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SENSING THE POLYCRISIS

An artistic approach to walking as ritualisation

ABSTRACT

This study investigates sensory experience whilst walking in the era of the polycrisis. Through a walk followed by an interview, an attempt to gather impressions about sensory experiences and ponder how these sensory impressions reflect relations within the environment by placing them alongside environmental data, and describe the implications of the polycrisis. The focus lies on sensory registers related to the environment in the Arctic village of Abisko in northern Sweden, an area that is changing rapidly and which has been extensively researched within the natural sciences.

The study draws on artistic research and the concept of transcorporeality—that is, bodies are in relation with the world around them and in a constant state of becoming with it. Transcorporeality as a concept is applied as walking ritualisation using multisensory ethnography and 'walking with' methodologies to investigate the sensory experiences and relations that make them. The interlocutors—here, called participants—were permanent residents of Abisko. I argue that a walking ritualisation, which involves repetitive sensing and a transcorporeal experience of the environment, adds to the narrative and knowledge of the Arctic polycrisis. In essence, that ritualisation may enmesh the human subject in the more-than-human world.

Keywords: More-than-human world, Ritualisation, Walking, Transcorporeal, Sensing, Arctic

INTRODUCTION

Sensing and sensory experience can be understood within the new materialist discourse as embodiment and constant material becoming. For instance, new materialist thought on how different entities influence each other and emerge through intra-action (Barad 2007) is often referred to in sensory ethnography (Järviluoma et al. 2023; Markuksela 2023). Similarly, the environmental humanities and new materialist scholar Stacy Alaimo's (2018: 435) concept of transcorporeality proposes that 'all creatures, as embodied beings, are intermeshed with the dynamic, material world, which crosses through them, transforms them, and is transformed by them.' Thus, wind, the warmth of the Sun, the softness of peat, the sound of a train, glimpsing a moose, and witnessing an avalanche are parts of the changing assemblages, fluxes, and flows in the ecosystems that cross through all bodies and as sensory experiences.

In her book *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (2010), Alaimo describes transcorporeality in

at least three interlinking ways. Firstly, transcorporeality analyses experiences of encounter through permeability and embodied porosity—for example, an illness that occurs due to environmental pollution. This encounter includes not only the human body's vulnerability but an encounter with economic, social, political, and cultural structures which can be violent. Secondly, transcorporeality can be incorporated in various theories within different disciplines—not only philosophy but also scientific and medical research, cultural studies, and technology. For instance, environmental monitoring technologies, used to monitor climate change and other environmental factors, tie into transcorporeality by providing direct or indirect data on how these conditions impact human bodies, thereby emphasising the interconnectedness of health and the environment. Thirdly, while transcorporeality focusses on the interconnectedness and permeability of the human body and the environment, it requires a critical approach to how human practices impact other species. Thus, humans should take responsibility for their intra-actions, accepting agential accountability and a collective responsibility for environmental harm, as well as adopting an ethics of care not separated into a nature/human binary. The notion of the more-than-human[1] crosses this alleged binary as a relational concept, involving not just humans and not just other than humans. It is not othering, but all that is becoming in transcorporeality, is similarly valued. It, thereby, decentres the human and underlines interdependent relationality.

Given these definitions, transcorporeality became palpable through the walks undertaken in this study. Sensory registers are linked not only to scientific evidence of environmental change but also to interactions with the more-than-human world. These relations include economic, political, cultural, scientific, and substantial networks in a world in polycrisis—a term referring to the simultaneous occurrence of multiple, interconnected crises, amplifying each other and creating complex outcomes (Morin and Kern 1999; Janzwood and Homer-Dixon 2022). This broadens the concept of transcorporeality to encompass its various definitions related to bodies, place, and movement.

This study took place in North Sápmi, the northernmost part of Sweden, known as Norrbotten, which is home to the Indigenous Sámi, Tornedalian, and Swedish cultures. It was conducted at Abisko Scientific Research Station (ANS), which was established in 1913 and is managed by the Swedish Polar Research Secretariat, a governmental agency that provides scientists with research stations, infrastructure, and expeditions to polar regions. I began my research at ANS in 2022 as a member of an interdisciplinary 'Changing Perspectives' research group, which focuses on fostering collaboration between the humanities, the natural sciences, and the arts to explore nature's contribution to people (NCP). The NCP concept was developed based on ecosystem services that are usually quantified in exact physical measures. However, NCP recognises the essential role of culture in defining more-than-human relations whilst also emphasising the significance of Indigenous and local knowledge (Díaz et al. 2018). One of the shared research interests of the group was how people can value more-than-human contributions.

As part of this research group, I visited Abisko several times a year over a three-year period to develop artistic research on the transcorporeal sensory experiences of environmental changes in participatory performance (Keski-Korsu 2024a). I combined walking methodologies utilised in the arts and

humanities to create these performances—for instance, related to encountering the microbial life of permafrost thaw (Keski-Korsu 2024a). Artistic research is defined as research wherein the artistic practice is not only the result of the research but its methodological vehicle; the research 'unfolds through the acts of creating and performing' (Borgdorff 2010: 46). Types of knowledge produced can include audience's or participants' sensory or potential knowledge which can be sensed but not understood immediately as well as knowledge that is produced through a platform of artistic research where the theories are developed in a transdisciplinary way (Kokkonen 2011). These approaches apply to my research and, to an extent, to the interdisciplinary research group of which I was a member.

ANS field research sites are located near the station as well as in various areas of the mountains and mires. Many of the study areas are nature reserves. The station is known for its long-term research on climate change; there have been continual environmental observations here for over 100 years, and the site is one of the most studied in the Arctic. The scientific data from this area are extensive, covering air and soil temperature, precipitation, and UV radiation (Jonasson et al. 2012). The site is a base for high mountain permafrost research and the current focus also lies on meteorology (winter climate change) and plant ecology (tree-line dynamics) (Johansson et al. 2011; Rundqvist et al. 2011; Vikhamar-Schuler et al. 2016). Since the station has been in operation, the Arctic climate, with a mean temperature below 0°C, has changed to a boreal, subarctic climate with a mean temperature above 0°C, causing changes to the vegetation, hydrology, permafrost conditions, and carbon cycling (Pascual et al. 2021). Environmental change in the area is driven not only by climate change but also by other anthropogenic factors such as mining, forestry, tourism, nature preservation, and reindeer herding. As such, these changes can be called the building blocks of the polycrisis.

Natural scientists focus on researching the environment using different technological sensory devices. Professor of Arctic ecology and previous director of ANS Terry Callaghan introduced the M3 concept—monitoring, manipulation, and modelling—for use in environmental observations in Abisko (Johansson et al. 2012). Monitoring refers to making observations *in situ* over the long term and conducting measurements of a phenomenon in one place. Manipulation of experiments simulates changes and evaluates the impacts of multiple drivers on ecosystems. Modelling scales the findings up from the local level (Johansson et al. 2012). Taken together, the scientific research realised through the M3 concept reveals environmental changes and their global impacts.

Often, monitoring detects physical inputs such as temperature, precipitation, or CO_2 emissions using technical, quantitative sensors. However, monitoring can also involve traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), knowledge based on cumulative collective experience, and citizen science—that is, the public taking part in observing, collecting, and analysing data. For instance, the 'Snow and Ice' research project collaborated with Sámi reindeer herders in research guided by their TEK in the Abisko area. The herders' descriptions of snow and ice connected to their herding strategy choices were recorded. When these descriptions and Sámi terminology (i.e., words for snow and ice) used by the informants were compared with scientific measurements of snow density and hardness, researchers found remarkable agreement (Riseth et al. 2011). Researchers in the 'Snow and Ice' project concluded that TEK holders can observe

and sense more changes compared to scientists, at times identifying changes scientists do not notice. However, scientific measurements are of a high quality which also capture uncertainties, and can be generalised over larger areas and projected into the future (Riseth et al. 2011). I propose that, in parallel with the data collected via environmental monitoring technologies, the human bodily experience of the environment can add to the environmental research in Abisko and open up perspectives related to transcorporeality. Furthermore, walking methodologies can take the form of art, allowing for participatory performance which extends the experience beyond the local level.

Bodily movement and sensory engagement are essential to understanding the world (Ingold 2000). This experience can provide another sensory angle on the environment and elevate more-than-human relations. Environmental monitoring technologies focus on one phenomenon at a time and record data in one place over certain time. Humans see, listen, feel pressure on the skin, taste, and smell, leading to a cognitive process as well as a holistic, mobile, and dynamic perception. Sensory input is not just perceived passively; perception is an active process in which the body entangles with the environment (Merleau-Ponty 1962). This is inherent to transcorporeality. Thus, utilising the M3 approach, this study proposes embodied and transcorporeal sensing to better understand changes in Abisko.

Walking is essential to a method based on sensory movement; it is a multisensory and participatory mode of knowing that cultivates ecological sensibilities and relations within the more-than-human world (Ingold 2000; Springgay and Truman 2017). Furthermore, walking is a basic human activity that occurs in everyday life. It may be a ritual in itself, such as a pilgrimage, but this study proposes that everyday walking can instead be considered ritualising behaviour, in this case within sensory research. Ritualisation is a term originating from ethology to describe the components of everyday instrumental behaviours of different species taken out of context; they signal a different motivation, becoming symbolic or communicative (Huxley 1914; Lorenz 2002 [1966]; Goodall 1986). Definitions of ritual vary from religious rites and theatre plays to football matches and yoga practice (Durkheim 1912; Turner 1982; Bell 1997). Today, ritual is often considered a domain 'conceived as occupying cultural space alongside other cultural domains such as politics, arts, or religion' (Grimes 2014: 343). New or reinvented rituals emerge in secular societies. As such, ritualisation is the process by which special rites arise from the mundane (Grimes 2014). Walking, as a form of common and repetitive movement, does not necessarily aim to create a rite but, like repetitive data collection in the natural sciences, can entail and underline sensory experiences that add to the understanding of environmental changes, functioning as a dramaturgy and performance. Thus, a layer of ritualisation can be added to ordinary walking.

Walking is an everyday practice for locals and visitors to Abisko. I investigated how to tune in and sense changes in the environment by walking with inhabitants of Abisko on their everyday routes. I studied whether it was possible, in the course of an ordinary walk, to filter out the sensory experiences and relations linked to the environmental changes recorded in the area via natural sciences research. Concurrently, walking could be considered a participatory, collective performance. Within the concept of ritualisation, participatory performance attempts to make new sense out of existing material (walking as everyday practice) via a dramaturgical approach and thus becomes

a new means of analysis. To map the sensory experience, walks were followed by an interview to understand the sensory register arising from the repetition of walks. The interview was pivotal because, during the walks, participants often talked a lot about what they saw around them and wanted to explain what they knew based on their experience. Through an interview, it was possible to step away from the mode of presenting knowledge and describing the environment. This made it possible to repeat the walk in one's mind, investigating the multisensory experience and what it evoked.

Polycrisis changes affect the Arctic more severely than other places due to polar amplification (Screen and Simmonds 2010; Serreze and Barry 2011; Rantanen et al. 2022). It is essential to know the scientific facts behind the polycrisis, but there is also a need to be sensitised and moved by the environment, to be touched in the heart (Latour 2017). The polycrisis is happening and has myriad implications at this moment; it has been observed through the natural sciences research in Abisko, but is also perceived and sensed in organic bodies and matter. How are humans enmeshed in the world of the polycrisis and in transcorporeal more-than-human entanglement? What kind of sensory register is there within the transcorporeal proposal to acknowledge, re-activate, and relate with when living amidst these changes? This study attempts to gather and emphasise sensory experiences as multisensory acts and place them alongside environmental data from the area potentially describing the implications of the polycrisis.

SENSING WHILE WALKING

Sensory ethnography is grounded in participant sensation, sensing, and making sense with others (Howes 2019). As such sensory ethnography relies on materialities rather than data, asking how those materialities, which include the researcher, relate to one another (Vannini 2024). To an extent, such an approach contradicts the natural sciences' reliance on quantitative data, which are collected at a specific location and in a specific form over a period of time. The senses work differently, and the experience is multisensory, more-than-human, and reflexive (Vannini 2024). Social anthropologist Sarah Pink (2009) argues that sensory ethnography should offer versions of reality; she popularised sensory ethnography as an emphatic and embodied practice.

Sensory ethnography and walking methodologies in various disciplines are influenced by (walking) art practices (Ingold and Vergunst 2008; Pink et al. 2010; Sansi 2020; Mueller 2023). Studies on environmental relations and sensing changes in ecosystems have been conducted using arts-based methodologies of walking or in collaboration with artists (Aula 2023; Raatikainen et al. 2024). However, walking art practices can also be informed by sensory ethnography. Similar to other fields of research, artists who develop walking methodologies create a score or a framework for their walk: for example, where it happens, how the path is chosen, and/or what kinds of sensory registers are emphasised (Biserna 2022). Walking can be the artwork itself—such is the case here—and can also be considered a storytelling or a social practice, or it can lead to artworks in other media (Pujol 2018; Horodner 2002; Keski-Korsu 2024b, 2024c). These perspectives emerged in this study and the entanglement of them can be viewed through the lens of sensory ethnography and vice versa.

The mission for participants walking in Abisko was to 1) take us along a route or path important to them and that they use in their

everyday life and 2) after the walk, take part in an interview wherein we talk about the sensory experience of that route. Thus, participants were in their familiar local area and I accompanied them. This is often called 'walking along', whereby the researcher is a participant in the walk (Kusenbach 2003). However, in this case, drawing on sensing, 'walking along' extended to 'walking with' to acknowledge more-than-human relations (Springgay and Truman 2017). As described above, this type of walking research can be considered both an artistic, experimental act and a sociological performance (Kowalewski and Bartłomiejski 2020).

Many hiking trails and other walk-based outdoor activities exist for tourists in Abisko, while locals walk in the same places as part of their daily routines. Here, the focus lies on the everyday walks of long-term residents who have a lot of walking experience in the area; this involves repetition and walks in changing conditions. The score of the walking, as explained earlier, is inspired by sensobiographic walking, which proposes talking sensory life into being while moving and biographical fragments are captured on video or audio using mobile devices (Järviluoma et al. 2023). Sensobiographic walking is based on multisensory features and the importance of being physically in the place of sensing. Simultaneously, it is storytelling whilst walking.

The participants in the walks in Abisko shared their sensory experiences of the environment and what kinds of relations these experiences revealed. At the same time, the walks were social and social performances because we walked together and talked about what we sensed during the walk—focussing specifically on what was seen. One of the participants, Alina, said:

> When I walk alone, I often think about things I want to do. I'm working on a sewing machine a lot and I figure it out easily when I walk: 'oh, I will do it like this.' It's meditation for the brain. But when I walk with friends, we talk a lot!

The interview after the walk provided another angle on the experience in that we distanced it from the actual, physical place of sensing and social communication.

INTERVIEW AFTER THE WALK

The audio-recorded interviews followed the walk and took place in a peaceful indoor place. I attempted to create a calm and relaxing atmosphere: using a peaceful voice, I proposed that the participant close their eyes, and asked questions at a slow pace. The interview aimed to take the participant back to the walk in their mind and to ritualise the experience. This interview draws on the idea of a microphenomenological interview whereby microscopic attention is paid not only to *what* was sensed but also to *how* it was sensed (Petitmengin 2007; Petitmengin et al. 2017; Johannesdottir 2023). In this case, the participants interviewed memorised and tuned into their experience by focusing on the multisensory perception of one location of their choosing from the walk. The interview attempted to reveal their long-term experience of the environment and to repeat the walks, thus interlinking bodily sensations and their possible changes over time. A microphenomenological interview can open up another intuitive layer in the multisensorial register and bring to mind the relations based on it.

Participants were asked to stop at a certain site of their choosing on the walk and describe

their experience through their answers to the following questions:

> I propose letting a particular moment from our walk come back into your mind. Give me a sign when you have found it.
>
> When you're there, do you see anything?
>
> Look around again at what you were seeing. In this place, there may be sounds. What do you hear?
>
> While seeing and hearing everything, try to remember the position of your body, and describe it.
>
> As you remember the position of your body, let all your sensations come back to you and describe them as you remember them.
>
> Slowly, you can now come back from the sensory experience. Lastly, I would like to know:
>
> Why did you take me on this walk?
>
> Why is this place or route important to you?

The walk and the interview that followed are analysed together as a ritualisation to filter out sensory and relational knowledge. Overall, they can add to our knowledge and help develop performative acts of walking beyond Abisko.

WALKS WHERE AND WITH WHOM

I conducted three walks including interviews in the Abisko area in April 2022. Abisko is a small village with approximately 100 permanent residents, who all tend to know each other well. There are many visitors, such as scientists who come to do fieldwork and tens of thousands of tourists who visit the nature reserve annually. In this study, I focussed on the people who live in Abisko village and who walk in the surrounding environment, as well as near the Abisko Scientific Research Station (ANS) or Svenska Turistforeningen's (STF) Abisko Turiststation outside the village.

Snowball sampling is an ideal way to get to know people in a small community. Plant ecologist Friederike Gehrmann, affiliated with ANS and a member of our research group, was the key person who introduced me to people at first. I hoped to walk with people from different backgrounds and asked several, from contact to contact. Some refused, to my understanding, due to research fatigue, a lack of time, or not knowing what they themselves could get out of the walk with me. This study consisted of three local participants, referred to using pseudonyms. Robbie is a young man, Alina is a retiree, and Sara is a middle-aged woman. Robbie and Alina both live in Abisko, whilst Sara lives at the scientific station. Notably, all of them work or have worked with tourists in Abisko, allowing them to juxtapose their sensory registers to that of visitors, partly influencing how they discussed places, narratives, and relations during the walks. Participants' ethnicities or where they were born was not central to this study, but it is important to note that all of them had lived in Abisko for a long time and thus had learned to relate to the environment by being in it across all seasons and circumstances.

Conversations during the walks and the interviews with participants were conducted in the English language. Whilst not the native language of any of the participants, they spoke English quite well because they worked with tourists. Arguably, the discussion and interview would have been easier in the participants'

native languages, but sensory methods aided communication, which was not only based on spoken language but also on the shared embodied, sensorial experience of the walk.

ANALYSIS 1: TOURISTS AND MORE-THAN-HUMAN WORLD

Alina and Sara wanted to walk together their route to work from Abisko village and ANS to Svenska Turistforeningen's (STF) Abisko Turiststation. We started the walk from ANS, which is located between the village and the STF tourist station. We walked on the side of the main road along a walking path. Torneträsk Lake lay on the other side, with a birch forest in between.

Sara put up 'Moose on the Loose' signs along the way to warn tourists not to go too close because mother moose are known to attack humans whilst protecting their offspring. We did not see any moose on this walk, but we had all seen them five days previously in the same forest. The aesthetics ('to perceive' in Greek) of the Arctic polycrisis have included images of polar bears on melting ice and tourists traveling to see glaciers as 'last-chance tourism' (Huntington 2016). There is a strong critique of this aesthetic proposal, implying that the polycrisis is happening in an exotic, empty place with little significance to the rest of the world (Bloom 2022). Alina said that, in Abisko, tourists are interested in seeing the Aurora Borealis, the beauty of the landscape, and animals such as moose and bears. According to Alina and Sara, many tourists consider these spectacles to be seen when they wish.

Figure 1. *Moose which, according to Siggi, are not easily spotted if one is unaccustomed to observing the landscape. Photograph by Mari Keski-Korsu 2022.*

Locals have learned and trained their senses to this environment, whereby they are sometimes able to present to tourists the spectacle of moose or other more-than-human species. Sara explained that it takes a long time to become accustomed to looking at and seeing animals such as moose (Figure 1). She mentioned this because she moved to Abisko ten years previously and learned to look at the landscape. Now, she spots differences in the forest immediately. She stated:

> Like moose. They are big but they can look like a rock if they just lay down. But I look outside and I'm like, 'wait, there's something!' Or, some weeks ago, I was in the parking lot we passed today, and I looked up—'look, there's an avalanche.' Like, a seriously huge avalanche coming. You see those things.

Tourism and mining are closely related to transportation in the Abisko region. We walked past the nature and tourist centre, and stopped at a small house, the first of which is used for tourist accommodation. Sara explained that it was originally built for the workers constructing the Kiruna-Narvik railway in 1902 and was then transformed to serve tourists. Four years later, a larger hotel was built to accommodate more tourists, and then established as the STF tourist station. The Kiruna iron ore mine, the largest underground iron ore mine in the world, was established in 1898, and the railway from Kiruna, Sweden, to Narvik, Norway, was needed to transport the ore via rail to Narvik's ice-free port. Mining has a significant role in this area. For instance, iron ore from Kiruna was the primary source of iron for Nazi Germany's weaponry during World War II (Karlbom 1965); currently, the ore is primarily sold to China. Mining remains an important livelihood in the region, with the town of Kiruna being relocated in 2013–2033 in order to prevent it from collapsing into the mined iron ore cavity beneath the buildings (Nilsson 2010) and drastically influences the environment.

For a long while, the railway was the only means of tourist transportation to Abisko. The E10 road, going through Abisko between Kiruna and Narvik, was finished in the 1980s. During the interview, Sara referred to the sounds of cars and trains, and how they make Abisko easily accessible to tourists. I shared my experience that these sounds are characteristic of Abisko; the sound of passing trains is a part of the daily auditory landscape at times even going unnoticed. Sara connected transportation to the environment and commented that, when people go fast in these 'capsules', they are separated from sensing the environment. Sometimes, this separation continues when tourists reach their destination.

> My feeling is that for some people—I mean, I don't like this idea of nature and not-nature, but some people go out and just be with this landscape and some people see it as a background to whatever they do. And then they don't care so much. If you need a helicopter to get somewhere or you just drive around on a motorbike or in a car, then it's only in the background. If you really want to be here, in this … landscape, then you are a guest and should have more respect.

After the small house, we continued towards the Abisko River. The river flows through formations of rocks and stones before reaching Torneträsk Lake. During the interview, Sara did not divulge which place from our walk she chose to remember and focus on as the sensory experience, but it is likely that it was

this one. She said that she knows that climate change will affect this area, and she can see and feel it already. It is difficult to predict because the weather can do anything in any month: the lake might not freeze until February, even though it should in December; and there can be snow in June in another year. Therefore, it is difficult to tell tourists when would be a good time to visit Abisko, and fishermen may not be able to predict when it is possible to ice-fish. The environmental data recorded from Abisko in the past 100 years reveal the same trends. The freezing of Torneträsk Lake occurs later and later each winter (Callaghan et al. 2010), a trend corroborated by data collected at the ANS weather station (Visualizing Change 2021).

Tourism accounts for 8% of global carbon emissions (Lenzen et al. 2018), causing the climate change felt in Abisko and elsewhere. However, Sara's perspective is both practical and local. She focused on the significance of guiding tourists to trails and educating them on how to behave whilst hiking. According to her, Abisko would not exist without tourists and, because it is a natural preserve, people have the right to visit it. She is proud to facilitate respectful attitudes and added that it might be possible for tourists to take what they have learned with them when they leave Abisko and perhaps act more sustainably. Furthermore, she thinks that moose, bears, and other animals have learned to stay away from tourist trails if they wish not to be seen.

WALKING IN SENTIENT ECOLOGIES

It was not easy for Alina to choose a place from the walk during the interview and to talk about her sensory experience of it. Instead, she used the overall experience of her daily walks to describe her sensing of and relations with the environment. When I asked what she saw on our walk together, she said that she did not see animals, unlike her daily walks. Usually, she enjoys meeting reindeer.

> I see a lot of reindeer and talk to them, too. They are so sweet … they are so calm. And, then, I feel calm. I'm comfortable with animals.

When she walks alone, it is like meditation, and she solves her problems during the walk. In particular, she referred to the handicrafts she is making. She gains inspiration during walks and starts sewing when she returns home.

> I do everything with my sewing machine. I sew clothes and help people with their things. I have a lot of things to do for other people.

Our discussion suggests that the walking methodology should be understood through the lens of the different abilities, distances, and terrain involved in the walk, as well as the embodied dispositions of the walkers (Macpherson 2016). Alina has a problem with her feet, but she considers walking outdoors, seeing reindeer, and hearing birds essential to her wellbeing. The distance and terrain we walked together were relatively easy because we followed a walking path.

On one of my follow-up visits to Abisko in September 2022, Alina took me to a weekly handicraft meeting of local women at the village railway station. Seasonal workers from the STF tourist station join these meetings as well. It was a sunny afternoon, and we all worked on our handicrafts almost in silence: reattaching buttons, sewing dress, and making tea towels. I asked a woman who was weaving an ankle band if she might be interested in going for

Figure 2. *Ankle band weaving. Photograph by Mari Keski-Korsu 2022.*

a walk and talking with me (Figure 2). She was a friend of Alina's, so it was possible that she knew about our walks and that they relate to sensing the environment. She declined, saying that she could not walk. I did not have the chance to explain in more detail what my research was about before she kindly said:

> I don't really think about nature ever. I'm not from Abisko but I was born and have always lived in this area. I don't think about nature when I do my handcrafts.

Transcorporeality, being changed by the environment, can be translated into sentient ecology. Sentient ecology describes mutual interrelations, consisting of solidarities and obligations between a human and a more-than-human (Anderson 2000). The relationship develops from intuitively knowing the land, not as pristine nor in a mystical way, but as a set of relations that contribute to technical and spiritual knowledge. In sentient ecologies, the

ecological, social, and cultural contexts shaping relations can be comprehended practically. That curt refusal during the handicraft meeting revealed a significant perspective related to the walks: knowing with land does not necessarily require thinking about nature. The woman had a long-term, generational relationship with the land and did not consider nature as something separate from herself. It is, therefore, possible to espouse a refusal of the nature-culture divide (or anthropocentric dualism) whilst still knowing the land and its changes. Anderson (2000: 117) contends that the 'complex, communicative understanding of a proper relationship to land is as important in evaluating the possibilities and limitations provided .' In this case, however, the possibilities and limitations remain in flux.

ANALYSIS 2: SENSING ON STORNABBEN

Robbie proposed walking up a hill called Stornabben. The walk began at his home in Abisko village; thus, we walked through the village and, then, across the railway line, past the tourist cottages and café, the helipad, and a husky farm where dogs were barking. It was easier to pay attention because we did not talk much. Gravel created its own specific noise on the asphalt under our feet. We reached the end of the village and entered the downy birch forests. The snow was soft, requiring some effort to walk or climb; we were sweating under our winter clothes. We walked single file through the forest. Robbie went first because he knew the way.

As we reached the top of Stornabben, Robbie said that this is a place where people celebrate the appearance of the Sun from behind the mountains for the first time after the polar night. Robbie's experience is that the polar night serves as a time to slow down; he enjoys relaxing and, as the days lengthen again, he goes outdoors and becomes more active. Thus, the day and night changes are not as important as the seasonal changes. Even if the Sun can be considered unchangeable in terms of how the Earth orbits it, an increase in UV radiation has been observed in studies conducted at ANS in recent decades. The increase has occurred because of the decline in the ozone when measured as a column of all atmospheric layers and changes related to the duration of sunshine (Lindfors et al. 2006: 11).

The celebration to greet the Sun in mid-February includes a barbeque and *fika*, a Swedish term for having coffee and something small to eat with friends. This event is open to everyone: seasonal workers and tourists, as well as the elderly and people with disabilities who are offered transportation to the top of Stornabben via an off-road vehicle (Figure 2). The Sun appears after the polar night every year, whereby the celebration involves repetition and residents of Abisko plan it together. The celebration is related to the environment and its seasonal cycles. Notably, the Sun is considered the mother of all life and is a deity in Indigenous Sámi mythology and its appearance in the spring brings food to reindeer (Valkeapää 1992 [1988]; Westman 1997; Helander-Renvall 2005). The Sun's return after the polar night is also celebrated elsewhere in the Circumpolar North (Arctic Council 2014).

Solar energy, and how it influences climate conditions within the context of climate change, refers to thermal sensitivity. Robbie shared his sensory experience of the temperature, focusing on his body because the weather conditions dictate his possibilities and limitations—such as choosing between remaining indoors or going paragliding. He has always been interested in

***Figure 3**. People welcoming the Sun after the polar night on top of Stornabben in February 2023. Photograph by Hedvig Öste 2023.*

the wind, temperature, and how the weather feels on his body. Robbie lived away from Abisko for some years, and compared the weather in Abisko then and now:

> For me, one of the big differences here is that the wind has been coming from the East a lot and it was never from the East before. Always mainly from the Atlantic, all year. This winter is also definitely warmer; it has been raining a lot.

The top of Stornabben is where Robbie chose to pause during his interview, which we recorded after the walk. During the interview, he saw the Abisko village, railway line, and road. Like Sara, he paid attention to the sounds of the railway and cars, but also to snowmobiles, the dogs barking on the husky farm, and helicopters. These sounds were present in the video clips from the walk, and the sound of a train can also be heard in the audio recording from his indoor interview. In particular, the helicopter sound was quite loud while we were walking. These sounds disrupt the aesthetics of the pristine landscape tourists wish to admire. Simultaneously, they are linked to sentient ecologies and serve as reminders of the interdependencies.

Almost two years later in February 2024, I had the chance to participate in Abisko's Sun celebration on Stornabben. I walked up the same route I had walked with Robbie. I was sweating in my winter clothes again even though it was February and I should have been cold. I had visited the hill several times, coming from different directions, since our walk and the route had become a part of my everyday life in Abisko as did walking towards the tourist station. It was easy to spot familiar faces amongst the people on the hill. The Sun celebration occurs every year, regardless of the

drastic changes in the climate and ecosystems that can be sensed here. The celebration manifests sentient ecologies, but it also evokes a sense of care because of the solidarity. This care involves active material engagement through sensing as well as ethical considerations (Puig de la Bellacasa 2012), which Sara also proposed in the context of tourism. By welcoming the Sun, humans acknowledge their relation to it and the fact that they are part of this more-than-human cycle. Alina offered me a hot drink, and its warmth spread to my fingertips.

CONCLUSIONS: RITUALISATION AND CHANGE

Walking can be understood as ritualising: a participatory performance investigating what is sensed to reveal transcorporeal experiences of changes in the environment and thus within relations. Walks with Abisko residents not only highlighted changes recorded by the natural sciences, but also connected our sensory registers to the rhizome of relational interdependencies in the polycrisis, reaching across economic, social, political, and cultural networks. The walks were elevated from basic, ordinary life, as suggested by the term ritualisation. The more-than-human relations sensed on daily walking routes produced a calmness, a sense of wellbeing, and a sense of sustenance, but also aroused worry. In transcorporeality, the relations underline the possibilities and limitations of sentient ecologies.

Sensory ethnography whilst walking and the microphenomenological interviews that followed the walks opened up instant sensory registers and connected them to earlier experiences, mirroring the ways in which environmental change relationally occurs. This phenomenological approach cannot reveal an authentic transcorporeal and embodied apprehension. Instead, it adds to an array of situated knowledge (Haraway 1988): knowing the land through entanglements, such as reading the landscape, the caring touch of handicrafts, and feeling weather on one's body, creates these situated perspectives on the polycrisis. Furthermore, I argue that, by acknowledging transcorporeal entanglement—the constant transformation of bodies as the more-than-human flows through embodied sensing—we can project these experiences into the future. The intersecting implications of the polycrisis can be localised in the Circumpolar North's sensitive ecosystems and cultures in places such as Abisko. What is currently sensed there may be sensed in different ways by multiple more-than-human bodies in the world. Combining sensory ethnography and walking methodologies, both as art and research, adds to the creative process of developing participatory performance as a ritual and an artistic tool during the polycrisis.

This study adds to the overall research of the 'Changing Perspectives' group on nature's contribution to people (NCP) by adding another methodological layer to the interdisciplinary research. NCP considers the value of nature as follows: 'living *from* nature' (the value of resources to sustain livelihood), 'living *in* nature' (social and cultural values), 'living *with* nature' (both intrinsic and relational value), and 'living *as* nature' (belonging, oneness, kinship, and interdependence) (Pascual et al. 2023). The walks revealed most of these pluralistic value perspectives, but embodied sensing within the concept of transcorporeality emphasises 'living *as* nature'—there is no separation between nature and humans. In this case, the environment is perceived as a physical, mental, and spiritual part of a human. Furthermore, NCP can include the material ethics of the transcorporeality concept, which does not centre on individual humans or nature somewhere out there, but stems from the flows and interchanges between them.

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This research was conducted on Indigenous land in North Sápmi, where the Sámi people have lived since time immemorial. I pay respect to the knowledge and care of these traditional custodians of the land, water, and air, and to the custodians' manifold spiritual principles. I pay respect to the land, water, and air that sustain humans, more-than-humans, and all their relations.

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ETHICAL STATEMENT

For the interviews with human participants in this research, the guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity were followed (Kohonen et al. 2019).The research plan did not require an ethical review statement based on these principles. I explained to informants the purpose of the data collection and the nature of the artistic research. They signed a consent form agreeing to the storage, management, privacy, and usage of the data they provided. No minors were involved in this study. The author possesses the interview materials from 2022.

NOTES

1 Philosopher David Abrams coined the term more-than-human in his book *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World* (1996). The term has its complexities, but as philosopher Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017: 1) states, 'it speaks in one breath of nonhumans and other than humans such as things, objects, other animals, living beings, organisms, physical forces, spiritual entities and humans.'

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