

Learning diary, Alka course 20.–26.5.2012

City nature and culture in Oulu region

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Sunday 20.5.

Sunday was the first day of the course and it was organized at the University of Oulu. Unfortunately all of the participants weren't able to come to the university and some were late because of their flights. Despite of that, we had very interesting evening and we could introduce ourselves to other Nordic countries and areas via food culture.

The accommodation began with familiarising with the University of Oulu. Eila Jeronen had a presentation about the topic, and she also showed a presentation video about the university. After that we - the teacher students Marjo, Mikko and Suvi – told about studying at the Oulu University. Suvi told about studying Geography, Mikko about Biology and Marjo about studying education. Especially teachers from other countries had excellent and challenging questions about studying in Finland.

After those introductions we had a small dinner that consisted of traditional food from each Nordic countries. Every participant brought some traditional food substances from his/her home area and then we could taste each of those food samples. That was very interesting experience!

Monday 21.5.

The main themes of Monday were land uplift, landscape and city culture. The day began at Park Ainolanpuisto with field work. After lunch there was a city block research and after that the participants had couple of hours to visit Science Centre Tietomaa. During the day participants were divided into different groups for each task so that they got to know each other.

The field work in the forenoon was mainly concentrated to issues such as land uplift, vegetation and bedrock of Oulu area. The land uplift was surveyed in two groups by digging a hole to different places. One group dug the hole near the shoreline and other to the inland. Both groups had to draw on paper a scheme that represents the wall of the hole. The main idea was to find the soil horizons and differences in horizons between those two places.

After coffee break we continued with statue path. Mikko led a short walking tour via few statues and gave a short presentation of each of the statues. The participants had to make short notes to their worksheets. After the statue path Mikko introduced the Arboretum. The participants could do the task at the Arboretum by themselves during the walking trip to Merikoski fish passages. The

idea of the task at the Arboretum was to identify and search different plant species that were listed in the worksheet.

During the walking trip to the fish passages Mikko told about bedrock of Oulu area and the so called Muhos formation that is a speciality in the surrounding bedrock region. The Muhos formation is clearly visible in the dried river channel at Merikoski. At Merikoski we had also a guided tour to the fish passages.



Figure 1. Alka group at Merikoski fish passages.



Figure 2. Arboretum at Park Ainolanpuisto.

After the lunch Marjo introduced the city block research. For the investigation the participants were divided into four groups and each of the groups got a block of their own. The participants were also given sheets in which they had special introductions and also the tasks and questions. Each group had about two hours to accomplish the research. During that time they had to investigate for example buildings, structures of city, traffic currents and environment (dirtiness, noises, smells etc).



Figure 3. One of the small groups having a visit in Oulu city house during the city block research.

The rest of the afternoon was used for visiting the Science Centre Tietomaa. Many of the participants were tired so it was good choice to let them visit Tietomaa freely. The first field day was quite intensive and consisted a lot to do. Despite of that, or probably because of that, the day was very interesting and both the teachers and the participants (“students”) learned a lot! Working in groups also helped the attendees to meet each other, which was very important during the first day.

Tuesday 22nd of May

In the early morning we took the bus to Nallikari and on the programme we had bird watching and examination of vegetational zones and soil profiles. For bird watching the group was divided into four groups. On the shore there was also a bird tower where it was easier to observe the birds. For example curlew, willow warbler, oystercatcher, chaffinch, pied flycatcher, wagtail, sparrow, robin, yellowhammer and common gull were noticed. After bird watching the survey of soil profiles and land uplift was continued. Again the participants were divided into groups and different groups got different research plots. The research plots formed the surveying line which started from the shore and continued to the forest zone. Like in the park Ainolanpuisto each group dug a hole and observed the soil horizons. Compared to the park Ainolanpuisto the soil profiles in Nallikari were not so distinctive and so well developed, and the water level was reached more quickly. In Nallikari each group also investigated the vegetation of their research plots by using the vegetational grids.



Figure 4. Bird watching at Nallikari bird tower.

Figure 5. Soil profile survey at Nallikari.

After the lunch we visited the Botanical Garden of the University of Oulu. The participants familiarized themselves to the garden independently by doing some tasks. The tasks were quite fun and easy to apply in the schools. Exercises included bingo, finding different kind of leaves and

discovering the ways for survival in rainforests. The participants had also time to visit the outdoor gardens.

In the end of the day we had a suggestopedia exercise, which concerned the scenic areas and flora and fauna of Finland. Suggestopedian cycle method is composed of active and dramatic concert lecture, break, passive concert lecture and activities concerning the subject. At the end we also had pictures from different scenic areas of Finland.



Figure 6. The relaxing phase of suggestopedia.

Figure 7. Activities after the lectures of suggestopedia.

Wednesday 23rd of May

The themes of the day were nature resources and human impact in the past and nowadays. We started the day by visiting the Provincial museum of Northern Ostrobothnia, where we searched information about the traditional livelihoods in Finland. The task was to find out the possible livelihoods of four characters, which were a person of the prehistoric time, the peasant of the 14th and 15th century, the peasant of the 18th and 19th century in Northern Ostrobothnia and the merchant in Oulu of 18th and 19th century. Especially the Doghill exhibition turned out to be very interesting.

In the Afternoon we visited the Zoological museum of the University of Oulu. To familiarize the museum we used Clifford Knapp method, and the visit was based on tasks instead of information given by a guide. The tasks were for example to list as many mammals as you could find starting with letter G, to draw animals that look funniest or which were greatest, to write a poem concerning butterflies and to draw a scene which includes typical Finnish wildlife.

Last thing on Wednesday was to learn about the timber construction in different Nordic countries. First the groups had about one hour for finishing their presentations while teachers had their own meeting. Presentations were based on the distant work and involved the information about wood as natural resource, how the wood has been used in construction in past and nowadays, and how timber construction is visible in urban environment. It was very interesting to hear different

presentations, which were informative and included very good pictures also. It was a pity that we had so little time for presentations and for the discussion after each presentation.



Figure 8. Two participants of Alka course exploring the Zoological Museum using Clifford Knapp method.

Thursday 24th of May

In the morning we took the bus to the Timosenkoski Nature School. There the principal told us about the Nature School and some activities that they had for the children. We got to see how the pupils studied there. The pupils took some water samples and they compared the samples with each others and tried to find out which was cleanest. They also took some water samples with aquatic animals for identification. After that we went outside and the participants of our course got to try some of the activities that the teachers in the Nature School had planned for the pupils. That was a lot of fun and we got a lot of ideas for our work as teachers.

We also visited Hönttämäki primary school. There the principal told us about the school and after lunch we had the possibility to see how the pupils study in Finland. Then we went to a small nature walk and had coffee in the forest. We think that this was one of the best days during the Alka

course. We got to show the participants of this course how the pupils study in Finland and what kind of schools we have here. We “teacher students” also learned a lot, especially in the Nature School.



Figure 9. Nature walk near Timosenkoski Nature School.

Friday 25th of May

On Friday we spent the whole day at the University of Oulu. In the morning the students planned a summary of the course. They were divided into groups and they all had different topics. The topics were Soil profile, Vegetation and birds, Nature School and other visits, Timber construction in Nordic countries and the City Block research. The students made PowerPoint presentations with the help of the teachers and after the lunch they presented their works.

After the summary we had the evaluation of the course. First all the participants wrote down their thoughts and comments concerning the course. After that they got to discuss about the course in groups and then we all talked about the positive and negative things and so on. We got some good feedback about the course and now we know what we could have done in another way.

All in all this was a really interesting course and a wonderful opportunity for all of us to learn about Nordic countries and to make new friends in different countries. We had some really good discussions about the differences and similarities between teaching (and everything else also) in Nordic countries. Also the participants were really eager to learn and they were all really nice and easy to talk to. It's a shame that this course was so short and also that we didn't have enough time to socialize with each other.



Figure 10. Participants of Alka course relaxing together in the light of midnight sun.