# Hot topics and burning issues in landscape planning

The world has always been in transition, yet the transformations we encountering today through climate change are often unprecedented in their severity. Over recent decades, in Northern Europe, we have viewed dramatic climatic events from afar through media. Yet now we are finding events that dramatically transform the landscape, coming closer to home. Forest fires bring this change in to sharp focus. Recent predictions that large forest fires will become more common, even in Northern Europe, have come to fruition. Sweden saw its most extreme fire season on record in 2018, while the 2014 blaze in Västmanland constitutes the largest forest fire in modern Swedish history. A new norm is materialising that affects society’s connections to their landscape. Existing knowledge and practices are not necessarily suited for future decision making around these problems or for understanding the loss incurred through these events.

Large forest fire disrupt the norm and require us to question the taken for granted. In this lecture, I present forest fires as the empirical focus for engaging with a range of issues. I will begin by briefly introducing findings from my previous work, which provided a deeper comprehension of the importance of place for understanding the impact of forest fires through addressing:

* How individuals lose emotional bonds to affected places and the associated decrease in place-related wellbeing.
* How certain practices maintain a sense of well-being and connection to the landscape after dramatic landscape change, allowing individuals to (re)connect to a landscape.
* How evacuation from home affects individuals, view of the world.

These findings raise the question of whose loss is justified and whose voices determine the future of fire affected areas.

I will then lift how the study of forest fires provides an extreme case for understanding mundane societal and environmental change. I will presenting two ongoing research projects that I am currently engaged in. The first questions the need for different forms of communication between civil society and citizens in preparation for unexpected events as support for decision-making and during a fire. The second examines the ability of fire to act as a catalyst for reimagining forestry, it use, meanings and values; a way to decolonize the forested landscape.

Finally, I will briefly lift future directions and methodological considerations for forest fire studies in a Nordic context. I will argue for the need for longitudinal studies (an aspect surprisingly underrepresented in social science fire research) for understanding the long term processes of recovery, for example how the fire site, a locus of destruction and stress must become the site for coping with this stress.

Hopefully, through this lecture I manage to illuminate the relevance of forest fire, as an extreme event, for making researchers (at least this researcher) step away from the familiar and creating an arena for interdisciplinary collaboration.