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## Kashubian Lake Calling The Posthuman as Care and *Stimmung*

We enjoy being in the open countryside so much  
because it has no opinions concerning us.  
Nietzsche 1996 [1878], 181.

### Abstract

This study leads the reader to some remote Kashubian villages, located on the shores of Lake Słupino, Poland. The residents of these villages have witnessed uncanny transformations of their once familiar lake in recent years. Through changes in color, odor and matter, Słupino has obtruded itself to call out the problem of pollution. How does the lake express itself? How does it affect the everyday life of the inhabitants? To approach the specific interaction between the lake and the inhabitants (thus non-human and human), the author conducted sensory ethnography and conversed with residents affected by the problem. The categories call, care and *Stimmung* are used to analyze the gathered empirical material. These categories enable a variety of perspectives on the phenomenon and, thus, let us approximate what can be characterized as posthuman: First, the lake-problem is viewed from the activity of the *calling* lake, and then the argumentation is built up from the activity of the *caring* inhabitants. Finally, both perspectives are integrated with the category *Stimmung*, into which the lake and the inhabitants are immersed. The present study shows that the posthuman is not merely an artificial category but can be found in the research field by an (European) ethnologist, as intersecting with everydayness, memory and activity and, thus, be perceived from an emic perspective.

Keywords: posthuman, Kashubia, *Stimmung*, sensory ethnography, tipping lake, pollution

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### **Introduction: The posthuman can be explored in the field**

As a category, the posthuman shows itself in calls for papers or scientific publications, and, thus, first and foremost in the world of science. However, does this mean that it is merely an artificial category? Examining the interaction between a tipping<sup>1</sup> Kashubian lake and the people living on its shores, I intend to show that the posthuman can be also found when researching the field, as intersecting with everydayness, memory and activity and, thus, be perceived from an emic perspective by both the researcher and the people living around the lake. Which methods make the ethnologist susceptible to the posthuman? Which theoretical tools are useful for doing analysis on it? Which phenomena appearing in the field can be characterized as posthuman? In my article, I aim to reveal how the posthuman can be explored in the field through paying attention to affective, sensory, and tacit knowledge and experiences in the everyday life. Moreover, I argue that in the context of climate change, posthuman phenomena need to be explored in the field and not just in abstract terms, since this allows discussing how the concept of posthuman also relates to concrete socio-political or environmental changes that can be seen and experienced.

An approach to a concept of the posthuman that is well-understood from an ethnological point of view is problematic since it is an “umbrella term” (Ferrando 2019, 1), unifying many, sometimes even contradictory ideas. It seems useful when understood as a postdualistic (ibid.) and postanthropocentric perspective taken in in the field or as a characteristic of phenomena that force us to question or break up a dualistic view of nature/culture. As phenomena characterized as posthuman decenter the human being by revealing their inherent activity and by moving from the periphery to the center of interest out of their own effort they have consequences for fieldwork and the discipline. Thus, the ethnologist has to sharpen her research instruments when including objects “far more than the *anthropos*: that is to say, the entire collective of beings that is linked to him but is at present relegated to the position of a merely peripheral role” (Descola 2013, xx). For my case study, this precisely means to turn to the lake and to find ways to observe, describe, and analyze its transformations, activities or modes of communicating with the people adequately and ultimately to question the phenomenon beyond the human. The urge to do so results out of a *conditio humana* of being inextric-

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1 The concept of “tipping lake” alludes to “tipping point” used in the context of Anthropocene: Not only the lake’s pollution can be assumed as an indicator for climate change but for the moment there is little hope that the lake will be saved or renatured. Even if this were the case, it would still be a different lake – its pollution will be part of its matter’s story (Oppermann 2018).

cably entangled with non-humans as from our very beginning, “we have always been posthuman” (Smart & Smart 2017, 3). Giving up a dualistic view of nature/culture is not only a necessity for becoming sensitive to posthuman phenomena, but also to get to “the bottom of people’s own perception of the world” (Ingold 2011b, 9) and consequently to understand how people think and narrate about, communicate and interrelate with non-human entities such as tipping lakes.

The aim of this article is a gradual approximation to the observed phenomenon of an interaction between the lake and the local residents, namely their mutual and equiprimordial setting into activity, in order to concretize the concept of posthuman. This phenomenon may be put into the formula of “mutual-in-activity-bringing of lake/human”. Although this formula may sound odd, it addresses the problem of speechlessness and lacking adequate words for the description of phenomena characterized as posthuman. As Smart & Smart (2017, 53) ask, “How should we give voice to non-humans, or are we limited to trying to speak for them?” The hyphen construction is a linguistically poor but necessary attempt not only to describe my observations, but also to emphasize the dynamic and integrative process, in which both the lake and the residents are empowered, and autonomously and equivalently involved. However, in order to ensure a smoother reading, I will use the phrase “mutual activation of lake/human” instead of this hyphen formula in the following.

To explore this specific intertwining between lake and residents, the empirical material is analyzed with special regard to three aspects: call, care and *Stimmung*.<sup>2</sup> These categories help to reveal successively the interaction between the non-human and human, allowing us to change the argumentative perspectives and, thus, to advance the concept of posthuman. First, with the category call the problem is considered *from the activity of the lake*: How does the call of the lake express itself? The term call answers to the mentioned problems of verbalization and tries to describe a sort of dialogue adjusting between the lake and the humans. Thus, the lake noticeably “does things” – it emits odor or changes its color – as a reaction to environmental changes, and hence its activities can be interpreted in terms of a calling, affecting the humans around it. Nonetheless, I do not claim that Lake Słupino has consciousness or has none at all, both I can neither prove nor rule out definitely. I rather try to keep an openness towards possibilities, and, thereby, take in a posthumanistic perspective that “shall address the possibility of the possible, of the potential, and even of the ‘impossible’, within its epis-

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<sup>2</sup> These categories emanate from Heidegger, and will be more elaborately introduced and discussed later in the text.

temological and ontological realms of inquiry.” (Ferrando 2019, 170.) Not only does the concept of a calling lake allow a multitude of explications for the experience of the lake’s activity but it also takes the miracle already into consideration, and thus avoids the concern that something is being forgotten. In order to describe how the call of the lake reaches the everyday life of those affected, I will change the perspective and built up the argumentation *from the activity of the human* by applying the category of care: How do the residents behave towards the lake? How do the lake-released activities of the inhabitants and their relations to the lake differ from those of the “ex-habitants” (Ingold 2011a, 120), who are not intertwined biographically and affectively with the lake, but have a distant relation to it? In the third step, the perspectives *from the lake* and *from the human* are integrated by the category *Stimmung*<sup>3</sup> into which the lake and the inhabitants are immersed: How does *Stimmung* become noticeable in the field? How does it correlate with the state of the tipping lake?

### **Context, data, method: Becoming sensitive for, involved with and attuned to the posthuman**

The material for this study was collected in some Southern Kashubian villages, lying on the shores of Lake Słupino in the Wdzydzki Park Krajobrazowy Nature Reserve, County Powiat Kościerski, Poland. Mostly farmers inhabit these villages but in the summer months, tourists sojourn there staying in one of the two hostels or some of the holiday lodges around. The website of the County praises the region as one of the most picturesque in Poland, with a focus on the biodiversity and beautiful landscape, large forests and over 200 lakes, which support a fishing economy. The nature reserve, with an area of 17.857 ha, is particularly highlighted on the website, because of its complex of connected natural glacial lakes (including Lake Słupino). (Website of Powiat Kościerski, n.d.) Beside these official characterizations, some perturbing transformations have been aroused. After Słupino attracted tourists for long time and inconspicuously became part of the everyday life of people who settled on its shores, it started urging them by foaming, stinking and changing its color.

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3 I prefer to use the German word *Stimmung* because it condenses all the resonating meanings of the English terms like mood, humor, spirit, climate, atmosphere, harmony, or vibe. Noteworthy seem the component of meaning that connects *Stimmung* with the tuning of a musical instrument – one can be attuned in different ways – that correlates with Bennett’s idea of “vibrant matter” (Bennett 2010) and the string theory gaining popularity in posthumanistic approaches (Ferrando 2019, 166).



Figure 1. Author. July 24, 2019. Lake Słupino in Southern Kashubia (Poland). *Cloaca*.

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During my four-week stay in one of the villages in August 2019, I witnessed these transformations, which affected the inhabitants and me, appealing to ecological awareness, awakening memories, anxieties, worries and moods, and forcing a response towards the problem. Therefore, I decided to examine this obtruding phenomenon closely, by doing sensory ethnography, evaluating websites, newspaper articles and having personal and email conversations with the people living close to Słupino. Almost all of my respondents were born there or

married into one of the farms, they are bound biographically to the region, and, thus, have a long family history of living next to the lake. They use Słupino mostly for leisure activities like swimming, boating, and fishing; but for those who benefit from tourism it is also an economic factor. My conversation partners – four women and eight men whose answers I have chosen to quote – are aged between 40 and 80 years and identify themselves as Kashubs. Most of them are farmers; some of them are running an agritourist business. One person runs an enterprise abroad, and one is a scientist and expert on Kashubian culture dwelling in western Kashubia.

Lake Słupino reveals itself as a research object pushing its way into the senses. In the hot summer months, thus, during my fieldwork stay, it begins to stink, turning grayish-green, becoming opaque, foaming and exposing itself with a greasy layer, all indicating a blue-green algae attack. The disclosure of the environmental causes of the observed problem is not the aim of this article – especially as it exceeds my expertise – but rather to describe and analyze how the tipping lake and the residents interact. My initiating sensory experience already indicated the methodical approach, namely the sensory ethnography (Pink 2015), which is currently enjoying great popularity. Assuming that the body of a researcher resembles a soft modeling clay in which the acquired perceptions leave impressions (Bendix 2006, 79), I intended to engage bodily with my subject of investigation. This meant regular stays at or even in the lake or visiting a sewage plant connected to the lake, which, as will be shown later, is assumed as a possible cause of the lake-problems. The stench inhaled through the nose or the lapping of the matter flowing from the sewage plant left lasting impressions on me that I gathered in my field diary. The bodily involvement and the lingering by what turns my attention stimulated a sensitivity for what the lake does, how it “behaves”, touches and attunes – and that is exactly how it showed its specific form of activity. Its inevitable presence and autonomous activity I experienced as invasive but at the same time connecting or integrating, as I noted in my field diary. The lake engaged me sensorily and affectively, making me feel thoughtful, worried, and placing me in a mode of sensitivity to the *Stimmung* reigning in the field. These experiences opened my view, and ultimately my whole body, for an interaction and entanglement with an unexpectedly active non-human entity, and thus let me access what might be characterized as posthuman.

Not only on the phenomenal, but also on the social level, and especially in conversation with the villagers, the lake obtrudes itself. This is not surprising, since it affects their everyday life immediately: fish and crayfish from the lake disappear from the menu, and for swimming, other, more distant lakes are preferred now. The lake is part of the inclusive knowledge, a conversation piece at the kitchen table, at the garden fence or on the way to the church. It

is rumored, speculated, spoken of in confidence, and cares and anxieties of the consequences are formulated. My involvement in village communication precluded a controlled survey situation and demanded trust, carefulness, empathy, openness and participation. Like my interlocutors, I too had to open up, taking a position, showing my anger about the ignorance of the local authorities, talking about my childhood memories of clean Kashubian lakes, thinking on possibilities for solving the problem, showing consternation, and engaging in participatory dialogue. Only under these conditions was I given an insight into the perspectives of those immersed in the landscape: However, how can such a participatory and “dwelling perspective” (Ingold 2011b, 185) be achieved? In addition to my expressed research interest in everyday Kashubian culture, the disclosure of my biographical connection to the region, as my great-grand parents were Kashubs, and my activity as a (hobby) farmer created a basis of trust and discussion and blurred the boundaries between field and non-field. Of course, ethnographic concerns for ethics and researcher-researched relationships are not only limited to the field of the posthuman. But being sensorily, affectively and emotionally involved in and sharing the landscape with its attendant cares provided the necessary access to the interweaving of non-humans and humans, lake and residents, this means to the very particular environment as a “zone of entanglement” (Smart & Smart 2017, 8), where phenomena characterized as posthuman can be encountered.

### **The posthuman as call, care and *Stimmung***

In order to determine and analyze the lake-problem as a posthuman phenomenon, the categories call, care and *Stimmung* are introduced here. These categories showed themselves all of a sudden in the Kashubian field, but first, spoken phenomenologically, only in their indefiniteness and isolation. They could then be identified as such with the help of Martin Heidegger’s central theoretical concepts for the analysis of being. Accordingly, Heidegger offers terms I use for the description of phenomena like a communicating lake (“call”), the deep concern of the inhabitants (“care”) or the depressed mood awakened by the lake-problem (“*Stimmung*”). Referring to Heidegger in my study on the posthuman is by no means arbitrary, since his theory is compatible with posthumanist approaches (Ferrando 2019; Rae 2014). With the destruction of metaphysics, Heidegger turns against binary oppositions and anthropocentrism – both aspects are central determinants of the posthuman – and avoids the Cartesian dualism by conceptualizing being as immersed in the world, what he expresses by the concept of being-in-the-world. Nonetheless, the most pertinent argument to use Heidegger’s terminology in this case study is the fact that his notions of call, care and *Stimmung* can help to describe the per-

ceived phenomena, to analyze the mutual activation of lake/human and thus to approximate the concept of posthuman. Of course, it is not my aim to show that Heidegger's categories can be found in the Kashubian field – this seems trivial, since his concepts are broad enough to be found everywhere – nor to suggest reading Heidegger as an instruction for finding the posthuman in the field. The aim is rather to fathom the ontological depth of the categories' meaning and to reveal their structural interrelation. As Heidegger states, empirical material, raised from the average everydayness, first offers only average structures, but by analyzing it on the ontological level, we can recognize deep and pregnant structures, too (Heidegger 1995a, 70–75). Nevertheless, the ontological boundaries of the categories will not be fully exhausted here to a fundamental extent as Heidegger would do. Rather, the categories naturally embedded in the average everydayness of my respondents, will be raised up from the ontical level (of their appearing) and guided towards their ontological boundaries through analysis only as far as they stay below the fundamental-ontological threshold and find their way back to their everyday meaning.

The first category appearing in the field is the call, which can be understood in a metaphorical or communicative way (although both dimensions may blur). In its metaphorical dimension, for instance, call is encountered as a motive of a calling lake in a popular Kashubian folk song. Such call sounds amusing, inspires curiosity, is ambiguous and noisy, but appeals to no one in particular. In contrast, on the ontological level, a call means being appealed to without mediation; it arouses a hearing, is summoning someone in particular (Heidegger 1995a, 316-317) and hence, here, the communicative dimension of a call comes to the fore. Słupino communicates by “doing strange things” such as foaming and changing color as a reaction to environmental changes. These activities can be interpreted in terms of a calling, which appeals to the residents by reaching their consciousness. Thus, this call has a different characteristic than the one mentioned first: “*That which, by calling in this manner, gives us to understand, is the conscience.*” (Heidegger 1995a, 316.) In the field, a calling conscience appeared as a bad conscience caused by bearing the blame for the lake pollution plaguing the inhabitants. Hence, the category call in its ontological dimension allows to describe the mutual, both-sided communication or “dialogue” between the lake and the residents, and at the same time to consider the phenomenon *from the activity of the lake*.

The second category applied for the analysis is care. In the Kashubian villages, care is encountered in words, facial expressions and gestures as caring about the deteriorating state of the lake. Ontologically care means something different to Heidegger: it describes the structural totality of *Dasein*<sup>4</sup> as being-

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4 Heidegger uses *Dasein* in the sense of *being here*.

in-the-world and encompasses the fact *That* Dasein can be (its *thrownness*<sup>5</sup>) and the way of *How* Dasein is (its *projection*) (Heidegger 1995a, 329). In this sense, care is the mode in which Dasein *is* from the very moment of being thrown into the world (by the lake) reaching to its future projections (of saving the lake). Following Heidegger, ideally, the two poles of the care-structure, i.e. thrownness and projection, should coincide; it will be shown later what happens when they fall apart. In three respects, care is relevant for the analysis: Since care describes the structural totality of *Dasein*, it is ontologically earlier than every practical attitude and willing. In turn, that means that every behavior towards the lake or the lake-released activity of the residents is founded in care and arises from it. Thus, care is a category of agency that defines the everyday life practices and relations towards the lake, and of identification, which defines peoples' notions of belongingness to the lake. Additionally, if care is understood as a basic constitution of "being-beyond-oneself" (Heidegger 1995a, 192) it seems to bear even more potential to examine the posthuman. Taken together, the category care enables us to describe the residents' activity towards the lake, their identification with and the relation to it by viewing the phenomenon *from the activity of the human*.

In the villages, the category *Stimmung* became noticeable as trepidation, uneasiness or unrest set off by the lake pollution. According to Heidegger, *Stimmung* should not be misunderstood as a mere psychic or inner state that reaches out of the mind mysteriously and colors things or persons, as it "comes neither from 'outside' nor from 'inside', but arises out of being-in-the-world" (Heidegger 1995a, 176). In this sense, *Stimmung* describes the dissolving separation between the human and his environment, and, thus, helps to interpret the moments of becoming connected to non-humans or registering a lake's calling. Becoming attentive to *Stimmung* awakened by the lake-problem correlates with the method of sensory ethnography. By focusing on sensory perception, the lake started to engage me, placing me in a mode of sensitivity to the *Stimmung* reigning in the field or vice versa: in the moment of noticing *Stimmung*, I could experience my own presence and the environment in an intensified way (see Gumbrecht 2012, 6). Additionally, not only the researcher in a certain field, but also her later reflections on the field and her analysis are guided and stimulated by *Stimmung* shining back from the field (Murawska 2019; 2020). That means that thinking and writing on the lake-problem always brought me back into a specific *Stimmung* experienced during my fieldwork. As a category, *Stimmung*

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5 I use the term thrownness, instead of belonging or rootedness. In contrast to belonging, which is a more active and conscious state, thrownness emphasizes the passivity of being thrown into a concrete world. The term rootedness particularly in German language evokes associations with the "Blut und Boden" Nazi-ideology.

seems promising for approaching the posthuman as it helps to explain the entanglement and interaction between non-humans and humans, the lake and the people and to integrate both perspectives *from the activity of the lake/human*.

In principle, it would be possible to analyze my material with other analytical tools approaching non-human activity, developed by New and Vital Materialists, Material Ecocritics or Ecomaterialists. Useful and compatible with Heidegger's notion of call is a tool of Material Ecocriticism, namely "storied matter", and a tool of Vital Materialism, namely "vibrant matter". Following the first, the lake's matter can be assumed eloquent. Through its narrative ability, the lake produces meaningful and readable texts expressing its interaction with humans. This concept invites to become attentive to the "unheard voices of reality" (Oppermann 2018, 413) and, thus, to the fragility of ecosystems like Lake Słupino. Concerning the second, the lake's matter can be assumed as vital, creative, incalculable, producing effects or altering the course of events. Thus, the aim of a Vital Materialist is to "give voice to a vitality intrinsic to materiality" (Bennett 2010, viii, 3). Nevertheless, I prefer to work with Heidegger since the research perspectives mentioned produce rather expert-discourses using abstract concepts often borrowed from the natural sciences. In contrast, Heidegger bases his analysis of *Dasein* on the average everydayness. Consequently, his concepts respond to my field material and to the emic categories borrowed from the everyday life experience and language of my interlocutors.

### **The call of the lake appeals to the conscience**

The aim of this chapter is to disclose what the saying "Kashubian lake calling" means. Therefore, I will first reveal the connection between the landscape formation "lake" and the motive of a "call" handed down in Kashubian folk tales. Then, I will work out how Lake Słupino makes itself noticeable to the inhabitants and what its particular call sounds like. With the category call, I will focus the problem *from the activity of the lake*.

In Kashubia, lakes are considered something peculiar and regionally typical, and, therefore, are entwined with numerous folk tales. According to one legend, centuries ago giants called *Stolemë* inhabited Kashubia, forming the lake basins with their footprints and burying the spits of land protruding into the lakes (Lorentz 2014, 97–98). Furthermore, the most popular Kashubian folk song, composed by Antoni Pepliński in 1967 and today known as *Kaszëbsczë jezora* [Kashubian Lakes], tells about the attractiveness of the Kashubian landscapes rich in lakes calling tourists to spend their holiday there (Obracht-Prondzyński, Fopke, and Kulikowska 2018, 164). Less popular, but leading towards the subject of investigation, is a call resounding from Lake Słupino handed down in a legend. An angler who had sailed out at witching hour suddenly heard a

dull voice, as from a deep grave coming out of the lake – it was the call of a revenant, who had illegally fished in Słupino and thus enriched himself with foreign property. Surprised by death, he could not bear his guilt and chose to atone on the spot where he sinned (Seefried-Gulgowski 1911, 165). In a canonical text of the Kashubian regional movement in the first half of the 20th century, Aleksander Majkowski, a writer and regional activist, describes his vision of the awakening Kashubian identity. Locating the cradle of Kashubian regionalism by the Lake Wdzydze (into which Słupino flows), he enthuses the attraction and auratic influence of it: “How should not the wake-up call sound from there?” (Majkowski 1939.) These examples reveal the connection between lake and call that curdles into a culturally coded motif that conveys animist-anthropomorphic images of a lake, integrating them into everyday life playfully and without contradiction. These calls, as they sound on the ontical level – in the folk song the lake calls something to the tourists, in the legend it calls out of it, and in the vision of Majkowski the lake puts out a wake-up call – are meant metaphorically, are ambiguous and entertaining, inspire curiosity but address no one in particular. It is exactly the opposite in the case of the call of Lake Słupino heard by the inhabitants.

How does Słupino make itself noticeable in their everyday life? After the lake for a long time was part of the everyday life of the villagers, it started urging them by foaming, stinking and changing its color. With its strange incalculable activity and – to speak with Bennett (2010), “vibrant matter” – the relation between the lake and the inhabitants changed: what once was taken for granted turned to be fragile and precarious. The hours-long conversations about the poor condition of the lake made clear that the inhabitants cannot escape the problem, which is now part of their world: “This matter concerns our own front yard.” (E 1.) Although the Southern Kashubs through the years have been confronted with dry soils and water shortages, and are aware of the importance of water in principle – as the folk tales reflect, too – the fragility of their lake seemed to be disconnected from the general water problem so far. However, the call cannot be unheard as the lake pushes its way into the senses, touching the everyday routines and stimulating narrations and memories. The inhabitants start to read its “language” – or “storied matter” as Oppermann (2018) would put it – by perceiving its changes sensually, as the following comment illustrates: “The lake is green as a sorrel soup.” (C 8.) A farmer states, laughing, “One shouldn’t drink the water, but you can still swim in it. Afterwards one mutually has to scrub another’s back under the shower.” (C 5.) An older woman complains, “On the lake floats a stinking, thick and firm layer on which even frogs could jump. [...] I recently rode the waterwheel on the lake and put my hand in it. I needed to wash it immediately, disgusting.”

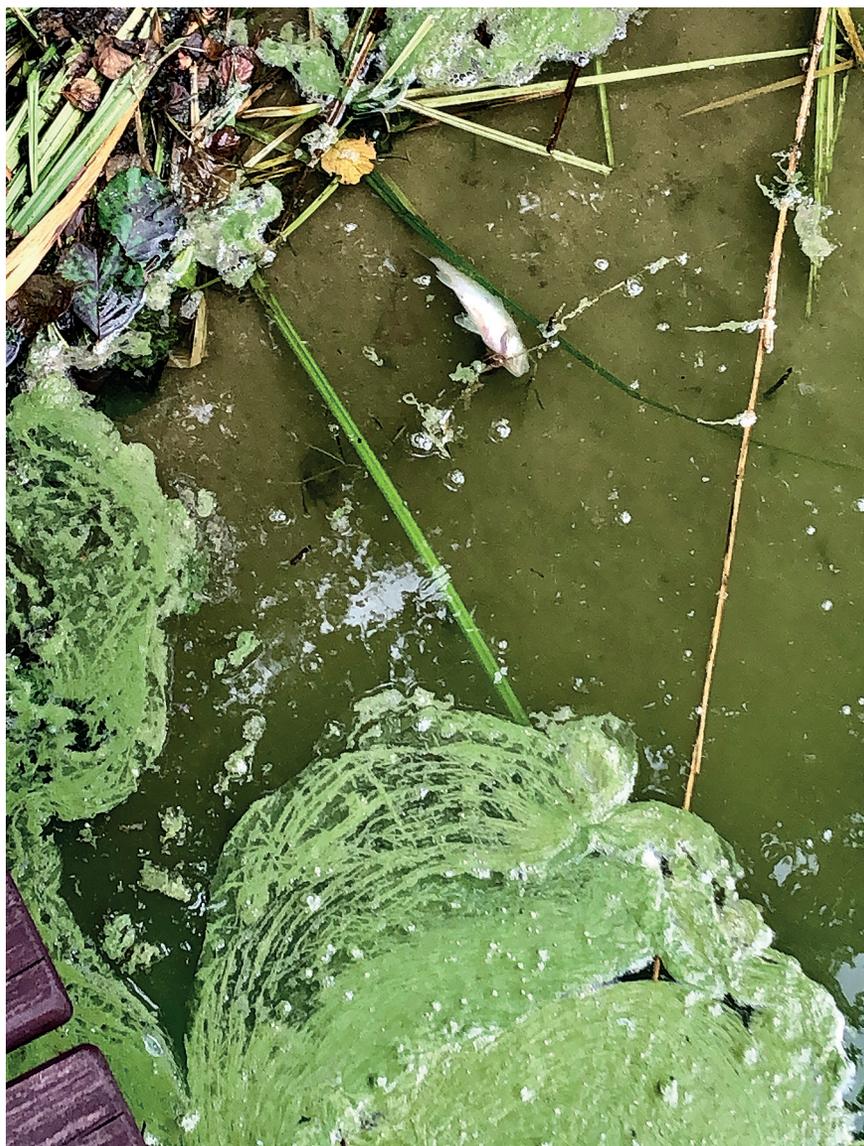


Figure 2. Author. July 24, 2019. Lake Słupino in Southern Kashubia (Poland). *The Tipping Lake*.

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(C 2.) The color, the taste, the smell and the haptic of the lake provide information about its condition, and its materializing activity seem to announce its threatening expiry that may lead to an eternal passivity as shellfish, crayfish and fish disappear, and storks, birds, tourists stay away – the “lake dies” (C 1).

My interlocutors told me that in the past bathing in the lake used to indicate breaks and the end of work during the harvest, and thus structured the

working day (C 1; C 8). However, what once was an obvious part of everyday life routines and is nowadays abandoned, calls into the collective memory of the villagers and catalyzes narrations of the good old days: “In the past you could see six meters when diving, today your eyes would be burned” (C 3), a resident remembers. The lake calls to one interlocutor’s mind the following past picture: “In the past we ate crayfish soup regularly, today there aren’t any crayfishes at all.” (C 6.) Another interlocutor deplores, “I remember the crystal clear water of Słupino, crayfish on the lake’s bottom, swans that are no longer there today, I remember storks that are not here either.” (E 1.) In some respects, the lake calls on time to the inhabitants and makes it perceptible, as a change of the lake they have witnessed or as a comparison of its past and present conditions: “We have seen how the lake changed year by year, ever since the sewage plant has been set up.” (C 6.) The lake not only awakens memories, but also stimulates prognostic thinking: “So effluents and fertilizers flow into [Lake] Cheb and further into Słupino. And they will continue to flow until all of Wdzydze stinks.” (E 1.) Due to its glacial origin, Słupino represents an extraordinarily long period of time, testifying to prehistoric times and telling of the dynamics and rapid progress of the human-caused pollution: “It hurts that something was destroyed, which was pure and beautiful.” (C 1.) In an email, the same informant complains, “We transform rivers into flowing sewage and lakes into stinking matter.” (E 1.)

In all its approaching and obtruding the lake shows its autonomous, uncontrollable or high-handed behavior – as Bruno Latour (2017, 59) would put it concerning the earth – which can be interpreted as calling that reaches the inhabitants. Such a call of the polluted lake has a different characteristic than the call addressed to an undetermined audience resounding from the folk song, and it causes exactly the opposite. Not only is the content of the folk song perverted now, but also the call becomes an appeal without mediation – nothing gets called to the inhabitants, they are rather summoned to themselves – this arouses a hearing (see also Heidegger 1995a, 316), and makes the inhabitants the affected ones as Słupino touches them “like a disease” (C 1) physically and mentally. That the call of the lake is now heard as a “call of conscience” articulates the following commentary written by a Kashubian scientist and expert in Kashubian culture, shortly after I discussed the lake-problem with him, to find out his opinion:

Because it seemed to me that in Kashubia, we already have an awareness of how important water is to us. Especially where people live from tourism. I do not understand this inability and passivity. If this continues, the entire area will once be polluted. Moreover,

that will not only bring merely losses to the local authorities! If the information that the Kashubian lakes are polluted will be spread, then... (E 3.)

However, is it not a far-fetched idea to talk about a lake calling? Is this assumption not merely supported by anthropomorphism? Certainly. Nevertheless, Latour provides some arguments to counter the accusation of anthropomorphism, which are valid for my case study, too:

That is why it makes no sense to accuse novelists, scientists, or engineers of committing the sin of "anthropomorphism" when they attribute "agency" to "something that should not have any." Quite to the contrary: if they have to deal with all sorts of contradictory "morphisms," it is because they are trying to explore the form of these actants, which are initially unknown and then gradually domesticated by as many figures as are needed in order to approach them. (Latour 2017, 66.)

Just like the earth, the lake calls to us, even though in different terms (see *ibid.* 64). Hence, out of our own speechlessness we should not hastily deny the lake's own enigmatic language or avoid a rapprochement with it, even if the attempts of confronting the unknown non-human calling and behavior seem modest and clumsy:

People who assert that the Earth has not only movement but also a way of being moved that makes it react to what we do to it are not all crazies who have invested in the strange idea of adding a soul to something that has none. (*Ibid.* 70.)

By using the term call, we can help ourselves to approach the moment of the inhabitants being appealed to directly by Ślupino through its transformations and to describe the specific kind of contact-making as well as the resulting both-sided communication. For as long as the behavior of the lake is assigned as meaningful, it is necessary to encounter it by language and not by silence: "As long as they are acting, agents signify. This is why their signification can be followed, pursued, captured, translated, formulated in language." (*Ibid.*) Talking of a lake calling ultimately represents an attempt to engage with its cryptic behavior and to formulate the riddle that gives Ślupino a voice (see Ingold 2012, 435). The effort to translate the call of the lake into human language expresses a posthuman need of wanting-to-get-beyond-oneself, of including and embracing the non-human, of entering into a dialogue with it and of exhausting the ontological boundaries, from which to bounce back is an integral part of the game. Nonetheless, by modifying Nietzsche's notion of perspectivism that posthumanists refer to (Ferrando 2019, 150–151), we can say that there are many kinds of mouths, even a lake has one, consequently



Figure 3. Author. September 2, 2019. Parowa in Southern Kashubia (Poland). *Drain of the Sewage Plant at Parowa.*

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there are many kinds of truths, and consequently there is no “truth”. However, the more mouths, different mouths that we can use to articulate a thing, the more complete will our “concept” of this thing, “our” objectivity, be (see Nietzsche 1967, 291; 2000, 555).

### **The behavior arising from the concern**

The call of the lake is what it releases and what it does to people (see Latour 2017, 56; Ingold 2012, 434). However, what does the call of Słupino release? How do the affected ones answer? By asking this, we change the perspective and start to consider the lake-problem *from the activity of the human*. The call of the lake heard as a call of conscience forces the affected ones to become active and to behave towards its problem. This includes talking and remembering within the village community, observing the lake, using other lakes for bathing and fishing, searching for explanations, and setting up theses, which are not to be examined for accuracy here, but rather to be seen as a result of the lake-released activity. The most frequently mentioned thesis is that the too-small sewage plant in the village of Parowa would have released untreated sewage via an inflow into Lake Cheb, from where it reached Lake Słupino.

In the summer months especially, the plant would have been overloaded because of the high number of tourists. Additionally, due to regular failures

in the plant as well as for reasons of economy, untreated sewage would have been drained into the lakes. The second thesis states that the sewage disposer commissioned by the municipality, commonly called *szambelan* (an informal and mocking job title, which derives from the Polish term for septic tank, *szambo*), would have contributed to the pollution, since he collects the sewage away from his district of responsibility. As one resident noted, “My relative already tracked him by car to see where he’s picking up all this stuff to bring it to Parowa.” An interlocutor even claimed to have seen how the *szambelan* emptied the sewage tank directly into the nearby forest. The third thesis, directed against farmers, states that they would have been engaging in intensive agriculture and over-fertilizing the soil. As one interlocutor formulates, “We are flooded with corn and heavy fertilizers. Years ago, no farmer grew corn.” Moreover, their fields, cattle pastures and stables would have been too close to the water. The fourth thesis states that the eutrophication is a natural process resulting from the proliferation of trees, reed and weed around the lake “If we want to have a beautiful lake, we must cultivate it,” a farmer states (C 1–C 10; E 1; E 2.)

The call of the lake passes out of the sphere of the villages and reaches institutions and authorities. Years ago, the inhabitants would have turned to the mayor (in Polish the *wójt*), but “The *wójt* always tells you what you like to hear” (C 1), one interviewee remarks. Another one criticizes, “He only makes promises and does nothing, I won’t vote for him anymore.” (C 2.) Some interlocutors speculate that he is supposed to be powerless anyway, since only the *voivodeship* or even the central government in Warsaw could force him to do anything (C 5; C3). The *wójt* is aware of the circulating theses and allegations against him, as shown in the interview he gave to the regional newspaper:

Every year, we have a similar situation here. There are blue-green algae, but only on this lake, in this place. We wrote to the National Water Management Authority, *Wody Polskie*, on this matter. This week, we will have a meeting on this matter with participation of many institutions. Amongst other things, we would like to clean the rivers between Słupino and Słupinko. We expect that we will find a solution to the problem. The blue-green algae show up and disappear again; much depends on the air temperature. I would like to underline that the reason for this is not the sewage plant; two institutions that have carried out examinations confirm that the blue-green algae are the cause. Additionally, the sewage plant has been modernized, which has cost the local community over one million złoty. We constantly monitor the situation to make sure that everything works. (Surażyńska 2019a.)

In the meantime, the Regional Nature Conservation Association, the Health Authority, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Water Management Authority, and the media have been involved. However, the inhabitants are skeptical about the authorities' reactions; they do not trust the correctness of the water samples, especially since they clearly see the contradiction: "The measurements are correct, the lake is a cesspool." (C 6.) It is said that the *wójt* came to one of the villages with the results of the water tests, throwing the documents on a table and saying crossly, "Nobody has a lake as clean as you have." (C 3.) The inhabitants felt the comment of a representative of the National Water Management Authority, who visited them and claimed, "Some have to suffer, so that others have better" as particularly impudent (C 6). Moreover, they are convinced that the reporting does not go far enough. In an unpublished commentary to the editor of two articles on the lake (Surażyńska 2019a; 2019b) handed to me, one inhabitant writes, "Your article has set the waters in motion, but has not triggered a storm yet." (E 1.) A participant of the meeting of stakeholders mentioned by the *wójt* comments:

They talk and talk and nothing comes around [...]. They talk about everything, but not about the lake. Each is against everyone, in the end the farmers are to blame, and the cows have shitted the lake. We should start a joint initiative, start an association, meet at a campfire, and talk about the lake eating sausages and drinking beer, setting common goals. *We who are affected directly* should ask, what we want to achieve. (C 5.)

"Like a team" (C 5), adds his wife. Of course, there is not always unity but also conflicts and tetchiness arise concerning the lake. Yet the conflict line runs between the inhabitants who see themselves as enlightened citizens (artisans, entrepreneurs) and the farmers who are seeking guilt and suspected of alliances with the *wójt*. A resident complains, "The farmers have told me nothing about meeting with the *wójt*, they wanted to make that up among themselves. [...] The farmers are not interested in progress, they are backward." (C 9.) Nevertheless, the inhabitants share the impression that only they as the directly affected ones can achieve something. They consolidate in their care and demarcate themselves from the external actors with phrases like "those up there", "someone up there benefits from it", "people here are afraid" of the government, of losing their jobs, of their children not being taken to school by bus if they continue to cause trouble. (C 2–C 9.)

What can be observed as practical attitude, behavior or willing released by the call of the lake – "We who are affected directly should ask, what we want to achieve" – is rooted ontologically in the preceding care, as "In the phenomenon of willing, the underlying totality of care shows through." (Heidegger

1995a, 239.) The interpretation of the observed behavior and willingness as an expression of care reveals the *whence* and *whither* of the activities of the inhabitants. Caring about the lake, those who are affected by the call ensure their *social thrownness* in their community, from which their *projections* for rescuing of the lake emerge, as well as their *territorial thrownness* alongside and with Słupino. This structure also explains the mistrust against the exhabitants who act far from their thrownness and immediate affectedness by the lake.

By situating the lake-problem within the care-structure, it is possible to reveal the inner connection between the categories call, conscience and anxiety, which show themselves in the field merely in their isolation. Following Heidegger, conscience manifests itself as the inner, silent call of care, which reminds the being of its thrownness and of its anxiety of the very possibility of being (Heidegger 1995a, 322) now and in future. The inhabitants formulated their anxieties of the aftermaths of their behavior or of the consequences of the pollution for their own future and that of the coming generations. In statements like “It would be nice if our children could use the lake, someday” (C 5), precisely the call of conscience comes to the fore as it does in the following reflections:

We are proud of Kashubia (I have been here for *generations*), we are proud of the landscape of Wdzydze and what do we do? We turn rivers into flowing sewage and lakes into stinking waters. Should that be *our heritage* [...]? Sewage and fertilizer flow into Cheb and then Słupino. Moreover, they will continue to flow until they make all Wdzydze stink. Then our *scream* won't help anymore. Then no tourist will come here. (E 1.)

An elderly farmer told me a story, which offers a cosmological explanation of the lake-problem and locates it within the care-structure. By no means is it intended to examine this story on its truth content, but rather to read it as an expression of the inhabitants' immersion into their landscape, with all arising informal knowledge not transmittable into other contexts:

Once the cows grazed on the shore of the lake, they ate up all the reeds and grass. With their hooves, they made a small path around the whole lake. The tourists, who came here from the nearby cities for holidays, discovered this pathway. With it they easily could get access to the beaches and were very happy to have such a comfortable way; the only thing, they found strange and unpleasant about it were the cow-pats. Everything could be so beautiful without them. So they complained in the office in the nearby village. After this, the farmers were forbidden to graze their cows by the lake. The tourists seems to be satisfied. However, the problem was now, that the reed had grown and grown, since nobody removed it; during the autumn and winter, the reed and

the grass moldered; and so does the lake. Today the lake has collapsed; the beaches are overgrown, neither the cows nor the tourists use it now. (C 7.)

In a humorous but sensitive way, the narrator condenses the becoming of the lake-problem by letting two contradictory logics clash: those of the inhabitants on one side, and the exhabitants on the other. The latter corrupts the lake to a merely bathing lake with comfortable access and a picturesque pathway. Without considering the emergence of the path, the tourists induce the disposal of impurities contrary to their holiday expectations, not realizing that by this they cause pollution that is even more serious. The moral of the story: out of disgust, the tourists intrude upon an intact ecological system; as punishment, they must now be disgusted by their own leavings, which flow from the sewage plant into the overburdened lake. In the story, the behavior, the willing and the projections of the tourists are not immersed in the landscape, but are opposed to it or forced upon it violently.

The narrator contrasts the worldview of the exhabitants with the integrative and balanced worldview of the inhabitants, whose projections coincide with their thrownness. Their behavior, their willing and their projections grow out of their immersion and thrownness into the concrete landscape alongside and together with the entities encountered within-the-world such as cattle, deer, swans, storks, crayfish, frogs, and fish. As indicators of ecological (im-)balances, animals were a dominant motive in narrations, for example, “When the cows grazed by the lake, the little fishes immediately ate up the cow-pats.” (C 8); “In the past, the lake was full of crayfish, today there are none.” (C 6); “I can barely watch the little fish swimming from the source into the sewer, into their ruin.” (C 3); “Where are the deer to take their drinking water from?” (C 8); “Not even cows would drink the water.” (C 3.) By integrating the entities encountered in their world into their projections and behavior towards the lake or by being immersed into their environment together with all entities encountered therein, the inhabitants are in some way beyond-themselves. This human decentering, non-human integrating and species-boundaries-overcoming or even abolishing attitude of the inhabitants, which arises from care, expresses the basic constitution of being-beyond-oneself and can thus be characterized as posthuman.

### **The lake tips, the *Stimmung* tips**

The following section is about the sphere of integration, convergence or attunement of perspectives *from the activity of the lake* and *from the activity of the inhabitants*. Already the story of the farmer unites and entangles the activities of the lake and the residents: it tells of the transformation of the lake, caused by the thoughtless human intervention, and of how preconditioning

an equilibrium state is. Furthermore, it also conveys an unrest or *Stimmung* that embraces both, the lake and the inhabitants.

The actual entanglement and interweaving of the lake's and the inhabitants' activities is reflected in the correlation of the tipping-moment: With the lake, the *Stimmung* tips, with the *Stimmung* the lake tips. From the tipping *Stimmung* emerges unity among the inhabitants – acting as a “team” – on the one hand and discord – “each against everyone” – on the other. The tipping *Stimmung* was articulated in the descriptions of the bodily and emotional states released by the lake, as the lake matter “depresses” (E 2), “makes angry” (C 9), “pulls down” (C 1) or “hits” (E 3). In this particular *Stimmung*, memories were awakened, with which the narrators assured themselves of their own thrownness, as did the inhabitant who signed his (unpublished) commentary to the already quoted newspaper article on the lake-problem with the following words: “With the hope that one day we will wake up in the reality that we know from our memories.” (E 1.) Although *Stimmung* articulated herein is future-oriented, it reveals itself towards the horizon of experience of the past, for “the existentially basic character of [*Stimmung*] lies in *bringing* one *back* to something.” (Heidegger 1995a, 390.) Since *Stimmung* is perceptible through affects and senses it is likewise connected to memories sedimented in the body, or in other words: mediated by affects and senses *Stimmung* brings the past to the present. With their words, the inhabitants tried to express this unspeakable unease, to what they are unquestionably immersed in and what determines their feelings, thoughts and actions. In turn, by its transforming matter, the lake also mirrors and articulates its own unease perceived as a call. In this regard, the whole interaction between the lake and the inhabitants is embedded in a specific *Stimmung* awakened by the environmental problem. Just as the human is immersed in the polluted lake, so too is the polluted lake immersed in the human, and as the human expresses what the lake does to him, the lake expresses what the human does to it. In this corresponding *Stimmung*, the dichotomy between environment and mind, non-human and human disappear, as *Stimmung* is neither outside nor inside, but emerges out of being-in-the-world (ibid. 176.) Emphasizing the blurring boundaries between world and human, Stephan Strasser denotes *Stimmung* as “a sentiment of the self and the world at once” (Strasser 1956, 121). The concept of world-sentiment can be applied to the lake-problem, too: in the current *Stimmung* of climate-change-anxiety, a tipping lake receives more attention, and vice versa: it can become a symptom of a globally changing *Stimmung* corresponding with the changing climate:

Today, through a sort of counter-Copernican revolution, it is the New Climate Regime that compels us to turn our gaze toward the Earth considered once again with all its

process of transformation and metamorphoses, including generation, dissolution, war, pollution [„comme un cloaque“<sup>6</sup>], corruption, and death. (Latour 2017, 61.)

Heinz Bude uses *Stimmung* as a socio-political category, responsible for events in financial markets and correlating with political power shifts (Bude 2016, 9): “*Stimmung* gives up the question that provokes this or that answer. This question questions how we live and what we live for.” (Ibid. 21.) The discussions on the lake often touched on issues such as regional policy, the national-conservative government in Poland or the EU’s agricultural policy. Ultimately, the socio-political *Stimmung* that comes to expression in formulated worries, anxieties, uncertainty about the future is part of the *Stimmung* registered in the villages and should not be seen as disconnected from the lake-problem. Rather, the pollution of the lake was read as a symptom of a socio-political, cultural and ecological change of *Stimmung*: “The lake expresses the attitude of the regional political powers” (C 1), an inhabitant states. On another occasion, he continues angrily, “The shit floods us, and the heads of the Polish people, including the Kashubs, are indoctrinated by the party and Disco Polo [Disco Polo is a genre of Polish popular disco music].” (E 2.) A farmer explains humorously, “There are good and bad bacteria and the neutral bacteria always join the bacteria that are in the majority; this is how ecological systems get out of balance – just like government systems (laughs) [...]” and continues, “Farmers are used as scapegoats to tap EU subsidies for revitalizing landscapes that have been damaged by agriculture. But if this benefits the lake, they can gladly blame us.” (C 3.) His neighbor mentions, “The EU-directives do not match with our landscape, our soil, and our climate.” (C 6.) As these passages illustrate, *Stimmung* brings together, embraces or pervades complex phenomena dispersed at first sight, without imposing a causality on them.

In numerous respects, *Stimmung* can be characterized as a posthuman category. As a total phenomenon, *Stimmung* removes dichotomies and integrates inside and outside, past and future, non-humans and humans, and thereby decenters the human. *Stimmung* is guessing in silence, is near and far, does not take shape, has no color, no materiality, no sound, no fragrance, and no taste. It is mostly noticeable only by its extreme tendencies (Heidegger 1995b, 68), and that is why it came to the fore in the Kashubian field at the moment of its tipping, simultaneously to the tipping of the lake.

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6 As Latour put it in the original French edition of this text (2015, 83), and what reminds us of the inhabitants statement, “the lake is a cesspool” (C 6).

### **Conclusions: The posthuman dimension of the Kashubian lake**

The aim of the present study was to concretize and exemplify an ethnologically well-understood and useful concept of the posthuman and to show that it is far more than an abstract concept, but can be encountered in the everyday life, memory and activity of people. The empirical basis for the study was a phenomenon showing itself in the Southern Kashubia, namely the phenomenon of the mutual activation of Lake Słupino and the people dwelling on its shores. Approaching the entanglements of landscape and inhabitants, non-human and human activity is a methodical and analytical challenge, as already the linguistic representation of the integrative moment forces us to unconventional solutions.

On a methodical level, sensory ethnography helped getting sensitive for, involved with and attuned to what the lake does and how it behaves, and stimulated thinking *from its activity*. The perspective of those directly affected by the lake's activity could be taken through a participative dialogue with the inhabitants and my own emotional and sensory involvement in the landscape. On the theoretical level, the changing perspectivization, which should be strived for when approaching the posthuman, was achieved by using the categories call, care, and *Stimmung*. These categories, deepened and sharpened by Heidegger's terminological apparatus, allowed to build up the argumentation first from the calling lake, then from the caring human and subsequently both perspectives entangled in the category *Stimmung*.

In the absence of adequate words to describe a lake-activity and its way of addressing the residents, the category call was chosen – by no means arbitrary, for it can be traced back to a culturally coded motif. Nevertheless, the inhabitants do not perceive the call of their lake as a call to an undetermined counterpart, but rather as a call of their conscience, touching them both physically and emotionally. What is heard puts the inhabitants in the position of those directly affected, forces them to behave towards the lake-problem by entering a dialogue with it. Their activity released by the lake, their behavior and willingness, are founded in the shared concern for the lake, from which through narrating and remembering they assure their own identity and thrownness. The situatedness of the lake-problem within the care-structure came to the fore in a story told by a farmer, which was read as an expression of the inhabitants' immersion in their landscape, along with all informal and intuitive knowledge derived from it. Integrating the entities encountered in the world into their projections, or by projecting themselves onto and being immersed into their environment, the inhabitants are-beyond-themselves and in this sense act out the *conditio humana* of being posthuman. The entanglement of the activities of the inhabitants and the lake was further reflected in the

correlation of the tipping lake and *Stimmung*. *Stimmung* simultaneously tipping with the lake shows itself in the awakened memories and in the unease released by the lake. In addition, the category *Stimmung* helped to consider the lake-problem more globally as a result or symptom of socio-political or climate changes. All three categories have proven helpful to elicit posthuman phenomena situated in the field and everyday life, and thereby the categories revealed their inherent posthuman characteristics.

Under the conditions of the field's demanded necessity of an integrative understanding of nature/culture and the assumption of a *conditio humana* of being inextricably entangled with non-humans, the idea of the posthuman opens the door to phenomena like the mutual activation of non-human/human and inspires unconventional methodical and theoretical solutions for approaching it. The posthuman is an invitation to think beyond the human, to exhaust and play with the ontological boundaries. In this sense, the prefix *post* can be interpreted as *beyond* human, as a basic constitution of wanting-being-beyond-oneself, as an obtruding option of transposing-oneself into entities like calling lakes, as the dream of overcoming our physical and mental limitations. Nonetheless, this interpretation requires enduring the lack of explicitness, for the transposability of humans into other entities is possible for humans – that means that this option is indisputably significant for human beings. Questionable is only the factual realization of this possibility as Heidegger notes (1995b, 207). Just as in the possibility of being-beyond-oneself, the possibility of failure is already accounted for in the danger of the accusation of anthropomorphism that is already founded in the possibility of approaching the riddles and uncanniness of what is characterized as posthuman. Attempts to translate the calling of Lake Słupino into human language must inevitably imply loss of meaning as attempts to approximate the mutual activation of lake/human *from the activity of the lake* must reach limits of representation. Nonetheless, by paying attention to a sensory and affective knowledge of the people entangled with the lake, to one's own affects and senses, to *Stimmung* reigning in the field, and by applying categories allowing changing perspective on the lake-problem, we come a little closer to what lays beyond but is at the same time inextricably entangled with the human.

Exploiting the potentials of the posthuman while at the same time accepting its dangers can be read as a way of confronting the challenges of our time. In the context of Anthropocene, phenomena like tipping lakes show themselves with a new urgency – they become more apprehensive. Therefore, contrary to Nietzsche's assumption formulated in the opening quotation put to the beginning of the exploration, it seems that we no longer can enjoy being in the open countryside carelessly, since it obviously has an opinion concerning us,

even calling it aloud. To bring this call to language poses a great methodical challenge to the field researcher, since – and as a modification of a phrase by Heidegger (ibid. 219) – each entity can only ever call with *its* mouth.

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