

**title:PhD Research Project Update**

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## Rethinking the research question and title

The title + subtitle is acceptably clear as last stated, but something is missing:

*Distance athletes in urban rhythm*  
*How do ultra-runners run through and out of cities?*

- It points out the empirical object of study: distance athletes.
- It gives *part* of the theoretical aim: urban rhythm.
- It gives context for study: inside and out of cities.
- What is missing is the main research question, assumption and hypothesis.
- The suggested under layer went missing by removing a key neo-word which was æffect. Clarifying the aim can move the thought forward. It is assumed that the activity, the engaging on ultrarunning implies changes, shifts in the living experience of thriving for a far away goal. This can happen at only certain low levels or to a wide range of transformations. *Some* kind and amount of change in lifestyle is always expected.

*Does ultrarunning shape the runners' reality and their surroundings in any meaningful way?*

Many personal accounts by runners give this hint. But, on the other hand, perhaps the contrary could be supported too. Running in ultra can be a relatively different effort for people with different background on training. For one person doing a 50K could mean more caloric, muscular, and mental effort than for another doing an 80K. The point of interest comes on how a threshold is reached to or surpassed. In all cases, however, ultra is not done without preparation: be it heavy or light, all change their daily/weekly habits to fit to the race/goal. Some transformations are slow, others sudden.

### Doctors

The major shift in runner's view and visible data to grasp their city behaviour comes from the ways of life that is needed to be adopted in order to complete an ultra. These adaptations are normally seen at several levels. The most immediate conversions are physical and are dealt with by the biggest amount of specialists.

In the field of ultra the presence of doctors is most evident, and are the first social role to display a major interest on the topic. A number of doctors have put together for some years already an annual reunion under the Ultra Sports Science Foundation. The aims of this group are to better understand how to address the endurance athlete's demands and how to fulfill them. A range of

specialists tackle different angles: muscular, metabolic, sleep, caloric, psychic, etc. These scholars have a historic basis of scientific presentations from their medical-technical point of view, some for nearly 20 years already.

### **Research on Running**

The general running literature comes from a wider array of fields and they frame the activity as a recent trend from the last century: running seen as a tool to keep population healthy and in contact with the environment in a general urban context that not always elicits the urge for people to go outdoors. The idea of physical health in general goes along with the assumption that running is a sane activity that contributes to overall well-being. Running can be an activity that is competitive and most of the media seems to highlight this aspect pushing the public to go further and harder. However motivations differ along the whole social spectrum, so a diversity of angles get highlighted by scholars: the embodiment of heat, the meaning (and sense) of pain, the awareness to run for a social (companionship spirit, even charity) reason other than by selfish motives, to regain a self-centered moment and/or enjoy the intimacy of environment together with (un)familiar people.

### **Research on UltraRunning**

Research on ultra can be specified from fields such as psychology, sports, tourism, and subfields of the medical such as Nutrition, Kinesiology, Sleep studies, etc. The closest to the present research are two: Hanold (2010) adopts a Foucaultian point of view to deconstruct the meaning of what it is to build a female ultra-body; and Ludwig (2011) intends to uncover the spiritual aspect of running as meditation and connectedness with nature. The latter is a psychologist's work that focuses on the inner view of the connection. Focusing on the material network of dependencies and meanings that runners share with the community of pairs and non humans can be a useful advance to understand urban flows.

Several researches focus on distinctive aspects or objects of everyday life that can unfold the many sides of runners change of habits. Lieberman focuses on the "natural" abilities of the body, and dissects the way that feet and shoes work. Ingold goes in a similar path but perhaps in opposite direction, putting in trial the idea that there would be a natural body that persists unchanged through time. Pink pays attention to the way in which the use of senses in a daily basis allow to attend to more stimulus than what we can just see at first sight. In this path, a subsidiary question:

What lifestyles root runners to their reality and place?

For Mol subjectivity can unfold in multiple ways and all should be less thought and more *cultivated*. Bertoni and Abrahamsson stress in favor of messy coexistence with earthworms. Katz argues for allowing food decomposition as a way of leaving new lifeforms (edible bacteria) take path over death to facilitate

digestion. Kusch considers that a slow plant-life rhythm can allow to a seminal fecundation of being and thinking in place.

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## PhD

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