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# Pilot 3.5 - Nursing home in Övertorneå and a sheltered accommodation in Luleå

Team LTU/UVA

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# Virtual environments

Choose between different natural environments



## Studioroom

- Wide selection of films featuring diverse environments
- Collaboration with Medeka.fi
- Each film lasts approximately 8–16 minutes
- Moving images with sound
- Encourage conversation during the virtual nature visit



# Studioroom at the nursing home in Övertorneå



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## Overall Aim

To explore the possibilities of using virtual nature experiences to promote health and well-being among older adults living in nursing home/sheltered accommodation

### **Research Questions:**

Meanings of nature in everyday life throughout the life course

How do older adults experience virtual nature?

What emotions and associations do virtual nature evoke?

### **Practical point of view:**

How well did the equipment facilitate the experience?



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# Participants – data collection

## Older adults:

In total – 34 participants

28 women and five men

Age 66-99 years

14 – VR intervention

14 – nature exposure via screen

6 – without any nature exposure

Excluded: 3 interviews



# Preliminary results – older adults

## Core themes

Meanings of nature in everyday life

Visual cues of nature elicit bodily relaxation and happiness

Virtual nature as a bridge to personal history

Autonomy, aging and freedom



# Meanings of nature in everyday life

We were always outdoors; I remember the smell of hay and the sound from the river

One cannot just “walk for the sake of walking” — outings must have a goal

Not for fun, but for food

Nature is the best thing we have — it brings calm and peace of mind

Nature is not a separate leisure sphere but the background of life and identity—experienced as *taken for granted* stability and belonging

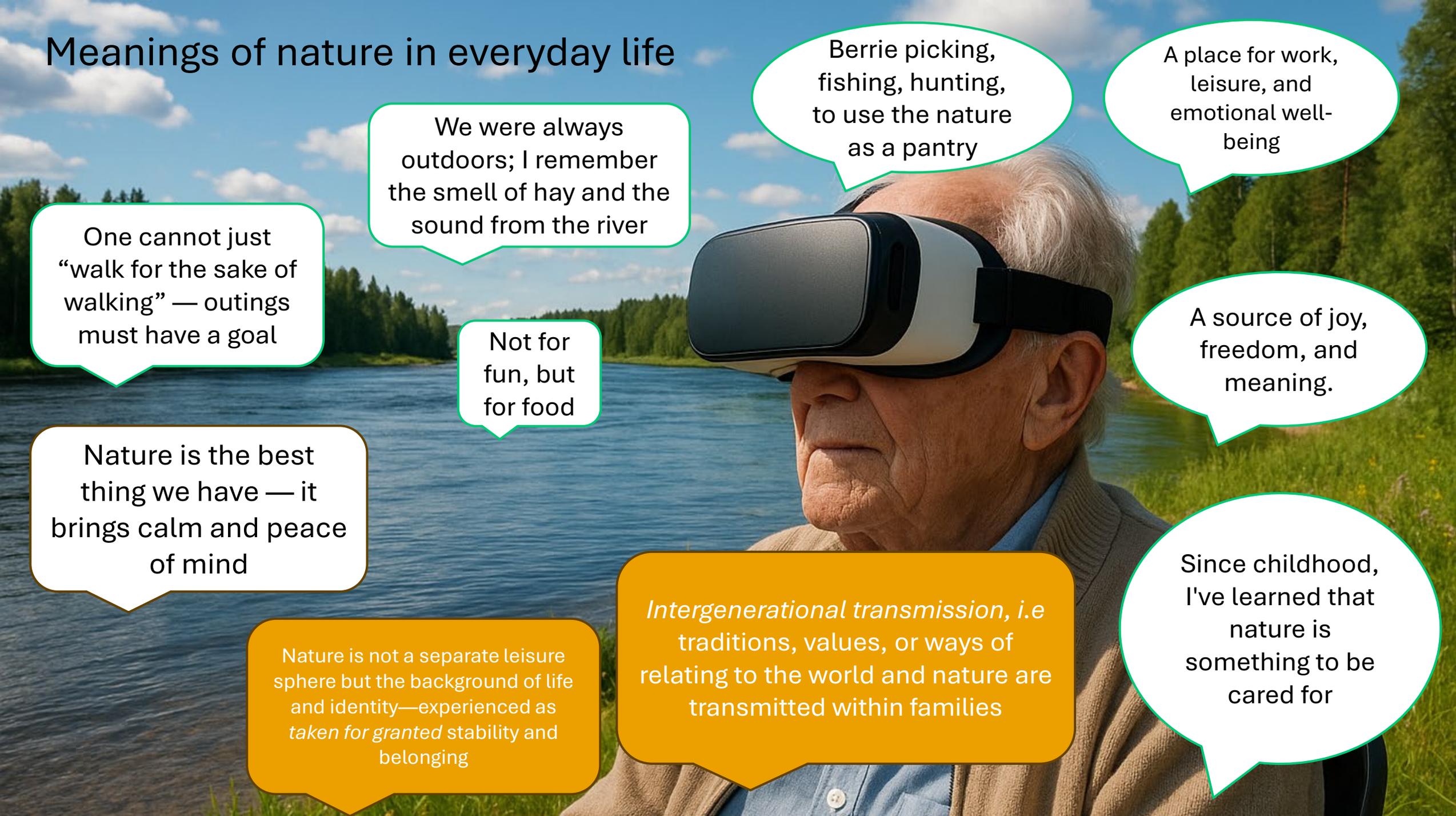
*Intergenerational transmission, i.e. traditions, values, or ways of relating to the world and nature are transmitted within families*

Berrie picking, fishing, hunting, to use the nature as a pantry

A place for work, leisure, and emotional well-being

A source of joy, freedom, and meaning.

Since childhood, I've learned that nature is something to be cared for



## Visual cues of nature elicit bodily relaxation and happiness

It is like looking through binoculars

It feels calm in my body, like sitting by the river

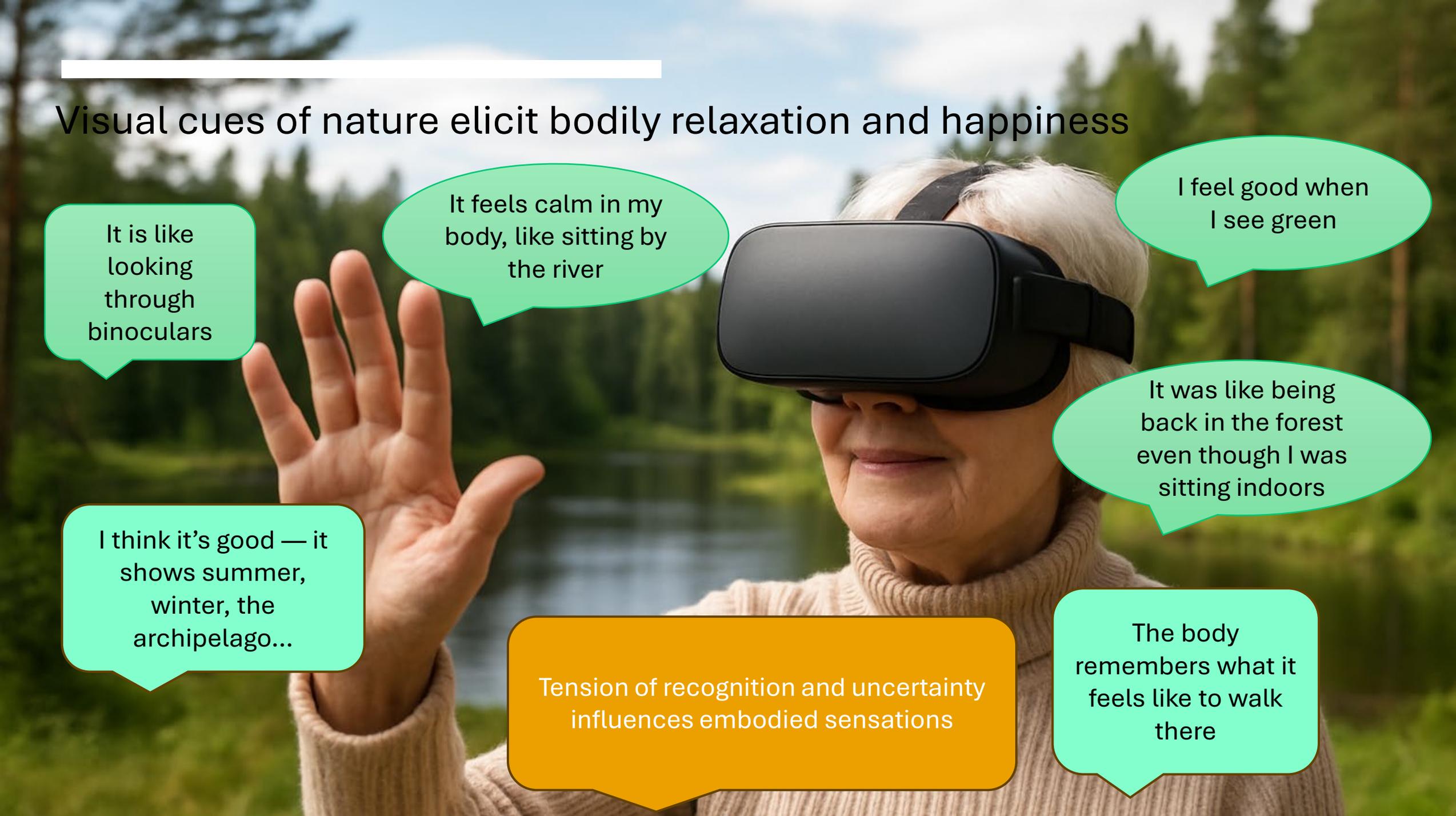
I feel good when I see green

It was like being back in the forest even though I was sitting indoors

I think it's good — it shows summer, winter, the archipelago...

Tension of recognition and uncertainty influences embodied sensations

The body remembers what it feels like to walk there



# Virtual nature as a bridge to personal history

Virtual scenes—especially forests, lakes, and snow—was used to recall past experiences and bodily sensations

VR as a trigger for autobiographical memory

Virtual nature seemed to act as a *bridge* between memory and present embodiment, restoring sensory and emotional contact with places now physically inaccessible

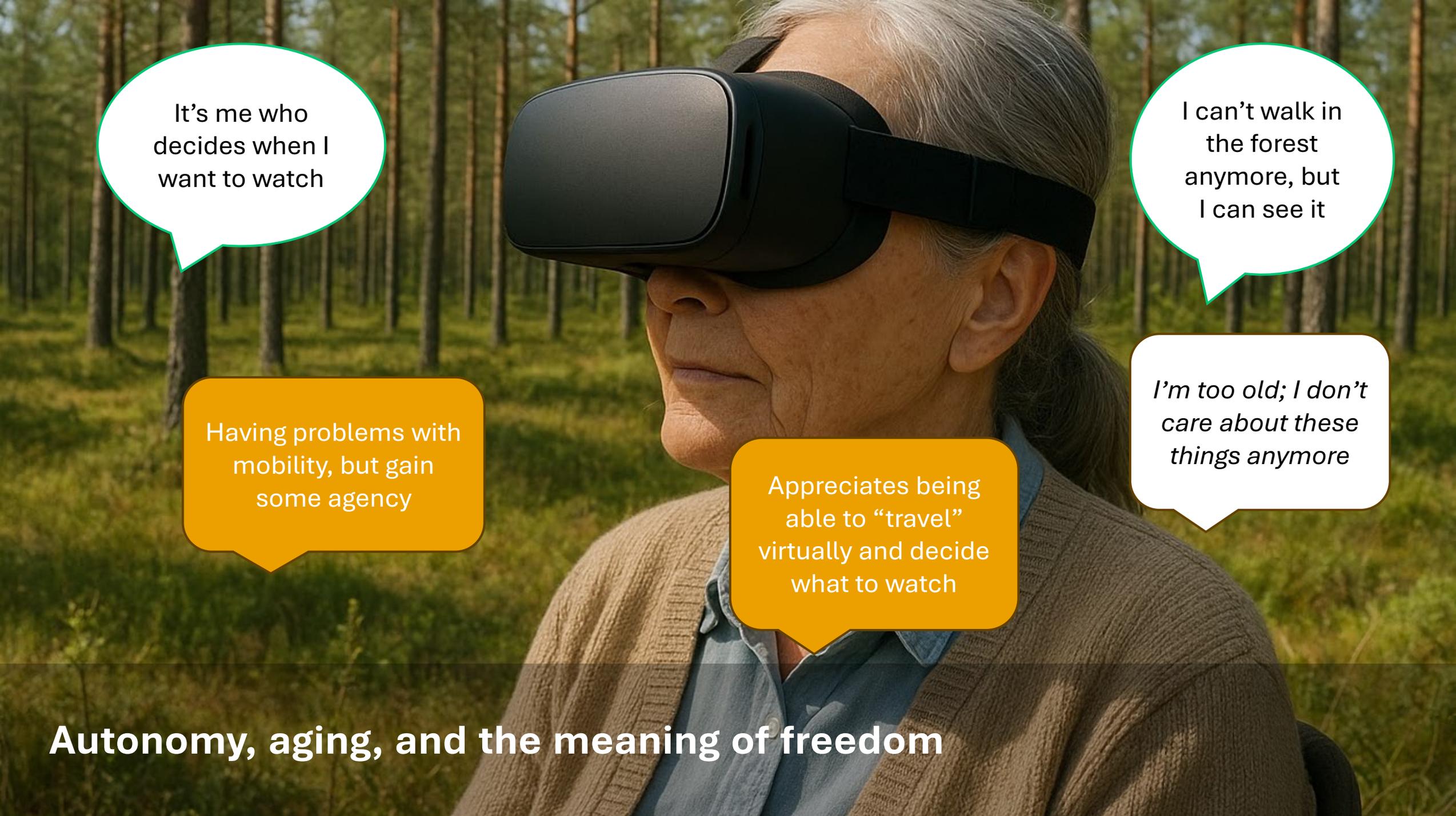
It makes me emotional as it awakens memories of so many things I've experienced.

It feels good — it brings back memories of how things were

It's a kind of joy that I remember

You immerse yourself in these films — they bring memories back

I thought of my husband—we used to walk there



It's me who  
decides when I  
want to watch

I can't walk in  
the forest  
anymore, but  
I can see it

Having problems with  
mobility, but gain  
some agency

Appreciates being  
able to "travel"  
virtually and decide  
what to watch

*I'm too old; I don't  
care about these  
things anymore*

**Autonomy, aging, and the meaning of freedom**

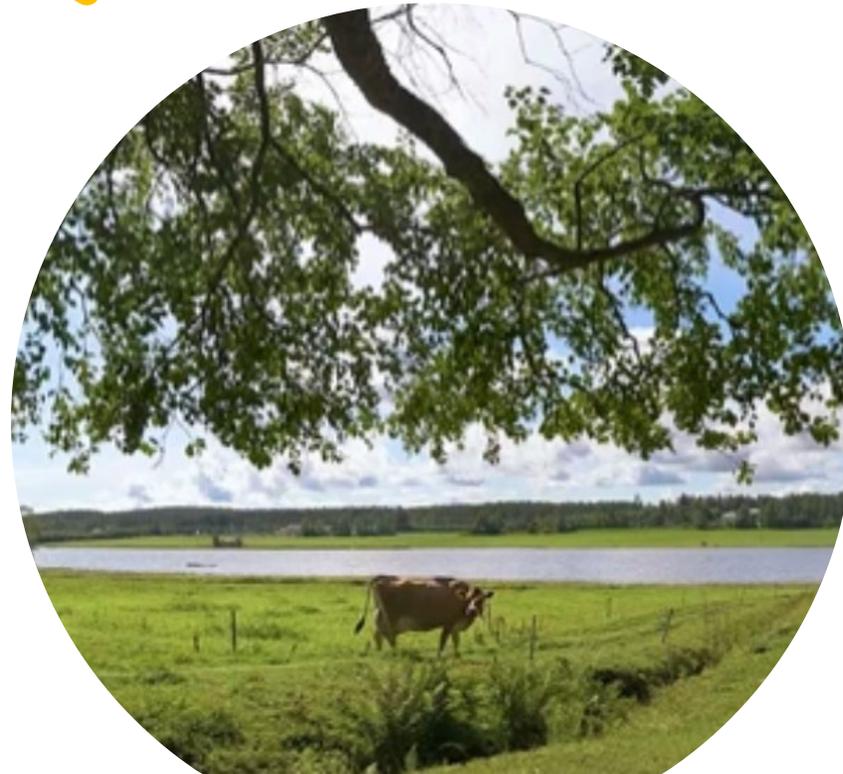
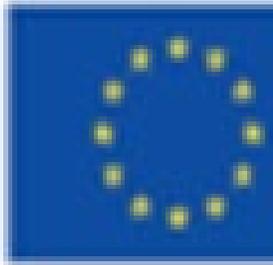
# Conclusions – so far

VR nature holds **strong potential for recognition, memory activation, and sensory engagement**, but must be tailored to **age-related needs for comfort, autonomy, and minimal effort**.

Staff recognize VR nature **can spark memories and offer meaningful moments**, but many remain **unsure** of its **health impact** and note that **limited time and care demands** make regular use **challenging**.



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# NATUREACH

## Thank you!

Webpage:

<https://www.slu.se/institutioner/skogens-ekologiskotsel/forskning2/nordic-nature-health-hub/natureach-start/>



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