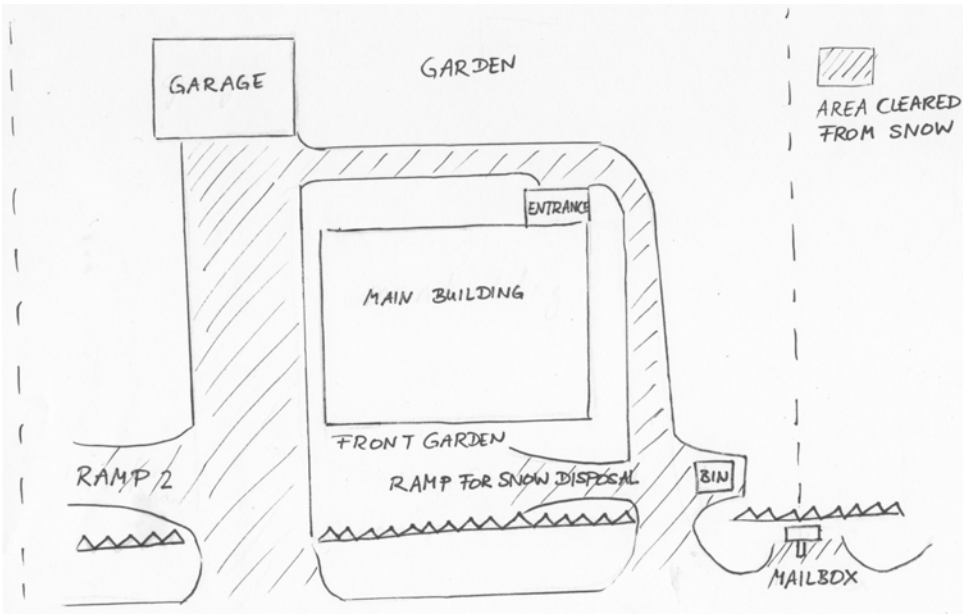

Fig. 5. The view from above: shovelled paths around a detached house.

towards that side until the end of the area to be cleared has been reached.

The snow blower creates a rather different landscape, with even, high side walls and a smooth area beyond (Fig. 4). Where a sleigh shovel has been used, these sharp side walls do not exist, but show the traces of an uphill path (Fig. 5) and beyond it, an uneven landscape because of different snow loads and various degrees of compression. The machine-aided snow removal on the private property has its pitfalls. Snow blowers are considerable financial investments in the first place, and they require a lot of maintenance, which can be costly too. Especially temperatures circulating around 0°, with alternating melting and freezing conditions create blockages of various parts, so that the machine becomes unreliable. In addition, to switch between snow blower and sleigh shovel means to shift storage strategies and to use alternative paths to move the snow.

Being along outside during snow work

As soon as the snow plough passes through and leaves a half metre high and 2-m wide dam of heavy, compressed snow in front of the entrance to the yard, people – whoever is at home – flock out of

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Fig. 6. The moment after the snow plough cleared a street.

their homes onto the street, aware that the task becomes more and more difficult the longer the snow pile settles. Apart from the physical stress the task implies, however, this moment fulfils an important social function as it forces homeowners to leave their houses and be on the street together. It is thus the moment to escape isolation and to meet the neighbour while at the same time engaging in physical activity that requires a slow pace and/or regular breaks. When the sleigh shovel is used to move the snow from the entrance to other places along the road, neighbours meet, take a breath and let the heart rate calm down, but resume before they get cold, as they are presented a welcome excuse to disengage (Fig. 6).

Shovelling snow inside the yard during or after snow fall does not have the same effects. Here, the timing is less important and can thus be chosen deliberately. Being inside the own yard further means that the distance to the neighbour who may happen to be outside at the same time, remains high, whereas the removal of snow alongside the road brings people closer in an area devoid of barriers. As Bradford (2007, p. 15) describes in her chapter on weather memories: "It is ironic for as many millions of people as have come to know snow shoveling firsthand, the task was always a solitary endeavor for me". In contemporary Finnish Lapland, being outside together on the street after the snow plough also connects those in common, purposeful activity who live further apart and who otherwise rarely meet or see each other if not only when one passes by the house of the other inside the car or on the bicycle. Albeit imposed by the timing of the snow plough, and despite being a mundane aspect of everyday life, social community culminates at this moment. It is a moment of transcendence, of knowing how the other feels, works the muscles, breathes and sweats, and it breaks the physical and mental isolation winter otherwise enforces on people's life.

Snow work for the gardener

The snow work that dominates half of the year of a home owner's residential outdoor activity can be understood as a surrogate for gardening. Especially where the most necessary aspects have been taken care of (passage from the street to the house and perhaps, garage), snow work is often understood as the possibility to exercise. In contrast to skiing and walking in the snow on beaten tracks, shovelling snow has a creative, and as I will argue below, highly aestheticised side, similar to gardening, of which the passionate gardener-resident is regularly deprived. The time for gardening is rather short in Finnish Lapland, comprising only the months of June, July and August. During these months, both people and plants burst into activity, followed by a period of around nine months in which plants don't grow under an at some point metre-high layer of snow that melts away in May.

Snow work leaves no visible traces after it has melted, but people's individual techniques are intertwined with features of the garden. In spring, in preparation of the snow-free season, the snow is not only pushed into corners where it is not in the

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way during the winter season, but also where it is not an obstacle in spring, when heaps of snow and ice can delay the start of gardening.

In anticipation of the upcoming season, melting snow, too, is subject to frequent removal. Melting ice sheets are broken with iron shovels and sticks and carried away by wheelbarrow to support the process. Snow is spread out in already snow-free places so that it melts away during the days when night frost still prevails. Channels are dug to prevent small floods and the forming of ice sheets during sub-zero temperatures at night.

Over the years, homeowners have developed elaborate systems to put away snow, regularly creating a functional yard environment in spite of expanding obstacles and at the same time preparing for the melting and gardening season. Rather than constituting a nuisance, snow work is considered a source of satisfaction, as is gardening, and it allows neighbours to exchange expertise over tools and methods. Not everyone devotes the same degree of passion for the task, but unless a professional service is paid, shovelling snow is an unavoidable part of everyday life for at least half of the year in Finnish Lapland.

"And what is snow work for you?"

A discussion in the newspaper *Kaleva's* forum (*Own life* section, 19 February 2012) illustrates common neighbourhood talk frequently encountered by the author. As such, the regular conversation tends to move quickly from the weather itself to the work winter weather entails for most city dwellers, even those without a garden. The user *Bellebyyn Bi´ha Boju* asked "Is snow work for you exercise or does it make you swear when you take the shovel in your hand and go to the yard? I can relate to it with my mind set for exercises, but of course it has been a routine for me for decades" (Bellebyyn Bi´ha Boju, 2012).

Among other replies, the following statements were made (all translations by the author):

"It's nice if it happens right after work. Sometimes in the morning it is a bit unnerving, but over time it has become a nice activity".

"I love snow work. I have many pictures of myself where I am posing with the sleigh shovel".

"It's a game. Playfully I go out to play sliding and building with snow".

"Nowadays sleigh shovels are lighter and easy to handle, no one has to be afraid to get weals on the palms. I always happily push the sleigh shovel that belongs to our apartment building, whenever no one else is using it. Among apartment owners, there is a fierce competition who is the fastest and gets hold of the sleigh shovel. So at the last meeting, we decided to buy a couple more sleigh shovels for our yards".

Among many older adults, snow shovelling is a daily routine, even in the absence of new snow. Specific corners of the garden and yard are tackled over and over again, and largely smooth and hard surfaces are created that are devoid of immediate use, but prepare for an increasingly wet season as well as the first garden activity later on. The health impact of such activity has been described previously in the literature that emphasises the restorative effects of spending time in favourite outdoor places. These are considered self-regulating strategies; in the attempt to cope with stress and worry, people have been observed to seek favourite outdoor places (Korpela, Ylén, Tyrväinen, & Silvennoinen, 2010). More generally, the positive effects of garden visits have been confirmed (Rappe & Kivelä, 2005), which are yet unrelated to feelings of satisfaction derived from creative and at the same time utile activity described in the context of daily snow work here.

In the Finnish North, snow shovelling does not seem to be bound to gender or age. While it has often been understood as a task for the working-age men, just like mowing the lawn (Nordenmark & Nyman, 2003), observations in the context of Finnish Lapland provide different evidence. Especially the elderly living alone are often women. And among other imposed chores, it can be a task for the children. Putting away snow strategically over many months needs some negotiation if pursued by several people, requiring discussion, instructions and teaching. It is thus not uncommon that one person of a shared household usually goes about the task and watches carefully that the established house rules of snow removal are somewhat observed. Bradford (2007, see quote above) describes herself shovelling snow as a young girl; in addition to the indoor household tasks that she shared with her sisters, she was the person who was responsible for shovelling the snow in front of the family home. Considering the amount of snow that has to be cleared after heavy snow fall, shovelling becomes a concerted family effort, and often those having grown up and moved out still return to their parents' home to help out.

When the snow creates too much pressure on the roof of the main or smaller buildings, many techniques have been invented to prevent damage to the building's structure. Climbing and walking on the roof can be dangerous, but is the most common way. Snow can be pushed, scraped (with the help of a telescopic stick) or cut off by ropes and two people standing on both sides of a lower building. In a study of a heavy snow fall area in Japan, it was confirmed that single elderly "[s]ubjects responded to life [. . .] with their knowledge and experience: they practiced performing countermeasures on the roof using methods with less physically burdensome" (Fujikawa & Tanaka, 2019, p. 40). Instead of walking on the roof and risking their lives, some turned to warm up their houses, causing the snow to slide down, thereby gaining control over their living environment.

From garden work to snow work

Snow work takes place in the same space as gardening. But the two activities resemble each other much more than just in terms of spatial overlap. Generally, both provide regular outdoor activity as well as the medium to socialise. Moreover, both plant-filled and snow-covered private gardens or yards are the object of creative effort and aesthetic judgement.

An extensive branch of literature discusses the role and development of private gardens from ancient to contemporary society, starting from the cultivation of plants among hunter–gatherer societies some four thousand years ago (Hoffmann et al., 2016) to more recent subsistence purposes in times of crises or rapid industrial development (Calvet-Mir & March, 2017; Ginn, 2012; Keshavarz & Bell, 2016). In the current season of 2020, the Corona pandemic has shown a surge in gardening activities across the world in the hope to supplement private food stocks and avoid the trip to the store (Walljasper & Polansek, 2020). Gardening is understood as an art and a science (Herklots, Millington Synge, & Perrott, 2020), and a political instrument if practiced in occupied city spaces in the context of so-called "guerrilla gardening" (Hardman, Larkham, & Adams, 2018). The benefits of gardening are discussed regarding the necessary daily physical activity (van den Berg, van Winsum-Westra, de Vries, & van Dillen, 2010), and sometimes turned into therapeutic measures to improve

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people's mental health (Clatworthy, Hinds, & Camic, 2013; Rappe, Koivunen, & Korpela, 2008). Gardening is promoted as a possibility to preserve biodiversity with the side-effects of increasingly knowledgeable gardeners who gain prestige and spread the knowledge by socialising over their experience with native plants and ecosystems (Raymond, Diduck, Buijs, Boerchers, & Moquin, 2019; van Heezik, Dickinson, & Freeman, 2012).

Winter, the time of inactivity?

Occasionally, literature mentions also the "time of inactivity", that is winter.

> "Moreover, because of the wet and cold, for a large portion of the year, the garden almost disappears as part of the domestic space altogether, unused, unseen, and unworked. The garden may be fenced in, bordered, and controlled, but this control has its limitations. Unlike the house, the garden is essentially unbounded and open to the elements; the borders are porous. In terms of cultural constructions of domestic space, then, the garden is an occasional arena" (Alexander, 2002, p. 861).

In the urban context of Finnish Lapland, winter yards are far from constituting inactive spaces, on the contrary, snow work reclaims the unused space and creates new and functional landscapes just as summer gardens. Snow fall offers the opportunity to be physically and aesthetically involved with nature, satisfying an essential desire. "We often appreciate nature by being engaged with it, rather than looking at or listening to it as a removed perceiver" (Kupfer, 1997, p. 6). The cultural landscapes around private homes reflect shared customs within ecological restrictions. Control is limited in the creation of a cultural landscape, where "nature [is] both resource and limitation, amenable to alteration and operating under laws of its own" (Strathern, 1980, p. 178). In the constructed ecology of the lawn or snow cover, "messy" nature has to be transformed (Grose, 2014).

The social importance of the front garden/garden front

The garden provides the setting for human interaction in the neighbourhood context. In summer, the neat urban front garden – in its many variations depending on local architectural styles, population density, ecological features of the landscape etc. – is understood above all to represent the private property. By adhering to certain expectations regarding the look of a front garden, the aim is to manage the impression on passers-by, thus preparing the homeowner's social position in future interaction. While the garden is understood to function as a stage, or "front" (Goffman, 1956, p. 13), it cannot be removed from its geographical location, hence any performance has to take place within that space. In contrast, the "personal front" (Goffman, 1956) consisting of facial expressions, gestures, but also more permanent body features of the person, travels from one geographical setting to another. On the other hand, the garden in its particular geographical location functions as a tool for impression management also in the absence of the gardener.

The purpose of a performance up front is to situate oneself among other like-minded homeowners and at the same time to convey a "personal" taste through the choice of certain plants or the way these are arranged. The personal taste is, however, hardly ever personal, and in its variations functions to ascertain preference and belonging (Bourdieu, 1984). Altogether, these principles of impression management and belonging influence the visible pattern, the degree of attention as well as the number of resources devoted to the tending of plants, maintenance of fences, paths and other items.

It is further claimed that the arrangements of the house's interior is repeated in the garden, dividing private space into an accessible front and more secluded back (Alexander, 2002; Chevalier, 1998). The neat garden as a domestic space, featuring a smooth green lawn, flower beds and lower bushes towards the borders and somewhat hidden seating arrangements away from the road, expresses the desire for social acceptance and public approval. What gardening homeowners strive for is the adherence of social norms, and here especially those believed to be upheld by the neighbours, rather than by society in general (Cook, Hall, & Larson, 2012). The desire for acceptance is a strong motivation, stronger than for instance the wish to preserve the environment: in the context where lush lawns are common but maintenance requires excessive irrigation, alternative, locally adapted plant species could be chosen to replace the lawn, but are regularly dismissed (Cook, Hall, & Larson, 2012).

Traditionally, reaching back to the post-WWII period, the urban garden would have to be neat towards the roadside, whereas waste and tools were to be hidden behind sheds in the back, away from the street. "Thus, front yards may reflect a display of social status or adherence to neighborhood norms or rules, whereas backyards reflect residents' ideals or 'dreamscapes' based on personal values and lifestyles" (Cook et al., 2012). Such obvious "performance out front" facilitates a secluded private, and thus separates zones for social encounter from the intimate engagement. MacCannell (1973, p. 591) argues: "sustaining a firm sense of social reality requires some mystification. [. . .] Just having a back region generates the belief that there is something more than meets the eye; even where no secrets are actually kept, back regions are still the places where it is popularly believed the secrets are".

However, not everyone adheres to the front-to-back principle. In its different manifestations, residents communicate worldviews to like-minded others. In the most distinct examples in the area of study, the "traditional" way of arranging a neat front garden clash with the preference of "having a nice view" from the point of the resident (watching the garden landscape from inside or outside the house, but from the private centre), who accordingly stores waste behind house walls, away from the secluded space, towards the public front. This latter way of arrangement resembles the view from the window of touristic accommodation, where messy objects are hidden from the customer's view rather than from everyone's view (Tyrväinen, Uusitalo, Silvennoinen, & Hasu, 2014). It also has its foundation in more rural living, where the front garden does not exist in the same way and has never gained such importance in framing social encounter.

Goodbye to the backyard

The "traditional" urban way of keeping the front-to-back principle alive further clashes with the most recent development of keeping gardens almost clinically clean. In more recent residential architecture development, the garden has lost much of its mysterious sense as it features few trees, which are never located close to a building in order to avoid damage through root growth, humidity and rotting leaves. Instead of secluded zones allowing for the messy side of life, a turfgrass monoculture lawn with a few selected lower bushes surrounds a single-storey main building with a fenced terrace. In this arrangement, the garden is visible into its furthest corner, and resembles the woollen carpet (Chevalier, 1998) of the "good living room". In a description of residential architecture in Australia, Hall (2010) has made similar observations, leading to

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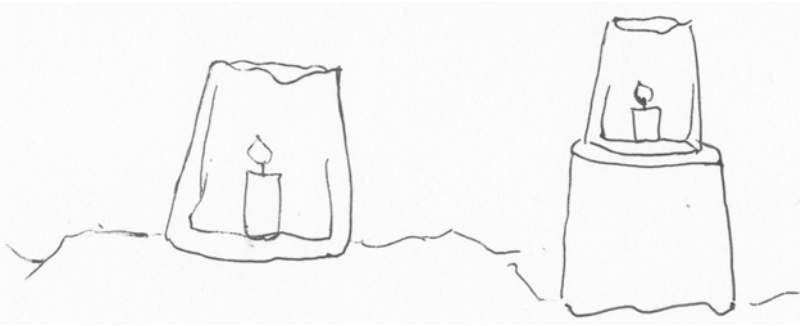

Fig. 7. Hand-made ice candle holders.

the title: "Goodbye to the Backyard? – The Minimisation of Private Open Space in the Australian Outer-Suburban Estate".

Between neighbours of different aesthetic preferences and passion for garden work, another front has to be dealt with, the border between homeowners' lots. Here, high fences, lines of trees and bushes hide undesired views and prevent social encounters while leaving the open-front-to-secluded-back structure intact. Hence, sociability is afforded by how the garden is organised, preventing or inviting contact between neighbours and passers-by who may start a conversation over the sight of a specific plant. On the one hand, a garden or yard creates distance between houses and its residents, preventing regular intimate encounters. At the same time, not living under the same roof already increases control over private space, as what is happening inside cannot be overheard so easily and other rules for living together wall-to-wall and sharing common spaces are obsolete. Despite facilitating detached relationships between neighbours, the garden allows neighbouring dwellers to be together in the open without obligation or need for justification, yet in full awareness of the other one's presence, thus hearing, smelling, seeing the same things simultaneously.

The snow garden

In winter, this exchange during a more frequent being in the open, and thus, being in visual and hearing range, comes to a halt, and the snow prevents access to the border, unless a path is dug and maintained over the season. Snow work presents a possibility for socialising, although this is less considered a motivation for taking the shovel and going out, where more pragmatic reasons seem to dominate. Therefore, it is important to raise attention to the social relevance of snow work in urban Arctic livelihood considering the extensive amount of time spent on this activity, people's skills in moving, storing, shaping and melting snow. The parallels drawn to the gardening season are necessary ground work to understand social life during winter, the so-called time of "garden inactivity", referring to the halt in plant growth. But the people keep moving.

The first proper snow fall heavily transforms the urban landscape, and private outdoor space becomes democratised as a uniform, white slate. At the beginning of winter, tended gardens as much as untended, or, "nuisance" yards are equalised. But with continuous effort, the snow blanket is modelled into shape and turned into a means for distinction and social encounter.

The secluded back partly disappears in winter when trees and bushes drop their leaves and visibility is gained. The more intimate space is then physically reconstructed through heaps or walls of snow, shovelled around a seating area or dropped from the roof in front of a window or terrace. Accumulating heaps of snow are a playful area for adults as much as children and their pets as they can be moulded into shape and used as a construction material for a temporary purpose.

Aestheticisation of nature

As mentioned in the introduction, snow sculpturing is an important part of the winter tourism business in Rovaniemi. Snow has also been adopted as teaching material at the local university, and from there art methods are spreading (back) into communities. In a sense, the "tourist gaze" (Urry, 1990) has framed the lens for such community engagement, which is often implemented with the help of foreign students. Trampling pristine fields of snow and photographing them from above or sculpturing compressed snow are the most common outreach activities that involve communities in the creation of art objects (Huhmarniemi et al., 2003). It has previously been argued that the work of well-known nature artists (e.g. Andy Goldsworthy) "aestheticizes, even sentimentalizes, nature" (Brady, 2007, p. 293). Popular photographs of ephemeral art represent only a glimpse, a single still picture, devoid of a process, struggle and previously failed trials.

Artistic snow practices

The artistic take on snow work has its foundations in traditional practices, such as the trampling of snow to create a path between houses. Where practical purposes prevailed in the past, contemporary everyday snow work reveals a combination of artistic and functional aspects. In one example in the area of observation, to reach the lake, a winding path had been shovelled between the garden and the shore at a 100-m distance. The decision to avoid a straight path was explained to make the walk through the landscape more "natural". In another example, the family dog's need for space to run had led the owners to create a maze in the garden, again in a meandering pattern rather than with sharp corners and right-angled crossing of paths. Snow castles, sliding hills and tunnels dug through accumulating snow heaps are a common feature of family yards. To provide shelter and seclusion during the outdoor time, young adults constructed half or full igloos in their private snow gardens, and then illuminated them with candles (Figs. 7, 8, and 9). Lighting is an important part of homeowners' winter landscaping, apart from electric Christmas lighting. When the snow is mouldable, at mild temperatures around 0°C, snowballs are often piled up in the shape of a pyramid. A candle in the centre is thus sheltered from the wind but let's enough light through to provide orientation in the dark. Another lighting artefact is produced in colder freezing conditions by letting water in a bucket freeze for

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Fig. 8. Snowball pyramid, with a candle inside.

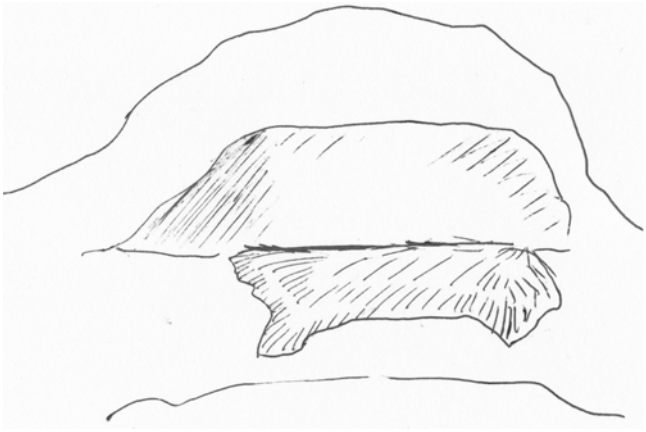

Fig. 9. Half-igloo carved into a snow heap and furnished with a reindeer hide.

a while until the ice has formed along the bucket's walls. Drained from water, the hollow shape of the frozen ice cone (Fig. 7) is used like the pyramid of snowballs (Fig. 8), to shelter a candle from the wind as well as to create a surface for reflection. These shapes are commonly prepared in advance of a social gathering where guests have not or rarely visited before, and often indicate the entrance to a yard where the snowy and dark landscape is devoid of discernible features, because hedges and ditches are covered in snow. Plastic versions can be bought in local stores, and from far it is hardly possible to tell whether these candle holders are made of ice or not. Coming closer, the hand-made forms reveal themselves to the observer because of their varying degrees of ice thickness, blurred patches and uneven sizes. Despite the edges and rough corners of hand-made candle holders, hand-shovelled, winding paths and playful areas, they are not devoid of a certain degree of cleanness, often highly balanced in composition, if not symmetric, as for instance candles are aligned along the driveway.

Because of its ephemeral features, snow work/art unavoidably transforms into aesthetics of disappointment, of the unscenic and ruined, caused by melting and additional snow fall. The above described hand-made candle holders are covered during the next snow fall and provide an obstacle to the snow shoveller, as they are hidden under a layer of snow, often frozen to the ground, when the sleigh shovel gets stuck in them and the snow worker bounces back from hitting the covered solid object. In the following weeks and months, the ice block under the snow is hit over and over again, unless purposefully removed with a spade or a heavy iron bar. Moments like these reveal the unexperienced or ignorant snow shoveller, in contrast to the experienced one who makes sure that the ground is even and puts the ice cones on wooden blocks in the first place as depicted on the right side of Figure 7.

The unscenic and ruined

Eventually, towards the end of the season, the plain white and moulded scenery (which is difficult to capture in mobile phone photography!) turns into an unevenly grey and riven landscape, and the snow melt is often aided by ashes and sand spread on the surface to accelerate the transition from white to green. Especially the remains of snow sculptures linger around because of their increased compression.

Aesthetic experience of everyday snow work and shovelled landscape

The aesthetic experience of an urban winter landscape takes place in a context where humans live in comfort and no longer have to fear the hardships of winter because of heated and insulated homes that are built to withstand tons of snow accumulating on the roof, cars with studded tires, functional clothing, snow ploughs and blowers and other tools and technologies such as weather forecast that make everyday living with snow easier. Yet, the *history of the landscape* (Adorno, 1970), that is the hardships of winter as people experienced it perhaps 50 years ago and in extreme situations still today, teach us to respect and admire nature's power. Extreme events function as reminders: a roof collapsing under the weight of snow, a roof avalanche that kills or severely injures a pedestrian, a car that breaks down on an empty road at −40 °C 55 km away from the next town.

In the process of making nature useful, liberating humankind from nature's forces, nature has been demystified and naturalised, that is turned into second nature. On the other hand, Adorno argues, aesthetic work means that nature takes over again, that the artist is possessed by nature and functions as a midwife (T. W. Adorno, 1970). The aesthetic appreciation of snow work as elevated natural beauty lies in the eye of the beholder and is, from Adorno's viewpoint, a subjective experience.

In the context of this article, the aspect of reconciling people with nature and people as part of a like-minded group of neighbours has been observed empirically. Let us consider again the moment in which multiple paths are being dug between a recently ploughed street and various front doors. The snow worker who is shovelling and watching others at work in an unwritten choreography is reminded of nature's force. It is not the romanticised and detached view on nature as the tourist might have looking at a ploughed and shovelled landscape while being yet oblivious to the strains of working in it, but one that is aware of a continuous effort to maintain the even street and yard surfaces which fleetingly prevail until the next snow fall.

In Adorno's discussion of the sublime (T. W. Adorno, 1970), natural beauty can be perceived in a cultural landscape that reveals nature's forces but has lost its threat to the observer. The producer of the shovelled landscape may of course be ignorant to any aesthetic thought (Saito, 2007, p. 47 on the examples of a mowed lawn or rusty car), and shovel snow for entirely practical reasons, as she is late for work and quickly needs to get the car out without getting stuck.

In the case of the urban private snow worker, the threat of winter precipitation in form of snow has been diminished because of a common effort, by organising regular snow ploughing through tax payments, but also through the common availability of affordable tools, machines and services. As the hardships have been lifted, this leaves more resources for a common aesthetic experience. A neighbourhood that can be walked through without facing obstacles in form of unevenly accumulating ice and snow, and

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which is at the same time pleasing to the eye, inviting for a chat over weather, tools and the like. For the passers-by, including commuting homeowners of the same street, the shared aesthetic experience is based on the succession of cleared entrances, a *gestalt* accomplished by everyone's contribution, and despite the failure of a few to contribute. Hence, in snow work just as garden work, neighbours are connected in aesthetic practice.

Tidy surfaces in snow work

For the touristic encounter, a snowy (wilderness) landscape has to feature a seemingly untouched, loose and smooth cover, devoid of edges and messy corners. Likewise, the sculptured snow and ice garden, hotel or restaurant does not show signs of the production process. The aesthetic lens through which the residential snow worker perceives the more or less functional yard may be inspired by this trend, and above all seems to answer expectations towards tidiness and clean surfaces. As part of our mundane environment, clean and smooth surfaces are highly appreciated aesthetically, whereas cluttered spaces are understood to reveal a "disordered mind" (Kilroy-Marac, 2016, p. 451). The recent popular movement of "cleaning up with Marie Kondo" replicates the minimisation of private, or messy, space described above. The smooth space of the summer lawn is then repeated in winter: orderly segmentation between paths, snow heaps, deep snow. Such orderliness is always short-lived, until the next snow fall, wind or temperatures above zero set in and disrupt formal proportions.

Clean lines and smooth surfaces are understood to have perceptual properties that give pleasure. Perception of tidiness relates to the gestalt qualities of everyday objects that are supposed to be complete, balanced, harmonious and integrated, featuring above all neatness as a "relatively simple relations between parts" (Leddy, 1995, p. 265). Cleaning, or tidying up, clarifies the relationship between complex objects. Cleanness and a sense of wholeness is achieved even in the absence of dirt: "Many people report an increased level of integration after they have cleaned their rooms, desks, or files. There is a sense of being ready for the next task. The level of sense of personal integration may not be very great, but it might be greater than what we get from seeing some good paintings, movies, or dances" (Leddy, 1995, p. 265). The above-reported discussion on snow work as duty or welcome exercise reflects this psychological aspect of cleaning up and becoming ready for something else, guided by aesthetic considerations.

"[T]he attending to beauty in everyday life highlights desirable aspects even in the predominantly negative. To plough half a meter of snow in pitch dark and freezing cold might not yield snow, darkness or frost as beautiful elements per se but the resulting affirmation in context is beautiful: you are responsible for your life, you know how to make do with what you have and where you are and you make an effort. In short, you own your everyday life quite concretely" (Rautio, 2010).

Another psychological effect is symbolic cleanness in impression management. The tidied front entrance makes an impression on neighbours and passers-by. Repeating the front-to-back principle of the garden, a neat front produces functional space and adheres to aesthetic qualities for representative purposes. Hence, "convincing" snow work does not require the entire yard or garden to be shovelled all the way to its outer corners.

Conclusion

Snowy winters are part of Lapland residents' identity, which became evident in a season of complete lack of snow in the Finnish south (2019/2020), leading the Minister of science and culture Hanna Kosonen to exclaim "*Onnellisia ovat he, jotka pohjoisessa asuvat*"/"Blessed are those who live in the North [of Finland]" (cited in Henriksson, 2020, own translation). The importance of snow and snow work is reflected in people's self-description, in everyday discussions and comments mentioned above, or expressions like these: "*Talvi, olet vahva ja pysyvä osa identiteettiäni*"/ "Winter, you are a strong and lasting part of my identity" (Henriksson, 2020, own translation).

Snow work is a voluntary engagement with nature, as is gardening. It can be completely avoided in contemporary Arctic livelihood, by seeking a living environment where this part of life is taken care of by others through paid services. For those choosing the laborious way of living in a detached house with a garden, complaining about the amount of snow is a common beginning of an occasional conversation, but the outdoor activity would clearly be missed by many in terms of exercise and creative engagement with the environment. Above all, it is the chance to escape isolation, get in touch with neighbours as well as passers-by and experience moments of transcendence during simultaneous effort after snow fall. Hence, individual, or "solitary" (Bradford, 2007, p. 15) snow work has yet a highly socialising function. In shared living, the concept of community responsibility is strong among the elderly generation, and snow work is the fulfilling of duty towards a community good.

Despite an often sporty attitude and volunteer engagement with snow, the history of the landscape keeps reminding of the hardships of winter as experienced still in the first decades after WWII. The panting and sweating snow shoveller can thus admire nature's forces without experiencing its full magnitude, which has been alleviated through technological innovation and social organisation – at least in the Finnish setting. The described example from North America shows that the daily struggle for mobility and self-determined living can be much more intense. Additionally, comparative research is needed to understand the differences in the social organisation of snow work, and in respect to the North American context, the role of volunteers and social media where the local administration remains elusive in fulfilling this task. According to the current state of research reviewed in this article, the ability to shovel snow safely and move around in winter has a significant impact on an ageing society's physical and mental health.

The psychological, sociological and historical importance of snow work in the daily life of those living in the Arctic has hitherto been neglected, the case for further research is thus made, not least regarding the additional risks arising from climatic changes through increasingly frequent melt–freeze conditions and the additional snow work this implies. This article has emphasised the way snow work is done in a routine manner, thereby reproducing social and aesthetics norms as much as maintaining functional necessity. In the area of observation, the manipulated, private snow landscape around detached houses shows aspects of balance and continuity, adhering to principles of beauty in everyday life. The activity of cleaning up, and the production of tidy surfaces creates satisfaction and functions as a means to distinguish oneself, as well as a means to experience social interaction in the front of a plot compared to its secluded back. Here, the summer grass carpet finds its equivalent in the snow carpet, as an expression of creative appropriation, thereby integrating nature in everyday domestic practices (Chevalier, 1998).

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