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EDITORIAL NOTE

Happy 2025, readers!

It gives me great pleasure to present this year's Winter Issue of *Suomen antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society*. This issue contains three peer-reviewed articles, three book review essays, and four research reports.

The first peer-reviewed article in this issue is written by Susanne Kuehling, 'Women and *Kula*: The Invisible Force Behind Hospitality in Gift Exchange'. Kuehling's ethnography considers the popular anthropological discussion on *kula* exchange through the neglected role of women in *kula* transactions. By positioning women as central to her ethnography, Kuehling sheds light on the fundamental importance cooperation and hospitality play in *kula*.

Next, Kalev Aasmäe's article, 'No Easy Way In: Navigating the Fragile Communality Amongst Squatters in London', delves into a single life history to study the lived experiences and survival strategies of a squatter in Southeast London based on fieldwork conducted in 2019. Core principles in squatter ideology are becoming increasingly fragmented, particularly since the criminalisation of residential squatting in the United Kingdom in 2012. Egalitarianism amongst squatters is also becoming rarer but, as Aasmäe's rich ethnography shows, the desire for solidarity and trust persists.

The final peer-reviewed article in this issue is a piece by Mari Keski-Korsu. 'Sending the Polycrisis: An Artistic Approach to Walking as Rituatlisation' incorporates artistic research with the concept of transcorporeality, referring to the notion that bodies exist in relation to the world around them and are in a constant state of becoming with it. Drawing on research in North Sápmi, the northernmost part of Sweden, Keski-Korsu explores how transcorporeality can be applied through walking ritualisation.

Alongside the three peer-reviewed articles, this issue also contains four research reports in the written form of *lectio præcursoria*. For readers unfamiliar with public doctoral defences in the Finnish academy, *lectio præcursoria* are short 20-minute lectures intended for the general public delivered by doctoral candidates at the beginning of their defence. *Suomen antropologi* publishes these public lectures from the fields of anthropology and related disciplines to celebrate the work of doctoral researchers who have recently successfully defended their dissertations.

The first three *lectio præcursoria* feature anthropology graduates, all of whom defended their theses at the University of Helsinki's Faculty of Social Sciences this fall. The first *lectio* is by Maija-Eliina Sequeira, who

defended her PhD dissertation, 'Becoming an Adequate Child: Learning to Relate to Others in Cultural Context', in October 2024. In her *lectio,* Sequeira introduces her mixed-method, interdisciplinary approach to studying the differences in being an 'adequate' child in two very different field sites: Helsinki, Finland, and Santa Marta, Colombia. Her *lectio* also draws attention to the ethical implications of doing research in academia today, where taking concrete steps against contemporary settler colonialism is continuously met with backlash.

Following Sequeira's piece, we move on to Emmi Holm's *lectio præcursoria.* Holm defended her anthropology PhD dissertation, 'Digital Threads, Interwoven Scenes: An Ethnography of Sustainable Fashion Production in Ghana and Finland', in August 2024. Holm's *lectio* discusses how the fluidity between digital and physical worlds manifests within the global fashion marketplace between Ghana and Finland, where she conducted research.

Aino Korvensyrjä's *lectio* summarises her thesis, 'Conflicts over *Duldung* and Deportation: West African Perspectives on German Immigration Enforcement and European Borders', which she defended in September 2024. In her *lectio*, Korvensyrjä discusses the central themes in her thesis, including the struggles and critiques around deportation as a function of state violence within the German asylum system since 2015.

The fourth *lectio præcursoria* featured in this Winter Issue is by Pirjo Rautiainen, an anthropology graduate who defended her thesis, 'Applying Anthropological Knowledge to the Business Field: Three Ethnographic Studies in a Commercial Context', in the University of Jyväskylä in late November 2023. Her thesis, which she summarises in her *lectio*, draws on her commercial anthropological approach to ethnography.

To conclude this issue of *Suomen antropologi*, we have also included three book reviews of the following titles: *Ways of Belonging. Undocumented Youth in the Shadow of Illegality* by Meloni Francesca, reviewed by Riikka Era; An Indigenous Ocean: Pacific Essays by Damon Salesa, reviewed by Matti Eräsaari; and Comparing the Worth of the While in Fiji and Finland by Matti Eräsaari, and reviewed by Matt Tomlinson.

Once again, I want to thank all of the remarkable individuals who have made this issue possible: the writers, the reviewers, and of course our copyeditors and the editorial team. This journal is produced by the investment of time and generosity of an amazing collective of people: many thanks to each of you!

As always, this issue of *Suomen Antropologi* is published as a fully open access journal with no APCs or embargoes.

Finally, I want to take a moment here to inform our readers that, given the political climate of the world today, we at *Suomen Antropologi* have chosen to remove ourselves from X (formerly known as Twitter). In recent months, news of the American election has provoked billowing clouds of disinformation and chauvinism, and what feels like clear indications of a nation sliding deeper into autocracy. How we continue to use and contribute to social media are pivotal to its development. In response to the authoritarian, right-wing influence infiltrating X (formerly, Twitter), *Suomen Antropologi* has removed our account and presence from the platform. We will, however, continue to use our Facebook, Mastodon, and BlueSky accounts for our readers and communities, providing updated information and news about our journal.

I hope you all have a pleasant start to the new year.

Suvi Rautio
Editor-in-Chief

Susanne Kuehling

WOMEN AND *KULA*: THE INVISIBLE FORCE BEHIND HOSPITALITY IN GIFT EXCHANGE

ABSTRACT

This article argues that the hosting of *kula* partners is an important part of the exchange system that requires more attention. Women's management of their households and resources, their training of children, and the internal networks that provide for a visiting *kula* partner are regarded as the benefits and key motivations ('profit') of *kula*. If the hospitality is underwhelming, a visitor will not continue the partnership and, because he will share his experiences back home, this will negatively affect the future *kula* affairs of that household. By isolating the movements of valuables from the deep experiences of visiting and hosting, the role of women in *kula* is typically misrepresented as marginal and of lower value. *Kula*, to me and to most islanders, is not about the fame of traders, but about the cooperation of families to ensure the services, hospitality, and generosity that are so special to the region.

Key words: *Kula* exchange, Melanesia, gender roles, women, hospitality, ethnography, power relations

WOMEN AND *KULA*: THE INVISIBLE FORCE BEHIND HOSPITALITY IN GIFT EXCHANGE

The *kula*, its essential form, is itself only one element, the most solemn one, in a vast system of services rendered and reciprocated, which indeed seems to embrace the whole of Trobriand economic and civil life. The *kula* seems to be merely the culminating point of that life, particularly the *kula* between nations and tribes. It is certainly one of the purposes of existence and for undertaking long voyages. Yet in the end, only the chiefs, and even solely those drawn from the coastal tribes—and then only a few—do in fact take part in it. The *kula* merely gives concrete expression to many other institutions, bringing them together (Mauss 2000 [1925]: 27).

INTRODUCTION

It is a well-known fact in the social sciences that the *kula* exchange of Southeastern Papua New Guinea is the business of men. The Trobriand Islanders, as Malinowski famously reported in 1922, are the *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*; brave men who travel the Coral Sea by canoe to visit exchange partners in hopes of receiving

ceremonial objects (either shell necklaces or shell armbands). While abroad, *kula* traders are hosted by their exchange partners who will in time come to receive counter gifts and hospitality. In this way, the two valuable objects circulate in alternate directions around the *kula* region. As Uberoi (1962: 10) summarised, 'the red shell Necklaces and white Armshells exchanged in the *kula* are regarded (…) as the most valuable objects that a man can possess.' In anthropology, this system of delayed reciprocity based on trust has become a key example of gift exchange as a human form of interaction. The complexity of different types of gifts, strategies to secure shell ornaments, spheres of exchange, and forms of cheating have been widely discussed in the literature, especially in the edited volume following the first *kula* conference in Cambridge in 1978 (Leach and Leach 1983).

Rather than reiterating the principles and conventions, loopholes, and gray zones of legitimacy of *kula* gifts, this article focuses on a neglected feature of *kula*: the contribution of women.[1] The reader may ask why this is relevant when, to this day, most *kula* transactions are done by men? And, indeed, the precious valuables are passed on through a succession of mostly male hands, such that the names of these men travel with the objects, producing some degree of regional fame for them. Thus, *kula* is generally represented as a male domain in which only some women participate as traders, are masters of weather magic, or travel along with a relative. It is no surprise that Uberoi (1962), in his analysis of Malinowski (1920, 1922), Fortune (1932), and Seligman (1910), looks at the politics of the *kula* ring by exclusively focusing on the work of men. Marilyn Strathern (1988: 133) observed in *The Gender of the Gift* 'one pervasive and near universal fact of life: the apparently persistent misrecognition of women's

work as somehow less than work.' Discredited by Malinowski (1922: 49) as 'old hags', women's wisdom was usually ignored in the early days, a perspective not easily unlearned. I admit that I also did not pay enough attention to the teachings of my village mothers.

An increasing number of women actively travel for *kula*, meeting male or female partners, although the majority of women stay home and take care of everything, while the men travel and meet their *kula* partners abroad. Most senior women act behind the scenes as custodians of the shell wealth of a matrilineage and discuss future exchange strategies with their brothers before the men take off for a journey. Men are not deaf to women's words, out of respect as well as a precaution, since, while the men are away, women's inappropriate behaviour can influence *kula* negotiations. The men are aware that women have room for agency even while staying back. Their confidential discussions reflect upon the responsibilities of women as sisters and mothers in these matrilineal societies, where balanced relationships between men and women are the ideal, and the brother–sister relationship is supposed to be marked by mutual respect. However, this perspective does not do full justice to the central female contribution to *kula*, namely, hosting a *kula* partner. While the men sit and talk, the women make sure they are comfortable by creating the *kula*-specific atmosphere of happiness, generosity, and abundance that are parts of its attraction. Men talk about the luxury of being hosted *kula*-style as 'the profit' of *kula*; it is the chance to get away from everyday chores, and just eat and relax into *kula* talk. This hospitality is based on the everyday duties and routine chores of women and children; perhaps this is why it did not occur to ethnographers to write about its importance, complexity, and ingenuity. As I will show in this paper, this is the realm in

which women can strengthen or even break *kula* partnerships.

The ordinary, daily work of island women—such as cooking, gardening, the use of the various cultivars of yams, and raising children—barely receives any mention in the classic ethnographies of the *kula* region. In the Trobriand Islands, Bronislaw Malinowski (1935: 462) admitted he was 'lured by the dramatic, exceptional, and sensational (…) I have also neglected much of the everyday, inconspicuous, drab, and small-scale.' Although he mentions food exchanges many times, his focus is on raw yams and the reader never learns any recipes or methods of food preparation. Rather than the production of cooked food, sexual favours were drawn to the foreground by Malinowski (1922: 53), who states that 'when a visiting party arrives from another district, food is brought to them by the unmarried girls, who are also expected to satisfy their sexual wants.'

The misogyny of early anthropology is striking from today's perspective. In another classic ethnography of the *kula* region, Reo Fortune's (1932: 43–62) account of marital life in the Dobu area centres around incest, adultery, and conflict. That account ignores the sphere of female life in its ordinary, day-to-day activities (other than sex). When describing the 'individual in the social pattern', Fortune (1932: 273–279) only talks about boys. The only time *Sorcerers* features women is as feared witches who endanger canoe travel (Fortune 1932: 74; Malinowski 1920: 100, 104). Fortune (1932: 152), with regard to witchcraft, believes that 'only a woman working with women could tell what the facts are—whether they are really innocent or whether they are putting up a convention counter to the men's. Personally, I suspect the latter.' He admits his lack of data and regrets his inability to penetrate deeper into the female secrets.

One night and one night only, the women in a body induced the men to get out, and my hut was filled with women all anxious to give information and acquire tobacco. Three or four times Kadi, Alo's daughter, seized a chance when no men were about, to slip into my hut and tell me gossip (Fortune 1932: 235).

From his male informants, he learned that respect, fear, and 'nervousness' are a man's feeling towards his affines, especially his wife and her mother (Fortune 1932: 24, 153). According to his information, conjugal couples are mostly in disharmony, although he admits that 'despite the premium on unfaithfulness and its counterpart, jealousy, there are some marriages that are happily contracted and happily preserved' (Fortune 1932: 249). I am doubtful that, given the ease of divorcing, there were mostly dysfunctional families during Fortune's time of research—that is, 1928—and he seems to contradict himself when mentioning that wives cook food for their husbands. Since couples eat their meals together, sharing the yams of both matrilineages (Fortune 1932: 69–70), men seem to be trustful enough to do so, as 'a native will never accept food except from a few people that he knows and trusts' (Fortune 1932: 137).

When female ethnographers began to study on the islands, starting in the 1970s, they experienced a different world of women than that described by their male colleagues. With their privileged access to women's lives, they began to correct this practice. Annette Weiner (1976: 65, 184) studied the Trobriand women's active exchanges of *doba* (banana leaf bundles) and noted the provision of cooked meals during exchange events and rituals. Both men and women 'tend to read each other's thoughts by the way in which objects are exchanged' (Weiner 1976: 87) she noted, so that prepared food

becomes a message of creating and maintaining social relations when presented in such contexts. Martha Macintyre (1983, 1987: 210, 1988: 185) reported that women regularly participate in *kula* and other exchanges involving ceremonial valuables on Tubetube Island in the southeastern *kula* region.

Conspicuously absent in the accounts of female activities is a more detailed analysis of the daily chores of women. Maria Lepowsky noted that the village women she lived with on Vanatinai Island were confidently doing their part, even having fun when working:

> As they became more accustomed to my presence they dropped the silent, reserved demeanor I later learned to recognize as the characteristic response to the few times Europeans or the Papua New Guinean government officerincharge appeared in the settlements. Quite to the contrary, the women were assertive and selfconfident, their voices ringing out across the ridgetop along with loud, frequent bursts of laughter (Lepowsky 1994: 17).

Lepowsky (1994: 115–116) describes in much detail how women can participate in exchanges, but offers only a few paragraphs to detail the weaving, sweeping, cooking, fetching of water and firewood, dishes, and childcare. She mentions the cooking for exchange partners, but leaves out the details (Lepowsky 1994: 192) as her study focuses on the areas where women are part of what can be seen as 'male spheres' in most parts of the world: travel, exchange, and leadership.

> On Vanatinai power and influence over the actions of others are gained by achievement and demonstrated superior knowledge and skill, whether in the realm of gardening,

exchange, healing, or sorcery. Those who accumulate a surplus of resources are expected to be generous and share with their neighbors or face the threat of the sorcery or witchcraft of the envious. Both women and men are free to build their careers through exchange. On the other hand, both women and men are free NOT to strive toward renown as *giagia* but to work for their own families or simply to mind their own business. They can also achieve the respect of their peers, if they seek it at all, as loving parents, responsible and hardworking lineage mates and affines, good gardeners, hunters, or fishers, or skilled healers, carvers, or weavers (Lepowsky 1994: 304).

Overall, women received less attention when they did not engage in formal exchanges and merely acted as a confidant. Nancy Munn (1986: 160) mentions female agency but does not go into detail: 'Like Gawan women, women on other islands are seen as influencing their husbands and own *dala* kinsmen with regard to *kula* decisions that the latter must make.' Providing hospitality to the *kula* partner is briefly mentioned as the reciprocal base line, the foundation of a *kula* relationship: 'as one man said: a Gawan can throw a shell to a partner one year and then not throw [shells] (…) for a time, but he will still eat at that man's home' (Munn 1986: 55). While Munn acknowledges that the cooking and caring for *kula* visitors impacts the husband's success in *kula*, women appear less important in *The Fame of Gawa*: '[S]ince she does not directly transact *kula* shells and create partnerships herself, she cannot acquire the fame created by handling shells with their long-term, extended circulation beyond Gawa' (Munn 1986: 53). Fred Damon treated the hospitality and gifts of raw and cooked food

as 'secondary, lower exchange sphere' (Damon 1993: 238).

Yet, it is the quality of a woman's performance as a parent and housekeeper and her success in managing family, household, and garden that grants women a high status, balanced gender relations, and permeable boundaries of gendered work. According to John Kasapwailova ('John K'), a Trobriand writer and active *kula* man, a successful *kula* man needs a 'female focal point', a wife, sister, mother, or favourite daughter (Malnic and Kasaipwalova 1998: 33). In contrast to most ethnographic descriptions of *kula*, he remarks that:

> For a simple and widebased definition of the *Kula* we must get away from talking about *mwali* and *soulava*. They are objects created to civilise and enrich. In the process of exchange they gain a life, a presence and a force of their own. That presence prompts people onto a plane where they can act and react, where they can create substantial human experiences (Malnic and Kasaipwalova 1998: 36–37).

We have a wealth of information about the actions of men in *kula,* but, so far, the role of women is underrepresented. Yet the hospitality of *kula* is not at all 'inconspicuous, drab, and small-scale', as Malinowski saw it. It enables the sharing of resources in a wider region and creates the need for surplus production for hosting purposes. For the islanders of the Bwanabwana region, in the southeast of the *kula* region, harvests were periodically spoiled by drought or cyclones, such that long visits at *kula* partners and their gifts of food helped them to survive. Macintyre reports that these visits could last for months. The earliest source, Marist Father Carlo Salerio, honours the importance of hospitality:

The Woodlarkers also impose enormous sacrifices upon themselves in order to maintain their pride regarding hospitality. Foreigners from all parts, hungry wanderers, land on Muju (Woodlark/Murua) every season. All families contribute to feed them and, even though they are suffering from hunger themselves, they are content and proud to show off their generosity (Salerio 1983 [1858], cited from Macintyre 1983: 254).

The labour force, provisions, and motivation to care for such long-term visitors are no simple tasks; and this 'focal point', in John K's words, is needed to provide the safe space for *kula* talks between the men. To 'be ready 24/7' for a visitor makes up much of the pride of a woman, builds her status, and challenges her gardening efforts. Thus, the essential contribution of women lies hidden from us behind a veil of our male bias. The female part of *kula*, the role of hostess for a man's *kula* partners, is a complex task that has been undervalued in the *kula* literature thus far. Anthropologists have not yet done justice to the complexity of women's role as hosts, creating the impression that *kula* is for men only, for the Argonauts.

Based on my longstanding knowledge of *kula* in the Dobu area and extended to the other parts of the region during two recent boat expeditions in 2016 and 2018, I believe that our view of *kula* needs adjusting to take account of the female labour it requires. While visiting most islands of the *kula* region and discussing *kula* matters in more than 60 formal meetings facilitated by a research team of *kula* men, we also had many informal meetings with *kula* practitioners, or '*kula* players', as they call themselves in English. Consistently, both men and women, in group discussions as well as during interviews, emphasised that women

are by no means only an exception (or their faithfulness a liability) in *kula*. Instead, they fulfil an essential role that can make or break partnerships. These islanders did not refer to women who travel on *kula* expeditions or manage the valuables of their matrilineage; in their view, women are 'essential' in *kula*, because men cannot replace their critical role.

This article gives voice to contemporary *kula* participants from all the islands of this exchange system such that '*kula* is impossible without the work of women' (Kuehling 2020). The 'work of women' is a translation that first needs to be unpacked as a central moral principle. Secondly, the work of women is discussed as a succession of chores in times of *kula* visits and in preparation for these encounters. I show that the work of women is at the heart of *kula*, just as it is at the heart of society. Women provide the key resources and practice the key virtues to read their visitors minds, anticipating and satisfying their needs and wishes, going out of their way to direct a performance of the happy, selfless generosity of the entire household. Finally, I discuss how this part of *kula* is threatened by introduction of values that privilege male activities, cash, and store goods, encourage the physical punishment of children, and combine to make the hospitality work 'heavy' for the hostesses and her helpers.

'HARD WORK': *PAISEWA* AS A MORAL PRINCIPLE

From an islanders' perspective, the contribution of women to subsistence in the entire island region is valued no less than men's work as the islanders live in '[s]ocieties where women own and inherit land, live with their own kin after marriage, and not only produce but allocate culturally valuable resources, controlling their distribution beyond the household, tend to

treat men and women more equally' (Lepowsky 1994: 46). For both genders, Lepowsky's description of nearby Vanatinai (Sudest) Island applies to the *kula* societies as well:

> Nobody can make you share, short of stealing from you or killing you if you refuse them. You have to want to give: your nurture, your labor, your valuables, and your person. This is where persuasion comes in. It comes from the pressure of other people, the force of shame, and magical seduction made potent by supernatural agency. Vanatinai custom supplies a final, persuasive argument to resolve this paradox: by giving, you not only strengthen your lineage and build its good name, you make yourself richer and more powerful by placing others in your debt (Lepowsky 1994: 305).

In order to unpack the work of hospitality that is managed and organised by women, with the assistance of the entire household and other relatives, I had to unthink my own notion of household chores as of low value. But, as I argued in my dissertation (Kuehling 1998), the notion of work certainly entails the labour of women as a highly valued part of exchanges. Hospitality during *kula* negotiations is part of the exchanges, an extremely relevant aspect of *kula* that has so far been mostly ignored. Women build their status by raising a prosperous and industrious family trained and motivated to go out of their way to offer perfect hospitality (Kuehling 2005, 2017a). By describing in detail how the 'hard work' of women contributes to *kula*, I focus on the principles that guide them in the complexity of their chores and give them both pride and prestige.

The word *paisewa*, always translated as 'work', occurs in all of the languages of the *kula*

region. It refers to a semantic field that includes the labour done, the pain felt, anger masked by friendliness, the smile on an exhausted mother's face, the sweat poured, sleepless nights, contributions to feasts, volunteering in teamwork, the passing on of *kula* valuables, and similar activities performed for the sake of the matrilineage. When elders point out that *paisewa i loiloina* (lit. 'work sets the rules'), they mean that the pigs killed for a family and the contributions to feasts and daily activities like sweeping and weeding a place all combine to form a strong argument in times of conflict about resources. *Paisewa* is performed best without showing negative emotions; it is most valuable as work that is energetically, freely, happily given, no matter one's true feelings. Both men and women are praised as 'hardworking' when their households are peaceful, subsistence activities are prosperous, and the distribution of surplus is satisfying.

Activities for the church, the school board, and similar community groups are also classified as *paisewa*, but I often felt that there was a somewhat lower status connected to families who did not grow enough yams, even if they worked full-time as public servants. Disobedient teenagers or the death of a child were often explained as the product of insufficient *paisewa* from parents. Similarly, if a parent spent too much time with church groups or on other community activities, it was sometimes counted against him or her when their family had problems.

The virtue of presenting a friendly façade and hiding negative thoughts and emotions is not restricted to the *kula* region but reflects a wide-spread concept of personhood. For *kula* people, the word *paisewa* bears the meaning of self-discipline, generosity, and humbleness (or 'respect'), the central ethical rules used to talk about others and determine their social standing.

'She is the root of hard work', (in Dobu, *paisewa alena*) represents praise of the highest order, describing women who build a large stock of yam seeds, raise well-mannered family, and stand out as friendly, cooperative, generous, and efficient.

THE CHORES OF WOMEN

In the *kula* region, as in many places, a women's day begins before dawn and ends after dark. Children usually wake up at dawn. While babies roll over to their mother for the morning feed, others mostly take off, use the toilet, and roam around looking for fruits or just to play with others. When the baby is satisfied and in fresh cotton diapers, mothers begin to sweep the compound with a short coconut broom, moving slowly across the area, back bent as they swish brooms across the dirt on the ground until all the dry leaves and droppings from chickens and dogs (sometimes also pigs) are heaped up. When asked, children help by fetching water, sweeping, lighting the kitchen fire, boiling water, or doing dishes and scraping the aluminium pots with sand or 'sandpaper' leaves to remove the soot from last night's dinner. Everybody is up at sunrise and women are busy preparing lunch, consisting of roasted yams, fried leftovers, banana chips, fried flour balls, or whatever is available. Some food is set aside for school lunches and hot water or tea is shared between household members. Everybody retreats with some food and drink for an informal breakfast in relative solitude. After the children leave for school, the adults decide on their daily chores and usually inform others of their plans. Women oversee a range of tasks, most importantly they take care of the food and wellbeing of the children. This involves gardening and managing supplies, helping other women, and accepting help, and cooking meals for different

purposes, which often consist of slightly varied ingredients.

The complexity of preparing island meals may escape an ethnographer's attention (Sutter 2010–2011: 93), but errors will not go unnoticed by local consumers. The meal needs to contain the right amount of protein, the appropriate type of yams, the perfectly balanced mix of various other root crops and bananas that add to the yams, the right choice of savoury herbs and greens, and coconut cream needs to be added at the end just before everything is cooked, so that they can flavour and add grease in a delicious manner. Salt from the sea water, combined with juices from the food, turns into a soup that is drunk with the meal. The complexity and art of cooking to perfection all these vegetables in one pot, with nothing over- or undercooked, over an open fire that constantly needs to be controlled and adjusted to the right temperature, can only be appreciated by people who have tried to cook a pot of quality food (*buyo*) for feeding helpers, or prepared a simple evening dish for the family with sufficient leftovers for breakfast, school lunches, and perhaps a treat for a pig or a dog. Planning the evening meal dictates some of the daily chores; most women go to their gardens once a day to pick some bananas, tapioca (that is, manioc or cassava), taro, greens, or whatever is ripe.

A visit to the garden takes up time, as some weeding and tending is always required. Women usually go in small family groups, often walking for over half an hour to reach the garden, traversing slippery stones, climbing steep hills, while carrying a toddler on their hip and guiding young children along. They usually do the garden work speedily, sweating in the heat, and return to the house for a much-needed rest. After dropping the heavy load of vegetables, firewood, a couple of coconuts, and smaller children, women first take a bath, since

washing removes the little insects like mites that cause skin irritations that can turn into sores. Part of their routine is to also wash the children who visited the garden with them, using scraped coconut as soap and body lotion, and to kill any head lice. A woman returning from the garden, with her basket balanced on her head, a toddler on her hip, two or three coconuts tied together by their fibres, and a few sticks of firewood in her hand, may not seem a spectacular sight. But, when I tried to join the women, I realised that my ignorance and incompetence added to their tasks as they now had to look after me in addition to everything else. It is easy to get hurt in the bush, on the slippery footpaths, or by accidentally touching somebody's protective magic (*tabu*) from which various dangerous diseases are thought to develop. Thus, women act like shepherds when they direct a group of children (or anthropologists) through the terrain.

Women are in charge of fetching water and can often be seen carrying buckets or pots on their heads to bring home the precious liquid from a tank or a clean well. Young women sometimes compete in carrying a fuller vessel and spilling less than others. Women also bring home sea water for cooking in lieu of salt. Food and drink for the family are managed by the senior women and carried out by all females with the occasional assistance of men.

Women produce baskets and mats for the family's use, as gifts for visitors, and sometimes for fundraising events, such as basket-for-basket exchanges in school, sales for the Women's Fellowship, or to sell on the tourist market. Baskets are made from the flexible, light green fronds of coconut palms which are also used by both sexes to weave quick multipurpose mats used as thatch, folded as rough baskets, and as the most modest of seats. When their short lifespan is over, mats are usually turned

into rubbish containers used when sweeping the place and to hold scraps when peeling vegetables. Coconut fibre baskets are woven into various sizes: tiny baskets are made for little girls to train their balancing skills early on, while the largest baskets can easily hold over twenty kilograms of large yam tubers needed for exchange events. Weaving baskets is one of the tasks senior women often perform while they sit under a house in the shade, with both legs stretched out and back straight, a position that I could only hold for a couple of minutes when I was in my 30s. To make a basket takes an hour or so and women like to finish a basket in one sitting. Because younger women are frequently called to help someone in the household, they are rarely able to complete a basket without having to drop the work-in-process a couple of times before completion.

While making baskets is not deemed an extraordinary skill, work with the pandanus fibre to create finer mats used for sitting and sleeping is highly valued. I tried to learn how to weave these mats but did not have the strength needed to weigh down one side with my leg while holding the strips tight and pushing the crossings down to prevent gaps. It was confusing for me to remember the support needed on the edges. But the most challenging aspect of the work was its physicality, since the weaver's body controls the loose strips of fibre that must be folded and bundled, crossed and added, while the product must not shift. Making pandanus mats takes time, and once a woman sits down to work on a mat, her sisters usually try to allow her a few hours of time without having to get up and risk loosening the weaving. The thick mats for sleeping can last for years, although over time they become thinner and damaged along the sides. Finer mats, more decorative and often elaborately patterned, adorned with fringe and strips in bright colours, are mostly

produced as gifts or for sale, as are the small hand baskets made from pandanus strips. While the weaving of pandanus mats is not in every woman's repertoire, there is usually at least one woman in a family who supplies others with sleeping mats. Preparing the pandanus leaves for weaving is considered an easier task, and I often saw younger women bringing bundles of freshly cut leaves to the village, boiling and drying them in the sun repeatedly to bleach them, scraping and cutting the leaves to remove thorns, finally creating even strips that are rolled up into a 'moon' shape—a round disk that can be sold and gifted as well as used. In the Northern *kula* region, between the Trobriand Islands and Woodlark, special mats are a customary gift to the wives of *kula* partners, as Pauline from Gawa Island told me.

On the tiny islands of Ware and Tubetube, and the Amphlett Islands, many women are skilled in making clay pots for cooking food. These pots also flow into the exchange circles with the larger islands as gifts. How to cook in a clay pot was one of the lessons that my village mothers insisted I had to learn, from proper loading to cooking times and heat, when to add which ingredient, and how to cover it with banana leaves. I also learned the different uses for different sizes, stylistic differences, and how to clean and store clay pots.

Laundry has become a growing workload for women, requiring one day per week at a minimum. Young mothers need to wash diapers every day, and bleach and detergents are not always available, which means more scrubbing and kneading. Many buckets of well water must be carried on laundry days, and I heard that male and female teenagers and some husbands wash their own clothes to share the burden of laundry. In the past, when skirts were made from coconut leaves and men wore pandanus leaves, the production was mostly in women's hands.

In 1993, I often witnessed the last old lady in Losina village casually stripping coconut leaves while chatting when working on a new skirt in one or two evening sessions. Compared to this meditative activity, laundry is time-intensive and bone-breaking; in addition, the need for soap cuts a hole in many families' budgets.

The least visible but most demanding task of women is the raising of healthy, strong, obedient, skilful children. I cannot do justice to the complexity of mothering in this short article (Lukere and Jolly 2002; Jolly and Macintyre 1989), but the continuous care of their (often many) children in a world without electricity and plumbing keeps mothers on their toes at all times. As senior women are typically challenged by the physicality of many female chores, they are often found sitting at a central spot where they are mostly watching their daughters work, advising and directing them. By watching each person's performance, senior women determine the distribution of chores among women in the lineage. Ideally, they find the perfect task for every woman. But, as relationships are not always ideal, young women in unhappy families can end up being ordered around by their mothers and aunts or mother-in-law for many years, until their own daughters are grown up enough to lighten their mother's burden. Many times, female friends told me they were suffering in secret, from abusive husbands or painful injuries, grieving deceased children or feeling bullied and treated unfairly. Yet, they displayed perfectly happy faces when our tearful conversation ended and we returned to the others. The strength of these women, I came to realise, is nourished by the performance of strength, with only occasional moments of sisterly encouragement helping to balance emotions. They do their *paisewa* as they juggle a vast number of responsibilities, seemingly effortlessly with a happy face.

Pregnancy is also classified as *paisewa*. Yet, women continue their daily chores until reaching full term, when they would give birth as silently as possible under their house. Although they are not always convinced that the aid post or hospital is a better place to deliver, most women are now dragging themselves to a health station shortly before giving birth. The boat trips often required to reach such stations can be horrendous in rough seas, but the relative safety of a hospital is viewed by many as preferable to a birth where the mother is responsible for anything that goes wrong ('why did she not go to a hospital?'). Another reason for avoiding home birth is the traditional restricted diet for new mothers (*bodaita*), who need to stay inside the house with the infant for several weeks (called 'roasting'), and the medical care that women hope to receive for themselves and their baby (Fiti-Sinclair 2002). Mothers often name their babies, and when a high-ranking *kula* valuable is currently in their house they are likely to pass that name on to the newborn. In this manner, valuables create a chain of namesakes in their movement, like a trace linking individuals by a special bond, a form of direct identification. 'I am Kibu', said Jerome Banasi from Gawa Island, a man named after this famous *mwali* because his father held it at the time of his birth.

Upon leaving the post-partum seclusion period, mothers typically breastfeed on demand. Mothers or other relatives usually carry small infants until they fall asleep. Then, they place the sleeping baby on a mat with an older child to watch and chase flies away. More recently, hammocks made from a cotton sarong have become popular cradles that can also be swung to pacify an upset infant. Babies are not supposed to cry, so a sick or teething baby is often breastfed through the night to keep it calm. Until a child can express that he or she

needs to urinate, normally at 1–2 years, it is rarely set on the ground but carried around or placed on a veranda to crawl or try to stand up. Until this point in the child's development, a woman should not become pregnant again or she will be talked about. Since husbands often find this period too long, domestic arguments about sex are not rare and many mothers of young children have told me that they see it as work to satisfy their husbands' desires. Mothers want to leave space between their pregnancies so their bodies can 'become dry' again to prevent sickness. They also want to be good mothers to all their children, which may well include indulging unreasonable demands to pacify an upset toddler in situations where a European mother would likely set her boundary and leave it at 'no'.

> My friend Julie once scouted over the entire island of Dobu with her toddler, Roger, on her hip, because little Roger was crying for rose apples that were not yet in season. She had hoped that some other trees were already bearing the juicy red fruits, but when she returned after three hours, Roger was still upset and she had not found any tree with ripe fruits. Nobody in the village thought that she had been overly spoiling her three-year-old son, wasting her time, or procrastinating from doing laundry. They all responded with praise that she was a good mother (field notes, 1994).

In 1997, women Dobu islanders of my age told me that 'mothering is hard work, but we don't talk about it.' The implied meaning was that I was 'complaining too much' about my own toddler's adventures when I had him with me in Dobu. At 20 months, my son had just learned to run fast, and as I chased behind him, my friends smiled at my inexperience in guiding him to do less dangerous things. Sometimes, they called their older children to look after him, thereby giving me a break. But when my son got sick with malaria, many criticised me for taking up such offers, as they saw it as the reason for his sickness—an envious witch had attacked him. Others believed that my impatience could have affected him physically. Ultimately, being offered help is a double-edged sword for a mother. She is never free from responsibility and, if anything happens to her children, it is always her fault. At age five, children are often very helpful and obedient, they can do simple tasks when told to without complaining. They are not praised for cooperation since it is deemed a natural thing to follow the orders of adults. 'You come and blow the fire' is sufficient instruction to a four-year-old child to rekindle the cooking fire. As soon as a child can manage to place a baby on their hip and walk, they can be trusted for a few minutes to watch and amuse a little one.

After a long day, women prepare the evening meal, wash the small children, and get the bigger ones to fetch water and wash themselves, frequently under protest as the water is cool and a bath signals the end of playtime. Some women paddle out to add a few small reef fish to the meal if there is no other protein available, but they often receive fish from a male relative, neighbour, or in-law. Obviously, boiling rice and mixing some greens with instant noodles and a can of fish or meat cuts down the preparation time by hours, although households cannot afford these desired dishes very often (which is likely positive since their nutritional value is low). When dinner is cooked, it is dished out on a big plate, placed on the mat on the veranda, and everybody picks their share, typically eating without looking at others. Babies chew on a piece of yam as soon as they have teeth, and, usually, they are breastfed

as well, at least until they can walk. Darkness, at around 6 pm, keeps people near their house if possible, with only the young men roaming around at night, searching for erotic adventures. Married couples may sit and chat until 10 pm or so, depending on the moon and weather, while the children chat or just listen until slumber overwhelms them around 9 pm.

Seasons greatly determine the work of women. Generally, from April to September, the time of cold nights and strong winds from the south, is the time of harvesting and feasting, when obligations that had to be postponed until the harvest was over are fulfilled. Mortuary feasts and affinal exchanges require large yams of specific cultivars exclusively used for special purposes and stored over the year to last for all those occasions when they are needed. During this time of plenty, *kula* visitors are less likely to land, as the winds and their home obligations keep them from *kula*. From October to January, when the hot season's easterly winds begin, the men are too busy to travel as they cut, burn, clear, and plant their new gardens. When the gardens are ready and only require weeding and last year's yam harvest is nearly depleted, the time of scarcity begins. *Kula* activities increase, and the women must be prepared to feed their hungry visitors for as long as it takes, for weeks even, while tending their yam gardens and taking care of their ordinary chores.

KULA AS WOMEN'S WORK

To village women, *kula* means entertaining relative strangers on short notice, serving a fluctuating pulse of visitors from two neighbouring *kula* regions. The visitors are *kula* partners of a woman's lineage plus all the other households, where she is expected to fulfil her role as hostess or as a helping hand. As everybody in the *kula* region knows, when they

return home, visitors will talk amongst each other about the quality of their accommodation and catering, and this information influences potential strategies of exchange. In brief, a generous, prosperous, cheerful household with a comfortable place to sleep and perfect catering will highly motivate others to visit such households, while a stingy, unfriendly place is avoided and consequently misses out on *kula* opportunities. When *kula* traders return from a journey and report poor hospitality, others will also avoid that household, whereby the flow of valuables to such a family ebbs down. As Millicent Laibobo pointed out, dysfunctional families and casual hospitality cause discomfort and scare *kula* partners away, effectively damaging the household's reputation and *kula* success.

When a *kula* partner arrives in a village, everybody's tasks, challenges, and chores are accelerated and multiplied, as the perfection of hosting is classified and appreciated as 'significant work' by all observers. A well-functioning household showcases the quality and resilience of a family. Thus, women train their children to assist them with age-appropriate roles that they should perform without much ado when all hands are needed. The moral standing of *kula* families is generally higher due to their readiness to jump into immediate action when a visitor arrives. Not just partners, but their larger families are warmly welcomed, based on the principle of *kula* that 'you get everything for free' (Millicent).

When a visitor arrives, all adult women rush to collect laundry from the lines, light the fire, and quickly sweep the place, so they are ready to welcome the visitor to a clean place, offering him a new pandanus mat to sit on. Meanwhile, the boys grab their foot strap rope to tie the feet together and, while one climbs for green coconuts to drink, others climb for

betelnuts and pick betel pepper (*piper betel*) fruits from a vine for chewing. Ideally, the husband of the household just sits and talks with his visitor, entertaining him, while tea and light refreshments are served within half an hour. The personal preferences of the guest are taken seriously—if he loves (and is not allergic to) crayfish, hosts on Dobu Island will try to find batteries for their torches and get some young men to spear crayfish for their guest, preferably more than one so that he can take the delicacy home. Some young men paddle out to the reef to look for a nice seafood dinner, while the women bring their prized yam tubers of a special cultivar from their yam storage huts. While carefully peeling this yam, some of which is bright purple, the women supervise the smaller children, directing the girls to look after the kettle or do some dishes, nurse their babies if they are too fretful and cannot be calmed down by the girls, all the while keeping an eye on the veranda where the visitor is sitting. Does he need a pillow and who can lend us a nice, clean one? Does he wish to smoke, and who can spare some tobacco and newspaper? A child is sent to show him the toilet and where to wash. Children are sent to fetch water and collect firewood, bring ripe coconuts, and husk them before dropping them in the kitchen hut. Later, they will split and scrape the coconut meat from them, to be squeezed over the simmering pot of quality food some 15 minutes before it is ready. Some older teenagers are sent off to bring larger bundles of firewood, as the cooking fire will not go out until the visitor leaves.

Other children are sent off to the store to bring noodles and flour, sugar, and oil, often buying on credit because groceries are very expensive in Papua New Guinea compared to income and the prices of market sales. *Kula* is a noble reason to ask for credit, such that storekeepers face the dilemma of either being seen as hard-hearted or running out of finances (Kuehling 2005). If the household is small, sisters and mothers will come and help as the senior woman of the household orchestrates the hospitality. Most of the women on Dobu are in some way responsible when *kula* partners appear; they are supposed to go and help, bring some yams, fetch water, mind children, and generally be on stand-by. Senior women gain high prestige when they demonstrate how well they mastered the art of directing whatever hands are there with a happy face. They make sure that everybody follows orders and refrains from noisy play or activities that bring up dust or splash water (if it rains), all the while keeping babies from crying, cooking a sequence of meals over the day, serving and cleaning up, sweeping the place, and entertaining the visitor from time to time for short moments, such as to give the husband a chance to go bathe. There may be a group of visitors at the same time, or they may arrive in succession, whereby the household of a *kula* family must be ready any time, day and night, in times of plenty and in times of hunger. The special yams need to be stored and managed well; the surplus production must match the family's *kula* needs. A chicken or even a pig will be slaughtered for the guest, a bandicoot or turtle would also be nice if the young men can be persuaded to dedicate the night to hunting instead of amorous adventures.

Since Malinowski's times, many generations have passed, all of them raised with corporal punishment in various, sometimes barbaric ways. The formerly appropriate way of teaching children, mostly by example or lecture, has been replaced by 'belting' and similar practices. Reforms of this method have yet to reach the *kula* region, where parents complain about the obstinance of teenagers without recognising that this may well be the result of too much beating and too little lecturing and

teaching by example. A grown teenager does not have to fear his mother since she cannot beat him any longer, as I witnessed in 1993, when a desperate mother was calling the police on her own son Stephen for having stolen a chicken from her again. 'What else can I do?', she lamented when I showed surprise at her decision. 'Maybe a bit of jail time will teach him.' Aisi, one of my *kula* mentors from Dobu Island, explained to me when discussing Stephen's mishap that teenagers often do not respond to lecturing when it was not previously a primary means of discipline. 'Stephen only knows *sapi* (beating), so now he cannot hear words (*ona*).' Like many teenagers today, Stephen clearly was not tuned in to read his mother's mind and automatically do his best to fulfil his chores to support her, attitudes that are engrained in *kula* households and, as many islanders say, 'make better people'.

The principle that 'happy pregnant women make happy babies, and happy babies turn into happy adults', which I was told a number of times, requires women to not only fulfil their chores, but to do so with a happy face. This is socially expected, displaying a pleasant personality, no matter how exhausted or sick, overburdened or abused a woman is (Kuehling 2017a). To be a responsible wife and mother, sister and daughter brings prestige as the years go by, and I admire the strength and resilience of the women who taught me to 'stop complaining and get stuff done'. A senior woman who can get everybody, even the male teenagers, to contribute to the hosting of *kula* partners is praised by her own community as well as by both neighbouring communities; and she actively contributes to the fame of her male counterpart who does the traveling on behalf of the lineage and enjoys the benefits of *kula* hospitality which she has helped to build. Her competence and engagement are honoured by

kula partners who may give a special present to the wife of their visitor. Such gifts can be a clay pot, a piece of clothing, a mat, a bundle of sago, or whatever they know she will appreciate.

THE BENEFITS OF HOSPITALITY

I have so far outlined the 'work' of women, the complex tasks and challenges faced by women in everyday life and in the time of *kula*. The chores that need handling competently and patiently to give prestige to a woman, her household, and her matrilineage. In all the *kula* households that we visited, among all the main language groups (Dobu, Trobriand, Gawa, Woodlark, Nasikwabu, Egom, Bwanabwana), the quality food, the gifts of betel nuts, the clean mats, and the welcoming atmosphere were very similar. Women worked hard to make us feel welcome, often killing a chicken or rushing to catch some fish to go with the special yams. In Asagamwana on Fergusson Island, fresh garlands made from coconut leaves and flowers decorated our meeting space. On Gumawana Island, I received a beautiful clay pot as a departure gift. On Iwa Island, they entertained us with songs, they cooked and distributed a pig on Koyagaugau, and I am still in awe of the speed-sweeping skills of the women on Gawa Island who finished their work in a whirlwind. Once, a senior woman rose during a meeting, crying and shedding tears as she profusely apologised that we had not received bunches of betel nuts from them. The reason, she explained and which we all knew, was that the trees were not bearing fruit at the moment; but she was so terribly sorry for this breach of protocol that she just wanted to apologise to us again.

To further illustrate my points, I cite three women from three different regions to further flesh out the pride that women feel about their role in *kula*. Eunice is in her 40s

and from Bwegise Island, west of Woodlark. An active *kula* traveller herself, she relies on her daughter when she hosts her partners. In 2016, she recognised me as a partner's 'relative' from Dobu, and invited me and my friends to dinner, giving us a taste of her generous and smooth hospitality. Her father was a 'number one *kula* man', she said, and, by listening while serving the men, she picked up basic knowledge that impressed her father enough to teach her by taking her along and giving her some small valuables to start her own *kula* network. Speaking in her language, she emphasised that '*kula* is love' and that 'in *kula*, everything is free', given out of sympathy and empathy. When explaining this, she mentioned free drinks, food, tobacco, betel nuts, and a newly woven mat for sleeping. Passing on the *kula* valuables to the guest at the end of his stay is the triumphant final gift, not the only exchange that is worth documenting when describing *kula*. I have heard this list many times, when people spoke about the benefits of *kula*, suggesting that to *kula* players, as to Eunice, the ideal of generosity and not of delayed reciprocity stands in the foreground. Women are the ones who display ultimate generosity since they do not even receive a gift in return. They stay back, expecting nothing other than a thank you, knowing that their work opens doors for all of their relatives when they travel within the *kula* region.

The second woman, Pauline, is from Gawa Island. Recently, her late brother (a local politician) was murdered on Gawa and she fled to neighbouring Kweyawata Island, where we met in February 2016. In her 30s, she had enjoyed a good education, spoke fluent English, and was very familiar with the tasks and chores of *kula* hospitality. She pointed out the role of hospitality and showed her virtue by emphasising that it is joyful to cater to the every need of a partner, even when this involves non-stop cooking, finishing all supplies, and going hungry.

> As soon as canoes arrive, we as ladies have to cook and bring food in coconut baskets or dishes to our partners. We are happy to cook our special yams for our visitors, maybe we don't eat ourselves but it is a joy to cook for our partners. They share and eat and later climb up to the villages to stay in the houses of their partners. We cook in the morning, for lunch, in the afternoon, and give food to everyone who comes for *kula*. It is up to our visitors how long they stay, sometimes it is over a month. Where we find food to feed them is our problem. They came for *kula* valuables. When we do not have enough food, we have to pass the valuables to them fast so that they know and leave. We never tell them that we are running out of food, that is a taboo, but they understand.
>
> When they come from a place without money, we may give them cash, kerosene, and so on, they don't need to ask, we know. And when I travel, to Iwa Island, for example, my brothers' *kula* partners will feed me, accommodate me, do anything for me, even if I don't actively exchange *kula* valuables myself. I think *kula* is very important, because as *bagi* and *mwali* go around the *kula* ring, they buy food, they buy accommodation, they buy friendship, they bring people closer together, and so *kula* also brings peace (Interview, March 2016).

The third woman, Millicent, in her 60s, is an old friend and has been 'mother' or 'older sister' to me since 1997, when I lived in her household with my young son. Then, she was

headmistress at the Dobu school; now, retired, she lives on Fergusson Island on her family's land. Displaying a friendly façade despite feeling otherwise is a central moral value in the *kula* region and beyond. *Kula* puts this virtue to the test. Raised in a *kula* household, Millicent points out the importance of self-discipline when attending to a *kula* visitor who turns up at the house without prior notice, at any time during the day or night:

> the[T]he role of the mother is to cook, and she should have a clean, a pleasant face [meaning a relaxed expression]. When the *kula* partner comes and she asks her husband to help her in the kitchen to 'come and scrape the coconut and then come back and talk' or, to 'chop our firewood first,' the *kula* partner would just know that the mother is not happy. Just by doing that [asking for assistance], she shows she is not happy. So, the *kula* partner can just get up and say, 'my friend, I will walk around and come back.' But when he goes, he will not come back. Whatever food she cooks, he will not eat it. And when he goes back to his place, he will tell his people or his wife that this *kula* partner is not good (Interview, March 2016).

KULA: IN TOUCH WITH OTHER ISLANDS

Kula events trigger activities and group cooperation, which is also called upon during other rituals and feasts, thereby reinforcing the ethically appropriate way of life by giving time to practice the central activities that enforce the social fabric. Death rituals, marriages, harvest festivals, boat launchings, conflict resolution through gift giving, and other events are opportunities for individuals and lineages to

put their virtues on display. Local events are different between the islands of the *kula* region, and islanders may well find the custom of their partners a little strange:

> Patrick Antonia told us about a widow from Gawa Island who felt so much grief about her husband's death that she cut off his penis, dried it, and wore it around her neck as an ultimate sign of respect. Patrick added that she wore it until the family of her late husband released her by presenting her a first-class *kula* valuable, one that usually is reserved for the inter-island exchanges. My team members from Dobu and Duau were surprised, amused, and a little shocked about this form of mourning, but, they mused, it was not unusual to keep a bone as memento where they were from (Interview, Alotau, February 2018).

Visitors often do not really know all the customs of their partner's place and are notoriously fearful when in strange territory. Unfamiliar spirits and physical dangers may be encountered, and deaths are known to occur during *kula* expeditions and later following people's returns home when envious neighbours are believed to secretly harm successful *kula* players. Women are chronically suspected as potential witches, and while they are not likely to attack a *kula* visitor whose exchanges are always matching his promises, they can be dangerous hostesses when the exchanges do not flow as planned. Sorcery and the use of poison are often mentioned as the effect of broken exchange chains, and misdirected valuables of high value are known to have a trail of deaths, triggered by their movements from hand to hand (Kuehling 2017b).

Despite these uncertainties, *kula* provides opportunities for travel without the need for cash. The name of a relative involved in *kula* is

the key to *kula* hospitality, as all three women emphasised. Munn may be correct in assuming that such a name brings 'fame' to a *kula* player. But, for these women, these names provided food and shelter in strange places. Fame appears as a collective benefit when the name of a *kula* player is 'loud like thunder', meaning that many people can use it to enjoy safety and comfort on all the other islands of the region. A less thundering name may not carry as far, and, hence, not trigger *kula* hospitality further from home than beyond one or two *kula* stations.

THE CHANGING WORLD OF *KULA*

Certainly, Malinoski's *Argonauts* were a product of last century's ethnography, and while it is possible that many things have changed since then, I am certain that the work of women for *kula* has remained very similar. The challenges of hospitality, however, have been impacted by the global market economy and the impact of school and church teachings (see Jolly and Macintyre 1989 for a collection of papers addressing such changes). Technological improvements to women's chores since Malinowski are minimal, and while men can now use motorised tools and motorboats if they have access, women cook on fire, carry water buckets, and wash by hand. A rake for sweeping seems to be one of the few tools some women use to speed up their morning routine.

On the other hand, the burden of earning cash in order to provide perfect hospitality has increased within the last 30 years. Back in the 1990s, I was often asked to provide a little tobacco, tea leaf, sugar, or kerosene for a visitor to my neighbours. There was only one *kula* valuable associated with cash, the *mwali* Kabisawali, created by Trobriand playwright John Kasaipwalova in the 1970s, named after

the Ponzi scheme-like activities that he had triggered. This *mwali*, so the story goes, needs lots of store-bought food to satisfy a partner, and several men have died as they were unable to pass it on without causing someone to use sorcery on them.

More recently, cash is reportedly offered to lure a high-ranking valuable away from its carefully planned route. For instance, 1000 Kina was offered to Ruth from Dobu for a *bagi* named Lepoyata II by a man who had no rights to this *bagi* but sufficient funding from his relatives in Port Moresby. Boat owners may offer free passage worth hundreds of Kina, in addition to the appropriate counter-gift of a valuable, to draw a valuable to their hands. Partners may leave from a visit without eating anything when the food that is served contains no canned protein and rice. In addition, with prices for tobacco sky high, many men have responded by smoking the strong, homegrown tobacco (*kasia*), rolled with store-bought newspaper, even though in the hierarchy of tobacco, store-bought sticks (mostly by the brand of Spear) is more appropriate for a good host. When *kula* visitors appear, women immediately send an older child to find either some coins or store goods to use among their relatives or explore which trade store has supplies and is willing to accept a later payment. If the timing is unfortunate, for example just after a funeral feast has depleted everyone's cash reserves, the hostess will fear that the visitor is as embarrassed as she is and will leave.

In a capitalist sense, it sounds counterintuitive that this hospitality is regarded as 'the profit' of *kula*, as there is no surplus in reciprocal hosting. The profit, however, is that through these visits a *kula* household is bound to a stricter ethic of solidarity and acceptance than places that have no *kula* ideology. As Digim'rina, a late *kula* master from Okeboma, Kiriwina

Island, said, 'people need *kula* so that they grow more yams' (according to his youngest son), and the many *kula* households I encountered were certainly very resourceful with stored food and fast in actively pursuing some of the fresh or store-bought items that they thought we would like. Today, many people regard *kula* households as the role model for everybody, but, as I was told many times, the burden of finding cash to please a *kula* partner is increasingly pressing and demotivating. In this context, Eunice's statement that 'in *kula*, everything is free' refers to the fact that *kula* visitors do not pay money for any of the good things they receive, in contrast to restaurants, hotels, and stores. Oftentimes people marvelled at the notion that the relatives of *kula* partners are included in this broad and truly outstanding hospitality as their contribution to hosting is well understood throughout the region. When Pauline told us that *kula* valuables 'buy' food, accommodation and friendship, she means the same thing.

For almost a century now, the smartest young people have been sent to school and to work in towns so that they can help their parents with their remittances for school fees, medical costs, taxes, and other essentials. Four generations of semi-attached islanders have resulted from this continuing brain-drain. As life in towns is extraordinarily expensive compared to most incomes, this plan has not resulted in much joy on both sides and many young people returned to Dobu after completing grade 10, sometimes with a wife from elsewhere, to claim land and make a garden, as if this was an easy task. I believe that the romantic notion of the simple life in paradise that many islanders in urban centres share on Facebook pages reflects their ignorance of the hard work required of them as junior men and women at the peak of their strength. Perhaps they are even open to the colonial narrative of primitive island

life, lacking first-hand experience. Women who cannot make baskets or mats, men who cannot sail a canoe, families where the division of roles and chores is disputed and contested are now residents in small villages where, lacking training, skills, and motivation, they cannot contribute appropriately. The skills that they learned in school do not translate into *paisewa*, as reading, writing, drawing, or composing songs are usually frowned upon as 'being idle'. Playing a guitar or games with a cell phone or tablet, or watching a film, the privilege of a few, surely do not count as *paisewa* either. Although I have not heard negative comments about such activities, which are called *gewana* in the Dobu language, the word, meaning irrelevant, useless play typical for children, are activities that do not qualify as *paisewa*.

Until after World War II, when schools became the preferred road to wealth, the smartest son was handpicked to become the next *kula* player for the matrilineage. The knowledge required to even understand the strategising and scheming represented the most academically challenging part of *kula*. There are hundreds if not thousands of words, mostly names that have no other meaning than referring to a person, a place, a passage, a valuable, a method of exchange, a vessel, or a mythological story. For example, this sentence makes perfect sense to a *kula* player and evokes many images and memories:

> Setepani went by Kwantas to Oiau and Mwasiuna hung up Kibutokuneseya so they now see if Sinodi in Loboda can get Teleiponi for them to marry, thereby turning Kibu from *bulubulu* to *dagula*. When Tamagu goes to Duau, Sete will start to *poala* for Teleiponi.

Understandably, it takes many years to learn the names and the concepts and objects, persons and places needed for *kula*. Being an apprentice for a decade marks a superior *kula* player, and senior players like Mwasiuna (from Fergusson Island) speak with pride about these years of obedience, hardship, and learning that led to their heritage of reliable partners and high-ranking valuables. Women, while cooking, serving, peeling, and sweeping, listen to some of the conversations and pick up a lot of what is said. In some cases, such as that cited by Eunice from Bwegise above, they understand enough to actively advise their husbands or brothers or to manage their own chain of *kula* partners.

Young people, on the other hand, have learned that knowledge is not a gift worth enduring through a hard apprenticeship, but is a source of school pressure and competition for good grades. *Kula* knowledge is private and secret, while modern knowledge is forced down their throats. Those teenagers who went to boarding school missed out on the first learning steps of *kula:* for women, weaving, and details related to gardening and cooking, and, for men, sailing and building. Both genders arguably received less training in 'showing a happy face' and working hard in spite of a strong desire not to do so. Consequently, today's adults are desperately searching for young men or women who qualify in their eyes as the future *kula* player of their lineage. As Papu Pika, a *kula* master from Dobu, put it in a meeting (in Sawa'edi, Fergusson Island, 2015): '[M]y sister's children are white-skinned.' Indeed, they were raised in Australia, even though these children of classificatory sisters could have been chosen to fill the gap if they had received his blessing. He picked his son for his heir, thereby transferring the *mwali* Kabisawali into a different matrilineage, diverting it from its route and aggravating a number of *kula* players, especially its creator, John Kasaipwalova, who wanted to return it to his own chain of partners. Shortly after announcing his heir, Papu Pika passed away, leaving a troublesome heritage for his son and his wife's family, who now must host with special care and handle the fear surrounding this *mwali* 'witchcraft'. Last year, John K also died.

The role of women in *kula* becomes even more essential now, as their good example helps to train the next generation of young adults to cooperate and perform when asked to do so. In some families, the most interested and intellectually capable men live and work in faraway towns and use their telephone to direct their sisters or nephews on *kula* exchanges that are sponsored by their wages. They may provide a boat when needed for a group expedition and they may even buy a dinghy to speed up exchanges. Others lack such advantages and may be less successful, whereby resentment spreads for a variety of reasons that are caused by cash, an imperfect education, and evangelist churches. With soap operas from the Philippines and cartoons on TV, the nonstop presentation of different, more egocentric values is shifting older notions of empowered womanhood. I have spoken to girls from the islands who spend time babysitting and housekeeping for a relative in town, who now find it hard to return to the often rather harsh life of village subsistence as a junior woman under the strict eyes of mothers and sisters. They begin to think of themselves as 'too thin', 'ugly', or 'stupid', and I have seen many desperate Facebook posts from young women who return to the village and feel overworked and depressed after a period of mostly sedentary living with constant TV in the background, as is typical for urban families.

The hard work of island women gives them status and meaning for a reason: it is complex and challenging, just as important and relevant

for the community as men's work. For *kula*, the work of women is certainly essential; while women can take up the role of men and actively travel to their partners, men alone cannot provide for their partners. They need sisters, wives, daughters, and mothers to contribute and provide services. As women strive to make their hard work look 'easy', they risk being overlooked—not by their own menfolk, who are highly aware of what it takes to fulfil the female role, but by foreigners from a patriarchal background, who are used to seeing housework as lower order than men's work. *Kula* hospitality is a good example for our bias, as even seasoned feminists like Nancy Munn and Annette Weiner ignored the work of *kula* women in the 1970s.

The fame of male *kula* players opens up the potential for hospitality to all his relatives, especially the women, as their contributions to his fame are significant and acknowledged by all *kula* families. Yet, anthropologists have so far missed this point, likely due to our spatial metaphor of public/domestic, the structuralist equation of public:male::domestic:female, 'very slippery terms indeed' (Jolly and Macintyre 1989:2), with spatial metaphors that privilege the public and see domestic chores as not very revealing. The lives of women, as long bemoaned by feminists since Simone de Beauvoir's book (*The second sex, 1949*), have remained hidden with regard to the most time-consuming and skilful activities that the women orchestrate when they display perfect hospitality. Marilyn Strathern (1988: 207) proposes that, to 'Melanesians', male and female are the two principles that form society because it is based on male and female labour. Carrying the metaphor further, she regards bodies as being metaphorically constituted of both male and female elements and suggests that gender is not an attribute but a form of action. Depending on context, one gender moves to the outside and determines

the activity which can be either male or female. Gift-giving is an important form of such detachment, as it requires an activation of one part of the person. In Strathern's (1988: 191f) words, 'exchange is essential to the processes of personification through which persons are separated by the social relations between them.' When we include the hospitality during *kula* as a gift, it makes sense that the participants see it as the 'profit', the motivating factor in *kula*—in most cases, this is surely more significant than the hope for fame, which is notoriously linked to the few matrilineages that legitimately circulate the valuables of highest value (called *dagula*, 'head-decoration' in the Dobu language and beyond).

As Judith Squires has suggested recently,

> dispensing with the language of dichotomous spheres would allow for either a fuller exploration of the notion of multiple separate spheres, or the rejection of spatial metaphors altogether allowing for a greater focus on the meaning of privacy and publicness, disentangled from the prejudices of geographic tradition (Squires 2018: 141–2).

The social significance of food, according to Marshal Sahlins (1972: 215), is that it is 'life-giving, urgent, ordinarily symbolic of hearth and home, if not of mother', is part of the exchange sequences of *kula*, not only motherly but also political and outward-oriented. Reo Fortune somewhat noted female agency in *kula*:

> Old women possess the incantations for making and for lulling hurricanes. They keep this superior magic closely to themselves, and the men admit that the women possess the ritual that is most needed by sailors. The women cannot

make the *kula*. They are jealous of it, and are gifted with the power that can break it. They are not of the kind that easily allow their men a free hand upon the seas or in strange ports' (Fortune 1932: 214).

Thus, it can be argued that women do indeed make or break *kula*, not only with esoteric means but simply by displaying or refusing their hospitality. When everything is perfect, they strengthen *kula*, as many potential partners will be attracted by stories of her hospitality. When the children cry, the place is dirty, the food of low value, and the faces unfriendly, the *kula* partner will excuse himself and never return, damaging the *kula* of the matrilineage since he will describe his bad experience with his peers.

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Kalev Aasmäe

NO EASY WAY IN: NAVIGATING THE FRAGILE COMMUNALITY AMONGST SQUATTERS IN LONDON

ABSTRACT

This article aims to study the impact the 2012 criminalisation of residential squatting in England and Wales has had on the lived experiences and communal logics of squatters in London. Through the story of a former homeless person named Keith, this paper explores how an individual squatter with limited experience tries to navigate the complex communal logics of squatter crews and identify larger networks in order not to lose the roof over his head. Squatters' needs to frequently move between non-residential buildings and replicate existing social dynamics in new spatial settings increase the pressures on the solidarity and communal ties within crews. Although, to some extent, stratification based on the experiences, skills, networking abilities, competencies, and status of individual squatters has always existed, the context of growing uncertainty has further amplified it. This, in turn, further erodes solidarity amongst squatters, prompting Keith to turn to new methods of securing accommodation.

Keywords: squatting, community, neoliberalism, solidarity, criminalisation, housing

INTRODUCTION. KEITH'S STORY.

Whilst conducting fieldwork in the area, I first met Keith in September 2019, squatting in a former charity shop in Southeast London. He immediately stood out from the rest of the squatting crew.[1] He was older, in his mid-40s, and, whereas other more seasoned crew members had brought as few things with them as they could, his tiny corner in the makeshift living space was filled with various random items, rucksacks, and spare bicycle parts.

A month before meeting Keith, I had begun my third period of fieldwork in East and Southeast London. My previous fieldwork in 2009–2010 and 2015 had focused primarily on the communal aspects of squatting. Within the first month of fieldwork in 2019, I visited several squats, lived in two, and was evicted from one.

Squatting has a deep-rooted and rich history in the UK. London's unique combination of a long-standing squatting tradition, skyrocketing property values, and a severe housing crisis creates a distinctive environment that continues shaping squatters' experiences and adaptations. Recent legal challenges—most notably, the criminalisation of residential squatting in 2012—have intensified these pressures in London, where both communal practices and survival strategies are continuously

reshaped by the interplay of legal, economic, and social forces.

After engaging with squatters in various squats in summer 2019 and being involved in squatting processes, it quickly became clear that some of the communal dynamics had shifted in the four years since I had last been in London squats. However, it was not until I met Keith in the squat and got to know him and his recent experiences that the underlying reasons for these changes started to reveal themselves to me.

In my frequent visits to the squat to meet other informants, Keith was almost always there. After hearing about my research project, he was very keen to share his perspectives. Over time and after sharing many cups of tea, I got to know Keith better. It turned out that he had just joined this crew a few weeks before my first visit and did not have any previous experience squatting. He told me that for almost all of his adult life, he had been living with his mother in a council flat north of London. When his mother died from severe illness, he was promptly evicted from the flat. He applied for social housing, but the waiting time was several years long. He resigned to sleeping on his friends' couches for a while and did odd jobs providing him neither sufficient money nor a stable income allowing him to afford rent on his own.

In 2015, Keith ended up sleeping rough on the streets of North London, where he lived for over three years. He claimed that he had never begged for money and was proud of the fact that he developed several strategies and methods to keep his head above water navigating street life for such a long time. Still, over time, he came to understand that he had to find some way out soon, because he kept having increasing problems with his health. The previous winter had also been extremely cold, and he had witnessed and experienced a lot of physical abuse and violence.

'Three years is a lot,' he told me during an interview. *'I saw people dying from drugs, alcohol, untreated health problems. I didn't want to end up like them. (Interview with Keith, 2019)*

As a homeless person, he had acquired the know-how and skills to get by. He frequently visited a bicycle repair shop in South London that ran a charity scheme: homeless people were taught how to mend and restore donated bicycles, which they could then sell to make some money.

It was in this shop that he met some squatters who recommended he start squatting instead of living on the streets and take part in an event called Practical Squatters Night in East London. This event was regularly organised by a non-profit organisation, Advisory Service for Squatters (ASS), to help those interested in squatting to get more information about it and to meet people with similar interests.

Keith decided to go and see what the meeting was about. That decision proved successful. Already at the first Practical Squatters meeting he attended, he received information about a place with room for people to join. After a volunteer at ASS recommended him, Keith was placed into the abandoned charity shop, which is where I first met him.

When I first talked to him at length about his experience, he was truly happy that he had managed to get off the streets and become part of a community, no longer fending for himself alone.

'Yes, I felt really lucky. I finally found some people who I could trust and rely on,' he explained during an interview that took place about three weeks after he had moved into the former charity shop.

About a month after this conversation, I learned that the squatters had been evicted from the shop, and the crew had split up— some went to stay with their friends, and some

joined another crew in a building that did not have sufficient space for Keith to join as well. Because the crew fell apart and he had no other acquaintances in the squatting network, he turned to the same volunteer at ASS who had helped him become housed in the charity shop. Again, he was lucky: the information about his situation was shared in a WhatsApp group of the local squatter network and he was placed in another squat.

When I visited him in this new place, the positive outlook I has previously witnessed had disappeared. He was disillusioned because he understood that the crews, like squats, do not last forever and the feeling of community in a squat can be deceitful.

> *I don't know what's going to happen next or who is going to be here next week. Everyone is only looking after themselves and they [other squatters in the building] might not take me with them if there is a better opportunity elsewhere and there is no space for people like me.*

Keith's perception of the fragility of solidarity was not unique amongst squatters. During my fieldwork, time and again I heard the argument that crews that previously lasted for years are becoming increasingly rare because it takes too much effort to hold them together.

> *'You cannot open flats anymore. So, you don't have all those nice things like running water and a toilet and a kitchen and (…). Each time you move to a new building you have to find space for everyone and put a lot of work in to make it habitable,'* explained Italian squatter Luca, who had squatted with Keith in the charity shop. *'It's just so exhausting.'*

In this article, I have chosen to focus on Keith's story in order to explore how the criminalisation of squatting has reshaped not only the structural conditions but also the lived experiences of those directly involved in these practices. By choosing him as the focal point of this article, I gained access to unique perspectives from a newcomer to the scene, allowing me to uncover the choices, survival strategies, and communal logics amongst squatters.

ON METHODS AND POSITIONING

This article is mostly based on fieldnotes and unstructured and semi-structured interviews I conducted during fieldwork in various squats in London in 2015 and 2019–2020. During the latter period, I also briefly volunteered at the non-profit organisation Advisory Service for Squatters (ASS), which helped me to better understand the local context after being away from London for several years.

The interviews were mostly conducted in the squats in which the informants were living. On the one hand, this was helpful, because I could spend more time with the informants. In addition to conducting an interview, I could also observe their everyday environment. On the other hand, squats quite often lack privacy and sometimes it was difficult to create a quiet environment in which to conduct an interview, without anyone interrupting or eavesdropping, knowingly or not. Therefore, some interviews took place in neutral settings like cafes or, when the weather permitted, outside in a park for example.

During my fieldwork, I informed all of my informants and the gatekeepers, as well as the volunteer staff at ASS, of my position as an anthropologist and the broader aims and purposes of my research. To protect my informants, I gave them the opportunity to remain anonymous if they wanted to since many

of their activities fell on boundary between legal and illegal, with some viewed as criminal offences.

Fieldwork presented me with several methodological and ethical challenges. During my fieldwork, which included observation, participant observation, and extensive unstructured interviews, I faced numerous challenges together with Keith and other squatters. These ranged from dealing with violent intruders at the squat to transporting food supplies from various locations to trying to sell a bicycle. As a result, at times it was difficult to define the relationship between myself and my informants in the traditional anthropological framework.

Because this article primarily revolves around the experiences of a former homeless person—Keith—I include a single life history as a research technique. Analysing his narrative helps to better understand the ways in which he attempts to navigate the squatting scene.

The decision to focus on Keith's story stems from a comprehensive analysis of all the interviews I conducted with squatters during my 2019–2020 fieldwork period. Across these interviews, recurring themes began to emerge, highlighting shared challenges and dynamics amongst squatters. Keith's experiences and narrative stood out because they captured these themes in a unique depth and detail, whilst the broader set of interviews offered complementary perspectives helping to contextualise his experiences with common struggles faced by squatters more broadly.

Single life stories have long been used as a method in anthropology, providing insights into how individuals experience and interpret their cultural context (Radin 1983; Lewis 1961). As Hammersley argued, the boundaries between ethnography, life history work, and discourse analysis are often fuzzy (Hammersley 2006: 3).

My approach, therefore, relied on combining a 'factual life-focused approach' and a 'subjectivist life-focused approach' as described by Peacock and Holland (1993). I view Keith's narration to a certain extent both as 'a window on the objective facts of historical and ethnographic events (…) and the experience of the narrator' (Peacock and Holland 1993: 369–370).

When using life stories as a technique, I aimed to maintain the authenticity of the narrative whilst respecting Keith's privacy and autonomy, balancing authenticity with respect. However, I could not independently verify some of Keith's claims, which is why I hesitate to describe my approach as purely 'factual life focused'.

There is also the methodological concern with objectivity and the non-biasing of the subject, which can at least to some extent be alleviated through the perspective provided by Peacock and Holland (1993). They claim that researchers must remember that life stories have an existence and meaning in and of themselves beyond the interview context. The researcher, no matter what s/he does, cannot but fail to elicit a story that conforms not to the scientist's account of the truth, but to cultural and social conventions of the genre itself (Peacock and Holland 1993: 376).

HOW RESIDENTIAL SPACE WAS LOST

According to geographer Alexander Vasuvedan, London is a city that has been continuously made and remade through struggles over space, whether as buildings, commons, or communities.

'Squatters have occupied an important if overlooked place within these conflicts, especially as squatters' rights have, until recently, encouraged Londoners to house themselves' (Vasuvedan 2017: 42).

The criminalisation of residential squatting,[2] which Vasuvedan hints at, was introduced in 2012 and made it a criminal offence to squat in residential properties in England and Wales. Previously, squatting was a civil matter, whereby squatters had to be evicted through the courts. The new law made it easier for property owners to evict squatters, but it also criminalised a practice that had been used for decades as a means of providing temporary accommodation to homeless people.

Because non-residential buildings lack privacy, proper utilities, and basic infrastructure like plumbing, squatters are forced to adapt to challenging conditions. When squatters form crews who move together between buildings, their communal relationships are put under constant strain. Each new space, with its unique layout and limitations, requires renegotiation of social dynamics—decisions about who lives where, how spaces are used, and how to manage shared responsibilities.

By contrast, when modern squatting emerged after World War II in England, it was viewed as a justified means of temporarily housing people made homeless by the enemy, displaced people, and war veterans returning home.

Historian Don Watson has described how soldiers who returned home decided to take direct action to house themselves and other people who found themselves in a similar situation. As large numbers of families began to occupy empty military camps, the government supported the idea of temporary occupation, urging local authorities to install more people in them (Watson 2016).

But, as the camps began to fill, squatters turned to other empty buildings in various cities: hotels, shops, mansions, disused schools, and, in the same year, a series of hotels and luxury flats were occupied, which were requisitioned for wartime use and were left empty (Ward 2002: 160).

In the decades that followed, squatting became an essential part of London's housing ecosystem, providing a vital source of shelter for the city's most vulnerable. In the 1960s and 1970s, squatting also became increasingly political as many squatters viewed themselves as part of a wider movement for political and social change (Wates 1980). Factions ranged from Marxists and anarchists to liberals, organising various campaigns and protests, and often clashing with one another. Friction also existed with more politically passive squatters, who disliked attempts by the overtly political few to harness the entire movement for their political agenda (Milligan 2016: 13).

The logics of social housing, squatting, and the political environment around them began to change in the early 1980s. In the last four decades, various neoliberal[3] initiatives and policies have helped create an ongoing housing crisis in London and, simultaneously, ideologically marginalised squatting as a direct solution to this crisis. This included the aforementioned criminalisation of residential squatting introduced by the British Conservative prime minister David Cameron.

The privatisation of the housing market and ideology favouring owner-occupied dwellings received a major boost in 1980 when Margaret Thatcher introduced the new Housing Act of 1980, better known as the 'Right to Buy'. This allowed the sale of council housing to tenants who had rented for at least three years, with a discount of up to 50% (Boughton 2019). The purchase of council houses by sitting tenants was not actually a new policy—but the cross-party expectation before the introduction of the Housing Act of 1980 had been to achieve the best price, with the income from council house sales reinvested into the programme for new

council house construction, which continues apace (Boughton 2019: 170).

After the new act was introduced, the powers and resources that local authorities previously had to build and manage social housing faced new restrictions. By 1983, the level of building had halved in just three years (Shelter 2024). According to Hirayama and Forrest (2009: 1002–3), in the 1980s, around one-third of households were living in the state housing sector; but, by 2000, municipal rental housing had shrunk to 12%. This meant that effectively a large portion of the low-income population dependent on social housing with below-market rents had been forced to move to the private rental market if they were unable or ineligible to benefit from the Right-to-Buy scheme.

Because the public discourse was shaped by the rhetoric and policies promoting the idea of the home as a privately owned property, other forms of housing lost their validity within the same discourse. Whereas previously squatters could take the moral high ground the state leaving houses empty, they now risked acting against the traditions and legal protections of ownership entitlement and sovereignty in the UK, forced to make claims against private ownership (Burgum 2019: 230).

Geographer Mel Nowicki (2020) has argued that the criminalisation of residential squatting in 2012 is actually an outcome of the strategic politicisation of language regarding the home. Specifically, since the so-called 'neoliberal turn' of the 1980s, the home has been re-engineered as a function of the market and an emblem of individual economic success (Nowicki 2020).

Because viewing housing as primarily a financial product over and above a home became normalised, homeownership became understood as not only intrinsically tied to notions of personal—and by proxy,

national—success, but also as the primary focus of legal protection regarding the home (Nowicki 2020: 843). Consequently, during and after the neoliberal turn, squatting in residential spaces, which for decades was legally viewed as a civil matter, fell under greater pressure to be criminalised.

As early as July 1991, Simon Burns, then member of parliament from Chelmsford, discussed in Parliament the case for reviewing the law on squatting and its effect on privately owned second homes. He argued that, although many people associate second homes simply with the wealthy who own a weekend cottage or a country home they visit on Friday nights, returning to London or wherever on Sundays, many people have a second home. This results simply from mortgage interest rates in recent years, whereby they have been unable to sell their existing home, but decided to move to their new home, thereby not losing their purchase (Hansard 1991).

His speech highlighted how understanding of the home had shifted in the public discourse in the aftermath of Right to Buy, adding another layer of justifications for why a long empty residential space should be protected by criminal law. It was no longer just about protecting people's homes; it was also about protecting their financial investments.

It took over 20 years from Burns's speech until squatting in residential properties in England and Wales was indeed criminalised. The change of law, led by conservatives, but also supported by the Labour party, was introduced after a long media campaign, which Dadusc and Dee (2014) described as a moral panic constructed around the practice of squatting and the squatter population. This, in turn, created indignation and fear of the squatter as the 'transgressive other' (Dadusc and Dee 2014: 110).

Through criminalising squatting, the values mobilised to create the moral panic included the right to private property, violating the rules of so-called 'common decency' and 'normal conduct', and respect for police authority. The appeal to these values has been allied with the belief that criminalisation would put a stop to squatting, thereby protecting and re-establishing the moral and social order (Dadusc and Dee 2014: 119).

Because residential squatting has now been a criminal offence for more than a decade, squatters have primarily focused on commercial buildings in order to avoid criminal charges. Residential properties are still squatted from time to time, but most of the squatters I have met during my fieldwork have not wanted to risk it, viewing it as a last resort. Nowadays, squatting is not as prevalent in the news and public discourse as it was during the media campaign at the beginning of 2010s, which resulted in the change in law. Still, there have been occasions when squatters have occupied residential buildings to raise awareness on political topics, such as when Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska's empty £50 million mansion was squatted in 2022 to protest Russia's invasion of Ukraine (Taylor 2022).

SKILLS AND COMMUNAL SOLIDARITY

In the scholarly literature, urban squatting in Europe and the USA has been predominantly viewed as a movement (Lowe 1986; Hirsch and Wood 1988; Martinez Lopez 2007, 2012; Owens 2008; Pruijt 2013; Priemus 2015) or as a subculture (Kadir 2016; Golova 2016; Aceros et al. 2019).

Anthropologist Steph Grohmann (2020) argues against the latter viewpoint, claiming that squatters are a discrete group of people,

perhaps even a 'community', not a 'culture' or 'tribe' emerging from some quasi-natural process of cultural differentiation. As a group, they are constituted and reproduced not from within, but through larger social, political, and economic processes causing them to experience a common set of problems and develop communal practices to resolve these problems (Grohmann 2020: 18).

Various studies highlight the communal and solidaristic elements of squatting. Lynn Owens (2013), who studied squatting in Amsterdam, proposed using the sociological concept of the *Bund* to analyse the squatter communities.

Originally, the *Bund* was introduced by German philosopher Herman Schmalenbach (1977) as a third concept to enrich the *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* dualism of Ferdinand Tönnies (2001 [1887]). In Tönnies's concept of *Gemeinschaft*, personal relationships are shaped and governed by traditional social norms. Individuals engage in simple, direct, face-to-face interactions guided by natural, spontaneously arising emotions and expressions of sentiment. By contrast, *Gesellschaft* is formed through rational will, characterised by modern, cosmopolitan societies with government bureaucracies and large industrial organisations (Tönnies 2001 [1887]).

Hetherington (1994: 21) developed Schmalenbach's concept of the *Bund* further, attempting to show its significance as a fundamental sociological category. "As well as being small scale, based on face-to-face interaction, the *Bund* is an elective, unstable, affectual form of sociation. *Bünde* are maintained symbolically through the active, reflexive monitoring of group solidarity by those involved (…). It is self-enclosed and produces a code of practices and symbols that serve as the basis for identification" (Hetherington 1994: 16).

Leaning on MacDonald's (2006) inter-

pretation of the *Bund*, Owens (2013: 188–189) argues that, unlike conventional forms of community, the *Bund* is intense, impermanent, and mobile, tying in well with squatting.

Solidarity amongst squatters often manifests through practices that demonstrate agency in uncertain circumstances, with active participation highly esteemed. In my previous work, I have highlighted time-tricking as a method that squatters use to manage the many uncertainties they face (Aasmäe 2024). Sengupta and Sharma (2012: 221), who studied urban development in Kathmandu, claimed that interpersonal relationships and shared identities and values as social capital play important roles for urban squatters when improving their housing conditions via 'self-help'. Similarly, Martinez Lopez (2012: 882) tied solidarity to the collective practices of self-management, empowerment, and social cooperation.

Many researchers highlight the importance of collective practices and skills-sharing in the development of squatting communities. Ballesteros-Quilez et al. (2022) claim that the squatters' collective learning and knowledge-building processes have had a transformative impact in many of the contexts in which they have developed, both at the neighbourhood and at the city level. Based on their research in Sweden, Polanska and Weldon (2020: 1368) highlighted the non- (or less) hierarchical social organisation, consensus-based community-level meetings, rotating responsibilities, and the adoption of clear 'guidelines' for individual and community practices as focal points for building a squatter community.

According to their research, the mixing of formal and informal governance structures was perceived by squatters as resulting in an 'equalising' of many immaterial aspects of their lives, such as skills and knowledge throughout the group, strengthening both the individuals

and community (Polanska and Weldon 2020). A similar view was expressed by Bouillon (2009), who claimed that squatting communities enable the development of commonly shared skills which are transferable to other territories.

Some studies question the idea that squatter groups and communities are inherently egalitarian and non-hierarchical. For instance, anthropologist Nazima Kadir (2016), who has studied squatters in the Netherlands, coined the term 'squatter capital' to refer to their specific skills and the differential prestige that one gains by excelling in such skills. According to Kadir, squatter capital describes the unspoken value system of the internal social world of the squatter's movement. Interestingly, she found that the 'real' or 'ideal' squatter was not easily defined and was often imaginary: squatters rarely articulately illustrated who and what the authentic and ideal squatter was. Instead, by labelling someone 'not a real squatter', they easily articulated what they disliked and disrespected about others in their community (Kadir 2016: 49).

During my fieldwork in London, I have observed many instances during which Kadir's claims applied, as I will explain in the sections that follow. Despite egalitarianism being expressed as a core principle in squatter ideology, not all squatters are perceived as equals in practice. This distinction is particularly evident within groups where members have limited familiarity with one another or where the level of practical skills remains uneven. Here, stratification based on skills and know-how quickly becomes the default order.

THE STRUGGLE OF AN OUTSIDER

During my fieldwork in 2019–2020, I visited Keith in two squats. Both were previously

commercial properties: the first was a former charity shop, and the second squat had been a minicab office. Some squatters, however, claimed the second squat had actually served as a front for an underground brothel. When they opened it, they found three small, improvised rooms with massage tables and various related paraphernalia.

Keith's corner in the minicab office looked different from the one he had occupied in the charity shop. Because he was one of the last to join, he had only a small space next to the bathroom door. Thus, his setup also looked quite spartan: a large rucksack, a few smaller bags for clothes, a sleeping bag, and an air mattress. All of his other possessions which he had had in the previous squat including the bicycle parts, he had stored in a friend's shed.

> *I only have the stuff I can carry with me (…). It's not that I don't trust these people. I just feel that I have to be cautious (…). When others move, I have to be ready to follow them (…). I don't know how to break into buildings and I'm too old to start learning how to.*

Both times Keith was placed in a squat by a volunteer of ASS, he did not know anyone else in the squat. He found himself in situations where he felt that he did not fully fit the social dynamics of the crew. This left him unsure if he could rely on the connections he was attempting to build in these crews and therefore also unsure about his future plans.

Although other squatters in the squats he joined were seemingly sympathetic to his situation, his reliance on the ASS volunteer to find accommodation for him rather than making the effort to fit in and help others in their attempts to find new places was not unnoticed. Keith also felt a distance separated him from others.

During one interview, he told me that his experiences in these two squats had been quite different from his first impressions from the Practical Squatters meeting. Based on chats he had with other prospective squatters and ASS volunteers at that meeting, he had assumed that the London squatter community was more cohesive and supportive towards people who did not have much experience squatting. He also assumed that there were rules in place which must be obeyed.

> *I mean, I'm not expecting everyone to be my best friend here, but it would be nice to be included in the chats, and (…). I'm here [in the squat] a lot, but most of the time I have no clue what's going on (…). or who is invited to stay and all that. I was told that usually everybody [all the crew members] is involved, there's voting and all that, but I don't see it here (…).*

The disparity between his expectations and the reality sheds light on the complex issues associated with solidarity and communality amongst squatters compounding since the criminalisation of residential squatting. More specifically, the degree of closeness and solidarity amongst squatters hinges on the level of uncertainty they confront in their daily lives and when strategizing for the future.

Owens (2013: 190), who has studied the mobility of squatters in Western Europe, has argued that mobility, especially through repetition, creates a kind of stability and formulates an attachment—to movement, but also to place, as well as to the people and things with which one travels.

Importantly, the stabilising mobility Owens discusses does not really exist in London following the 2012 legislative change. There are multiple factors intensifying the instability

and unsustainability of squatting as a practice and the relationships amongst people who squat together.

Namely, squatting in London is defined by various temporal, social, and spatial uncertainties squatters must overcome. When a crew of squatters decides to leave a squat or is evicted from a building and moves to the next, various additional tensions arise.

During my fieldwork in London, I visited squats in empty buildings formerly built or fitted as schools, pubs, pawnbrokers, gyms, various kinds of shops, libraries, hostels, and even police and fire stations—that is, serving every imaginable non-residential purpose. Because the spatial layouts and habitability of empty commercial buildings vary widely, they also have different features or limitations which affect how squatters can use the space and interact with each other. In the new space, social relations and practices need to be reproduced, or at times reestablished, and everything must be renegotiated. This includes the allocation of private and public space, the practices of protecting and maintaining the physical space of a squat, and the everyday practices necessary to sustain the crew.

Usually, when the squatters decide to leave or are evicted from a building, they do not have many options for where to move to next. Therefore, the limitations of the new space they can find and move in to dictates the number of people that can move to it. Anthropologist Steph Grohmann (2020), who studied squatting in England before the criminalisation of residential squatting, noted previously that group size was a crucial factor in finding suitable sites for both pedestrian squatters and caravan dwellers. The number of newcomers had to be well considered, and connections and recommendations determined if an individual was invited to join (Grohmann 2020: 205).

After the criminalisation in 2012, when squatters were denied the opportunity to move into residential properties, the group size factor has become more flexible to accommodate specific contexts.

Firstly, squatters' ability to only occupy non-residential buildings has impacted the flexibility of the size of squatting crews. Moving from one non-residential building to another means that the squatting crew may have to adjust their size and social dynamics to fit the new space. The number of people in the crew can change, depending on the size and arrangements in the previous squat. If the new space is smaller, it might not provide sufficient space for all of the people who lived in the previous space. Similarly, if it is much larger, then the squatters need more people to keep it secure. The building cannot be left empty—thus, there must be at least one person in the squat at any given moment. Otherwise, the owner can claim that the property was empty and take it back by just breaking in again without first taking the squatters to civil court.

This means that the person who is asked to join a crew is required to have certain skills, competencies, or status. Nazima Kadir (2016) described these characteristics as squatter capital, which might not always be as relevant now as it was before criminalisation, as described by Grohmann (2020). Therefore, there might be situations when newcomers are invited to join just because there is an urgent need to fill the space and secure it from immediate eviction.

Interestingly, the political activism Kadir (2016) mentioned as a way to assert one's authenticity as a squatter did not play a big role in the crews I observed or in their stratification. Squatters acknowledged the political situation, with some quite vocal in expressing their views and participating in various protests and campaigns. But because the crews consisted of

people from different backgrounds and with differing motivations who ended up together almost serendipitously, an anti-capitalist stance by default was expected, whilst active participation in related activities was not.

This does not mean that their actions were not political. Indeed, others have argued that the act of squatting itself is inherently political (Milligan 2016: 25). For most squatters, however, Keith included, it was not their primary motivation.

Keith was placed in squats by a volunteer and was viewed as someone who fills the space when needed rather than as someone who helps reestablish and maintain communal relationships solidified in previous squats. Thus, his position in the squat was much weaker than many others, who had squatted together before and who successfully performed risky activities such as scouting and opening buildings, skills highly valued amongst squatters.

Keith repeatedly brought up the lack of rules, meetings, and decision-making processes, contrasted them against the picture he had painted for himself at the ASS introductory meetings, where the logics of squatting together were briefly discussed. This meant that the formal and informal governing structures that, according to Polanska and Weldon's (2020) research, should have had an equalising effect on the squatters were not in place.

Most importantly, the affection and attachment to both spaces and one another, essential to Hetherington's (1994) and Owens' (2013) interpretations of the *Bund*, were only rarely evident in both of Keith's squats.

The one unifying factor amongst squatters in both squats was the actual need to have a roof over one's head, at least for a while—a configuration that Hans Prujit (2013) has called 'deprivation-based' squatting. Indeed, almost all of the squatters who I met were in the position where they had no other chance to be housed.

They were not using the act of squatting together as an alternative housing strategy—most of them ended up in these abandoned buildings by chance.

Therefore, it is also logical that the skills needed to keep that roof over one's head—opening up and scouting squats—were valued above all else and were also the basis for hierarchical logics within squatting crews.

THE EXPIRED TOMATO SAUCE

After his first experience in the charity shop squat, Keith felt that he lacked certain skills and know-how and thus was not valued much by other squatters. As such, whenever they were evicted in future, he could not be confident that the more experienced squatters would view his joining the next squat as beneficial to them. He did, however, make an effort to contribute to the crew's communal wellbeing in the minicab squat using the skills he had acquired whilst living on the street.

There was a fridge in the communal space of the squat, brought in from another squat with the help of someone's friend who had a van. The fridge was noisy and heavy but did its work well. The squatters tried to put it to use by storing the food they collected from local supermarket rubbish bins in it. This required some know-how and physical skills, because more often than not the bins are located half-hidden on supermarket properties, typically behind a fence one might need to scale. Although the squatters who had participated in finding the food had priority access to it, the food was primarily communal, shared amongst the crew and at times with visitors. This practice was not simply ideological, but also served a practical purpose: much of the foodstuff rescued from bins has a best before date that has already passed or is about to pass, resulting in a need to consume it quickly.

Keith never participated in dumpster diving, but had another strategy for contributing to the food reserves using his experiences from the streets of West London. He explained to me that the food banks in South and Southeast London were quite spartan because both the population in the area and the local councils and organisations supporting the food banks were poorer. Thus, demand was always much higher than the quantity and quality of the supply. Therefore, you could only get canned food and staples like flour and rice there.

To access a better variety of food and healthier options, one had to journey to West London, where he knew of a food bank with fresh fruit, baked goods, and sometimes other things like soup or sauces you could take with you if you had suitable containers for transport and storage.

During my fieldwork in this squat, we went to the West London foodbank together on three separate Saturdays. The trip was always exhausting and time-consuming: we had to change buses twice, and Keith always refused to pay the fare, arguing that homeless people should not pay for transportation. At times, we waited for hours, hoping a bus driver would take pity on us and let us travel without a ticket. The return trip was always even more difficult since we had filled our rucksacks and bags with food supplies, which at times leaked and left bus drivers significantly more reluctant to allow us to travel with them.

Keith hoped that this contribution would help him create more lasting connections with the other members of the squat crew, all to no avail. Most of the food was indeed consumed, but a lot of it went to waste as well. At one point, large bags of tomato sauce he had carried from North London to the squat expired and began to smell in the fridge. This caused someone to make a nasty remark. Keith became rather angry, feeling that the others were ungrateful to him,

and he never carried stuff from the foodbank to the squat again.

By attempting to apply the skills, techniques, and knowledge he had gained from his time as a homeless person, Keith believed that the cultural norms amongst squatters would encourage using these abilities for the collective benefit of the group. However, he was deeply disappointed when he realised that this was not the case. The sense of community and the shared moral behaviour he had anticipated simply did not exist in the ways he had imagined.

Keith's experiences reflect the tension between the ideal of the *Bund*—a supportive, affectual community—and the harsh reality of fragmented, needs-driven relationships. Keith's initial optimism about finding solidarity within the squatting network was challenged by a dynamic whereby communal bonds were often conditional, formed out of necessity rather than elective affinity. This shift underscores the difficulty of maintaining the *Bund* within a crew shaped by survival pressure.

When analysing the viewpoints expressed in Keith's interviews, it is interesting to see the friction between his own narrative and moral norms and those of other squatters.

Explaining the challenges of a single life story method, Linde (1993) has noted that speakers aim to establish coherence, not just with their previous personal narratives, but also with the cultural expectations regarding identity and moral behaviour. Because evaluation is an inherent feature of narratives, life stories naturally provide the speaker with an opportunity to reflect on whether their actions and sense of self align with what is considered good and proper (Linde 1993).

This friction of norms and behaviours arose during an interview with Tom, who was one of the squatters who had opened the place. He had been squatting since 2011, when, after taking part in the Occupy London movement,

he joined Bank of Ideas, a former bank building turned into a squatted social centre.

> *I mean, I have nothing against him, but we don't have to pretend that we have a home here or a crew here that's going to last for years. It's [the squat] just a shelter for today and maybe tomorrow or for the next two weeks. Obviously, everyone is welcome, but (…) it's difficult to do it [open a new squat] and I'd rather rely on people who know what to do and can help out more than just staying in the squat the whole day. (Interview with Tom, 2019)*

Tom's rational, if not borderline uncharitable attitude, was something that I had not experienced in squats where crew members have known each other longer and who have together gone through all the trouble that opening a new squat and moving from an old one entails. As Tom explained, the role of just being present in the squat is not viewed as a sign of competency or status, because it is impersonal and does not require any skills. Although Keith had been trying to establish some kind of solidarity by participating in putting food on the table for the entire crew, future-oriented activities, such as looking for and opening up a new squat, were more highly valued by the more experienced squatters.

This resonates with the findings of Nazima Kadir (2016). Specifically, the everyday practices, as difficult as they are, are not viewed as important or considered squatter-capital worthy, reflecting practices that demonstrate the skills, competence, and status of the person (Kadir 2016).

Keith, who only a few months ago was happy to escape the dangers of street life, found himself in another precarious situation. Because he lacked the skills and competencies valued,

his membership in the charity shop crew was unclear. He was needed to hold that specific place. He did not, however, have sufficient social capital in the crew nor personal connections which would guarantee him access to the squats the more experienced squatters in the crew might open in the future.

VIRTUAL HOPE

At some point, Keith decided to diversify his methods of networking. The volunteer at ASS granted Keith access to a WhatsApp-based messaging network, where a lot of information is shared. Information included news of evictions, parties and other events, people needing new places to stay, people needed to fix something, and warnings about transport police seen in various Tube locations amongst other bits of news.

In the last decade, squatters have begun using WhatsApp and its various alternatives such as Signal and Telegram for instant and group messaging. Such communications became increasingly important because, around the same time residential squatting was criminalised in 2012, new developments in technology gained popularity, enabling anyone with a smartphone to send and receive end-to-end encrypted instant messages via mobile or wireless internet connections. Because much of the interaction between squatters of different crews has become virtual, information regarding squatting opportunities has also become more accessible to more people. Squatters who are well-connected and who maintain a good reputation find it easy to find a new place to live whenever evictions occur. At the same time, there are also more opportunities for others who are not that well-connected. The shift in technology helps to create connections similar to something Mark Granovetter (1973) described as weak

ties—that is, allowing distant clusters of people to access novel information that can lead to new opportunities for the broader social network.

During my interviews, seasoned squatters described their views of messaging platforms as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, sharing information and contacting people has never been easier; on the other hand, it was also perceived as eroding the communality amongst squatters, since it eliminated the need to establish and carefully maintain personal relationships within the scene.

As a long-time squatter, Paolo explained to me in an interview in 2019 that all of this progress in communication and social interaction has its dangers. Previously, people had to vouch for someone to establish trust, whereas now, because of the virtual connectivity, it has become much easier to find people and to gain access to a lot of information that was difficult to obtain in the past.

> *I remember the days when you had to go through several people to get someone's phone number. You had to be trustworthy. It was so much more difficult. Those people might not have been using these phone numbers anymore, because a lot of squatters changed their pre-paid SIM cards regularly for safety reasons. Also, you never knew whether a person was going to pick up the phone or text you back. (Interview with Paolo, 2019)*

He believed that without face-to-face interaction, there was no real responsibility.

> *Anyone can text me and say, 'Hey, do you have a squat where I can stay, I want to be a squatter.' But this is not the real world. I want to see this person defending the squat at 4 o'clock in the morning against an illegal eviction by bailiffs. This is what counts.*

A similar logic was previously highlighted by Owens (2013), who claimed that technology, which makes mobility possible, can also render it redundant, by delinking communication from proximity. But closeness does not replace the need or desire for 'real contact'—it actually intensifies it (Owens 2013: 190).

Thus, although digital networks offer squatters a lifeline, they complicate the concept of the *Bund*. Whilst squatters use platforms like WhatsApp to form necessary connections, these connections lack the intimacy and spontaneity of face-to-face relationships. The shift from physical to digital or hybrid bonds reflects a transformed *Bund*, where communal ties are functional, albeit more fragile and subject to the immediate pressures of survival.

Keith viewed it from another angle. He viewed the impersonality of the virtual networks as a virtue. That is, the functionality of these networks did not depend on individual people or relationships between certain people.

After being disappointed in the two squatting crews he had joined, Keith placed his bets on the larger squatter community. He consciously decided to make an effort to establish connections within the wider networks. By the end of my fieldwork, he had managed to access several other WhatsApp groups of local squatting networks, where a lot of information about empty properties, evictions, people in need of housing, protests, and practical questions amongst other information was shared.

He did not rely on the virtual connections alone: he also frequently visited the office of ASS and monthly pub nights in a legal squat in East London to meet people face to face.

> *I have to look after myself. Noone else will (…). I don't want to end up on the streets again. (Interview with Keith, 2020).*

CONCLUSIONS

This article examines the impact of this legal shift on the communal dynamics and lived experiences of squatters in London by focusing on the story of Keith, a middle-aged man who turned to squatting after living on the streets of West London for three years. Whilst Keith's personal experiences are central to this study, they are contextualised within broader sociopolitical frameworks that have amplified precarity in London's housing crisis.

The criminalisation of residential squatting has forced crews to frequently relocate between non-residential buildings, each presenting new and unpredictable challenges. This constant state of flux undermines the stability of communal ties, given that squatters are required to continually adapt to changing conditions and reevaluate their strategies with each new squat.

Keith's narrative highlights a significant weakening of communal solidarity within squatting networks. Since squatting is primarily deprivation based, squatters are less driven by shared visions of social change and more by their immediate need for shelter.

This article, therefore, challenges the conceptualisation of Owens (2013), who, in building upon Hetherington's (1994) work, views squatting communities as *Bünde*—small-scale, elective, and affectual forms of sociation based on face-to-face interactions. In this context, the framework does not entirely hold, because the relationships amongst crew members are increasingly shaped by necessity and survival, rather than elective, emotionally driven sociation. In addition, currently, there is a frequent need to relocate coupled with a growing reliance on digital networks rather than on in-person connections.

In an attempt to navigate these challenges, Keith sought to build connections within the squatting scene through digital means, including WhatsApp groups. This underscores the potential for further research, particularly on how digital technologies are reshaping communal practices and complicating traditional understandings of solidarity and mobility within squatting networks.

Nevertheless, the notion of the *Bund* remains a useful framework for understanding squatting communities, even as it evolves under new pressures. Whilst traditional Bünde are defined by stable, elective, and emotionally driven bonds, contemporary squatters in London navigate relationships that are increasingly conditional and survival oriented. The need for frequent relocation, coupled with a reliance on digital communication, seems to reshape the *Bund* into a more transient and necessity-driven form. Yet, as illustrated through Keith's story, the underlying desire for solidarity and trust persists, reflecting squatters' continued pursuit of community even amidst precarity.

NOTES

1   In this article, I use the terms 'squatting crews' and 'squatting groups' interchangeably. Whilst 'crew' is more commonly used amongst squatters, both terms denote a collective of individuals cohabitating in a squatted building. These groups or crews may vary in longevity, with some existing for only one building, whilst others persist across multiple buildings for years.

2   Residential buildings in this context are flats and houses, whereas a non-residential property is any building or land that is not designed to be lived in. Squatting in non-residential properties is not in itself a crime, but it is a crime to damage the property (Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland 2024).

3   In this article, I define neoliberalism as a political paradigm that advocates reducing state intervention, including in public housing, whilst emphasising the efficiency of private enterprise and free markets. It also promotes individual responsibility and self-reliance, often framing

social and economic issues as matters of personal choice and market-based solutions (Ferguson 1990; Harvey 2005; Ong 2006).

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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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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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LECTIO PRÆCURSORIA

Becoming an adequate child: Learning to relate to others in cultural context

28 October 2024, University of Helsinki

Honoured custos, honoured opponent, and dear audience members,

As a childhood researcher with a particular interest in the way that early experiences shape children's psycho-social development, and who ended up in this field because of my motivation to improve material and social conditions for children globally, it is impossible for me not to open my PhD defence with recognition that the world is witnessing a brutal genocide that is primarily targeting Palestinian civilians, over half of whom are children.

Exactly one year and two days ago, I signed an open letter along with over 2400 other childhood researchers, calling for an immediate ceasefire in the occupied Palestinian territories; the letter noted that around 3000 children had been killed by the Israeli military in the three weeks since 7 October. A year later, the number of children killed is estimated to be at least 17 000 (UN Human Rights 2024), and this shocking number is likely to wildly underestimate the true impact of Israel's offensive actions (Khatib, McKee, and Yusuf 2024).

Over the course of my PhD, and this past year especially, I've come to realise that conducting research means constantly making choices. In doing so, we seek a balance between ethical, political, moral, and practical concerns, as well as the more theoretical perspectives that

guide our work. As researchers, we must justify the choices we make to our institutions, to peer reviewers, ethical review boards, colleagues, funders, and opponents in PhD defences. The institutions we belong to also make choices in how they operate, and I strongly believe that we should hold our institutions to account for their choices.

Take the University of Helsinki's immediate condemnation of Russian military action following the invasion of Ukraine (University of Helsinki 2022), compared to their dismissal of the Israeli invasion of Gaza as a 'conflict in the Middle East' (Lindblom 2023). Consider also the decision they took in June to ask police to remove student protestors who were demanding an academic boycott on the grounds of the ongoing genocide (ICJ 2024) and scholasticide (Dader et al. 2024) being committed by Israel (YLE 2024).

These choices from University leadership demonstrate that, while the University may allow so-called 'decolonising' efforts in theory, they are unwilling to take even small concrete steps against contemporary settler colonialism (Nijim 2023), despite the many calls to do so from within the University community (Forde et al. 2024; RASTER 2024; HYY 2024; OLIVE Project 2024). University decision-makers apparently fail to see the irony in their proclamation that the University is not a political body and, therefore, 'refrains from

making political statements' (Lindblom 2023), when feminist, anarchist, racialised, and activist scholars, amongst them many anthropologists, have long been at the forefront of dismantling the notion that science and knowledge are apolitical or objective entities (Said 1978; Lorde 1984; Ahmed 2021).

While it sometimes feels that there is a limit to what we can do as individuals, I do believe that those of us who can make choices that promote and uphold principles like basic human rights should do so. For this reason, the ongoing genocide is not something I could be silent about whilst I have this platform today. The annihilation of Palestinian lives continues as I speak, through unimaginable atrocities such as the carpet bombing of homes, encampments full of displaced families, and hospitals; the targeted destruction of schools and all of Palestine's universities; direct attacks with snipers and armoured tanks on civilians including children and pregnant people; and the targeted murder of journalists and UN peacekeeping forces, much of which has been openly broadcast on social media.

In the face of this, I call on everyone today to use their own power and platforms to act towards ending the genocide of Palestinians, and the attacks on neighbouring states, as best they can. Involvement in groups such as Students for Palestine (SfP Finland n.d.) and Researchers for Palestine, or tools such as the 'No Thanks' app (Bashbash 2024), which makes identifying items on boycott lists easy, can help us take small concrete steps towards making a difference.

It feels a bit awkward to bring this lectio back to my PhD thesis, a feeling I've been constantly challenged by this year as I try to balance witnessing and protesting against a genocide and carrying on with business as normal, but I will now crudely do so.

My thesis starts with a conversation which I will share part of here. During my fieldwork, I caught up with a Colombian friend, who I call Valentina. She lives in Helsinki, but had just visited Colombia with her daughter, Laura, for the first time since they had left 4 years earlier. When I asked her how everything had gone, she pulled a face, telling me that Laura had seemed uncomfortable and had clearly been happy to return home—to Helsinki. She had been overwhelmed at being hugged and kissed by family members she didn't really know, who ruffled her hair and pinched her cheeks without warning. She also thought her cousins played too rough, made too much noise, and talked over each other too much. 'It's the first time I realised that she's become a real Finnish kid,' Valentina said.

I believe it's clear to Valentina and to all of us here today that Laura was learning to engage and interact with other people in ways that were strikingly different to her cousins, and that the expectations that adults had for and of their children were very different in these two places. This idea, that there are different ways of being a *proper* or *appropriate*—or, as in my title, 'adequate'—child (Ulvik 2018), underlies my PhD research.

The thesis essentially asks how, why, and when these differences emerge, exploring these questions through a comparison of children in two very different field sites: Helsinki, Finland, and Santa Marta, Colombia. Now, it might not seem particularly difficult to answer this question: we all know it's because of the 'cultural differences' that Valentina herself identified. It might seem quite common-sensical to us, that children learn to behave in ways that imitate or conform to the norms and values of society, and that these differacross time and space. However, as a scientific community, we know relatively little about how this process of learning to

behave 'appropriately' actually unfolds in real life or of how it is shaped by children's broader social contexts.

This is partly because anthropologists—who are so skilled at developing the deep, sensitive, nuanced understandings of social relations and intimate lives that would be helpful here—have typically not been that interested in children. This is quite ironic since it is during childhood that we truly learn to become 'proper' or 'adequate' cultural and social persons. However, as Lawrence Hirschfeld (2002) argued in an article titled 'Why don't anthropologists like children?' over 20 years ago, the study of childhood has long been marginalised within anthropology and the field has tended to underestimate both how active a part children play in their own learning, and how important a role they play in shaping cultural change (Levine 2007; Lancy 2022) or with specific marginalised groups in urban contexts, such as children living on the streets (see, e.g., Kaime-Atterhög and Ahlberg 2008). While these perspectives are very valuable in themselves, and have laid the groundwork for my own research, it means that children living in contemporary urban contexts—a growing group, globally—continue to be under-represented in the ethnographic literature and theory.

Alongside this, the field of developmental psychology exists with the purpose of understanding child development, but is primarily focussed on quantifying concrete outcome measures, and defining 'normal' or apparently universal stages of child development. In addition, within psychology traditionally there has been little recognition of the importance of cultural context on child development (Levine, Caron and New 1980). Although this is slowly changing, 'culture' is still often treated as a single variable or explanatory factor in psychological studies

rather than examined in any detail (Weisman and Luhrmann 2020).

Interestingly, many of the questions that anthropologists and psychologists ask are similar in essence—they just use different approaches and have different assumptions underlying their research, which leads to different focuses and different strengths and weaknesses. The premise of the mixed-methods and interdisciplinary approach of my thesis is that integrating perspectives from both anthropology and psychology allows me to draw from the strengths of each and, in doing so, to develop more holistic understandings of children and childhood (Levine et al. 1980; Weisman and Luhrmann 2020).

Somewhat unusually for a PhD thesis in anthropology, I did this through a series of articles rather than a monograph. Each of the articles, which I will now describe quickly, focussed on slightly different concepts and took slightly different approaches to address the broad question of how children learn to become adequate social actors within their particular cultural contexts.

The first article is called 'Fairness, partner choice, and punishment: An ethnographic study of cooperative behavior among children in Helsinki, Finland' (Sequeira 2023b). In this article, I examine how the behaviours that cooperation researchers are interested in tended to play out in real life amongst children in Helsinki. Research into human cooperation typically relies on findings from economic games or experiments and many of these have highlighted that punishment is particularly important for maintaining cooperative relationships and reducing conflict in human societies (Boyd and Richerson 1992). In this article, I explore how findings from cooperation research align with the everyday behaviour of the children with whom I spent time.

I found that both adults and children in Helsinki were very hesitant to punish, and, instead, they typically relied on *avoiding* and *disengaging from* overt conflict. Children were also discouraged from using aggressive, dominant strategies with their peers, and this reflected the relatively non-authoritarian relationships that adults had with children. I suggest that childrearing goals that emphasise children's independence and autonomy promote a focus on partner choice strategies instead of punishment, since strategies such as telling another person too explicitly what to do, punishing them, or using dominance to 'force' them to do something against their will, all infringe on their autonomy and are, therefore, undesirable. Interestingly, these strategies are similar to those typically observed amongst hunter–gatherer societies (Baumard 2010).

The second article, 'Cultural Models at Play: What Miscommunication Reveals About Shared Social Norms' (Sequeira 2023a), is a short article that also draws upon ethnographic data from Helsinki. I reflect upon the difficulty of researching something you cannot observe; the cultural models, values, and norms that I was interested in are, after all, impossible to 'see' in any real sense (Antweiler 2019). However, during my fieldwork, I noticed that moments of tension between children served as windows into understanding them better. I explore what happened when a group of children were faced with a particularly dominant and aggressive player during a game of dodgeball. The children's extremely disapproving yet non-confrontational reactions revealed their assumptions and 'taken-for-granted' knowledge about how someone *should* act in the game, and also about how they should react to inappropriate behaviour. I argue that paying particular attention to *miscommunications* and *tensions* between interlocutors can be a fruitful way of accessing

normative knowledge, particularly with children.

In the third article, 'Learning shame, learning fear: The socialization of hierarchy through emotion among children in Helsinki, Finland, and Santa Marta, Colombia' (Sequeira 2024), I examine and compare the types of emotionally evocative experiences that children faced in their normal lives. I draw upon the idea of *socialising emotions* to frame the article; this refers to the use of emotion to reinforce certain types of behaviours and ultimately to guide children to learn certain ways of acting and interacting with others (Röttger-Rössler et al. 2015).

I describe common disciplinary practices that I observed in each field site and argue that these tended to elicit different emotions in children, which I characterise as *shame* in Helsinki and *fear* in Santa Marta. I demonstrate that common emotionally evocative practices are shaped by the specific cultural schemas that parents and adults draw on in each context and cultivate specific types of behaviours in children (Fung and Thu 2019). I then examine what kinds of modes of interactions shame and fear serve to promote, and highlight that *compliant autonomy* appears to be particularly important in Helsinki whereas *respectful obedience* is emphasised in Santa Marta.

The final article, 'Prestige and dominance in egalitarian and hierarchical societies' (Sequeira, Afshordi, and Kajanus 2024), reports the results of experiments that I ran together with collaborators in Colombia, Finland, and the USA. The experiments are based on theory which postulates that there are two ways to achieve high status: through dominance, referring to bully-type power-grabbing behaviours, or through prestige, implying being skilled and knowledgeable and having status granted to you by others (Cheng and Tracy 2014). We were interested in how children

in different cultural contexts thought about dominance and prestige, and the development of these skills with age. We collected data from almost 500 children, and then analysed children's answers to understand how they thought about dominance and prestige.

We found a shared tendency to favour prestige amongst children from all three countries, which increased with age. However, there were also cultural differences. For example, we asked the children a set of questions about who they would assign leadership to between a dominant and prestigious character—children in Finland showed a stronger tendency to assign leadership to the prestigious character than did children in Colombia. Overall, we argue that socio-cultural factors, such as levels of societal inequality and the degree to which children are exposed to overt dominance in everyday life, shape how they think about social status, dominance, and prestige.

By examining children's intimate lives in two very different sociocultural contexts, my thesis offers both an in-depth analysis of particular childrearing practices and childhood experiences in these two cities, and a broader comparison across them. Through this approach, it examines how normative ways of interacting and relating to others are learnt through the repeated childhood experiences that are so 'normal' to those who exist within these worlds that they are unquestioned, or 'second nature'. In doing so, it also examines how these everyday practices are connected to broader structures, norms, and value systems.

The articles each spotlight a different aspect of children learning to be 'culturally adequate' (Ulvik 2018); they explore how children learn to manage conflict, play games, and know their place in social hierarchies in ways that are considered appropriate in their local contexts. Common to each of them is the understanding that children's ability to learn to navigate social

relationships is built upon shared human bio-psychological capacities and tendencies to do so, and that these are also shaped by the cultural context within which they are learning such skills (Boas 2008; Röttger-Rössler et al. 2015).

Through this mixed-method, comparative approach, my thesis, therefore, makes contributions to the anthropology of childhood and learning, but also holds broad transdisciplinary relevance across the study of child development, human cooperation, and hierarchy.

Honoured opponent, I now call upon you to present your critical comments on my dissertation.

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Digital Threads, Interwoven Scenes: An Ethnography of Sustainable Fashion Production in Ghana and Finland

7 August 2024, University of Helsinki

Honoured Custos, honoured Opponent, dear members of the audience,

When I started to think about the title of my dissertation, a colleague of mine suggested including a play on the word 'vogue', referencing the world-renowned, iconic fashion magazine. However, my initial reaction was 'absolutely not', since it would have almost felt like a betrayal of the Finnish sustainable fashion designers taking part in this research.

These designers wanted to create clothes that were not only fashionable but carried something of lasting value—because, to them, true 'sustainability' referred to something outside the cyclical fashion calendar, and its constantly changing trends and magazine covers, and the ever-increasing global consumption patterns. By contrast, some of the Ghanaian fashion designers I was in contact with had actually appeared on the pages of *Vogue* and had been pulled into a global fashion marketplace that craved authentically created sustainable clothing.

In Ghana, locals had to deal with the consequences of the exploding consumption of fast fashion in the West, filling local landfills, beaches, and sewage systems with an endless influx of poor-quality, second-hand clothing. In fact, 15 million pieces of second-hand clothing are shipped to Ghana every week, of which approximately 40% is categorised as unusable waste (The Or Foundation 2022).

Whereas Finnish sustainable designers were hoping to tackle the global environmental and social problems caused by fashion, by creating new options for the Finnish market, the Ghanaian designers hoped to carry the torch of Ghanaian, and more generally African-made, fashion, with the ultimate intention of shifting the power structures within an unequal global fashion market.

When I began planning this project, I initially wanted to explore notions of sustainability, through the meanings fashion designers attached to the concept, in different marketplaces. However, due to unforeseeable changes, I altered and expanded the scope of my study to consider the digitally connected marketplace, and how we all participate in the discourses that shape and define complex and often paradoxical concepts.

This is of particular interest when considering terms that determine global responsibilities and local consequences, and vice versa, such as sustainability. In this way, the term is both formed by and influences phenomenon across an immense scale, from the highly local, such as a single market street in Accra, to the almost limitless reach of the World Wide Web.

In my dissertation, titled *Digital Threads, Interwoven Scenes: An Ethnography of Sustainable*

Fashion Production in Ghana and Finland, I focus on Finnish and Ghanaian sustainable fashion brands and independent designers that use artisanal techniques, all of whom aim to source their textile materials and produce their clothing as locally as possible.

In the text, I bring in the voices of many interlocutors, meaning the designers and other individuals participating in this research, and focus on four main characters, so to speak. Through the eyes of Benny and Sunshine from Ghana, and Sofia and Mai from Finland, we learn what it means to produce ethical and ecologically sustainable fashion in a world that, basically, does not need any new clothing.

Many of these brands also navigate a global marketplace and cater to a cosmopolitan clientele, willing to pay higher prices for pieces of clothing that tell a sustainable story. These two countries, Finland and Ghana, provide two drastically different cultural and socio-economic contexts. But, the fashion brands in both countries promote themselves with similar themes of authenticity and locality, and are intertwined, in different ways, through the logics of social media algorithms and the dynamics of global fashion trends.

As an anthropologist, my initial plan was to do a year's worth of on-site fieldwork in Ghana. As I embarked on this journey in the beginning of December 2019, the city of Accra was filled with hustle and bustle, especially due to the Year of Return campaign that marked 400 years since the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in Jamestown, Virginia. Rumours swirled that 400 000 tourist visas had been approved for December alone, mostly for, as the Ghanaian organisers liked to call it, the 'global African family'.

The state was looking for international investors, preferably people who had an ancestral tie to the country or the African continent in general. Locals were busy producing items to sell, renovating hotels and restaurants, and organising all sorts of events with both local and international celebrities as performers or guests. For example, supermodel Naomi Campbell and rapper Cardi B both made appearances.

Little did we know that all of our lives would be so drastically changed within a few short months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As Ghana decided to close its national borders, I had to return home, and, after some months of contemplating my next moves, I decided to continue my fieldwork in Finland, this time with Finnish fashion designers who used similar artisanal production methods and branding tactics as my interlocutors in Ghana.

The contrast to the busy city land- and soundscape of Accra could not have been bigger, as most indoor public spaces were closed in Helsinki, due to pandemic-related restrictions. In addition, as many if not all of us here experienced during lockdown, more and more of our lives were taking place via screens.

Following the groundbreaking work of Tom Boellstorff (2016) and my honoured opponent Daniel Miller (Horst and Miller 2012), anthropologists have long understood that the physical, or the so-called 'real' world, and the digital world are not separate spheres, but rather co-constitute our lived-in realities, the sense of ourselves, and the formation of social relations. Through my research, I wish to show how the fluidity between the digital and the physical worlds manifests itself within the global fashion marketplace.

I always knew how important social media was for the makers of fashion, particularly given the significance of Instagram. But, it was the Black Lives Matter movement that really made me understand—in ethnographic terms—the connectedness of digitally mediated trends, personal politics, and their effects on the

formation of identities, as well as the definition and production of sustainable goods.

The Black Lives Matter movement is a political and social movement that seeks to highlight the racial inequalities experienced by Black people, with a primary interest in police brutality and racially motivated violence. After the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, many thousands of people gathered in front of this very building[1] to show support for global Black liberation.

Digitally, while the fashion designers in Ghana benefitted from the increased visibility on social media apps, especially through the several Black-owned lists that often were put together by activists and other online users in the US and the European Union, Finnish fashion designers were posting informative content on how to support the global solidarity movement and to tackle racism not only in the fashion world but also in society in general.

Thus, in the end, my research became a multi-sited ethnography in Ghana, in Finland, and on social media. All in all, I gathered data intermittently for 2 years. I followed not only fashion designers, but also fashion activists and sustainable fashion brands from all over the world to provide a fuller context of the worlds in which my interlocutors operated. Some anthropologists like to call this, quite fittingly, patchwork ethnography (Günel and Watanabe 2024).

For a long time, I thought this would become a comparative study of Finland and Ghana. Instead, it shifted to the flows and disconnections between these two locations, which are formed in a seemingly unbounded and digital world. As well as the pandemic crisis, the social uprising of the Black Lives Matter movement created recognisable and shareable 'global moments' for people in a multitude of locations.

Intertwined with discourses on identity politics, these globally recognised and locally experienced events created new, ethical considerations for the fashion designers and activists in both Ghana and Finland. These global moments were amplified through widely recognised memes and other types of social media content, and were shaped by a variety of perspectives that were made visible in democratic online spaces.

At the same time, it also felt like identities, political stances, and even opinions had become obstacles to navigate in an otherwise borderless social media landscape, with a heightened awareness of the power of new and sometimes divisive identity politics. Physical barriers were also created in the global supply chains, which faced severe friction caused by the pandemic, and the inflation of prices that followed, making it more difficult to acquire textile materials from the global market.

Thus, I argue that sustainability in fashion is a site of negotiation and contestation in which regulatory bodies, large fashion corporations, activists, small-scale producers, and consumers, engage in efforts to define—from their various perspectives—how to tackle the environmental and social devastation caused by the global fashion system.

To uncover the multi-layered meanings of sustainability, I have brought works from different fields of study into conversation to address topical debates connected with fashion production and the effects of social media platforms on artisan fashion designers and their branding activities.

Drawing heavily on anthropologist Marilyn Strathern's work (2004), I introduce 'scenes', or '*skene*' in Finnish, as fluid and digitally stretched spaces, where my interlocutors actively discussed the nuanced perspectives on sustainability, fashion, cosmopolitanism, and

authenticity. Scenes, which were particularly visible through social media, had the potential to link individuals as well as groups of people from faraway places through commonly shared and recognised aesthetic references. This meant that the aspirational and strategic work of my interlocutors related to them wanting to sell their clothing or wanting to provide information on sustainable lifestyles in general could become intertwined with truly global discourses on sustainability and fashion.

In Finland, as the local scene for sustainable artisanal fashion was highly critical of the global fashion industry, it became important for my interlocutors to denounce certain fashion ideals. This was evident in how they, for example, wanted to stay away from images of glitz and glamour, and instead be associated with frugality and rationality. In Ghana, especially due to the Global African diaspora and the visibility brought on by the Black Lives Matter movement, my interlocutors could witness how their sales increased, but also how they could experiment with Ghanaian, and more generally African, aesthetics of pre-colonial times that intertwined 'authenticity' with their existing elaborate and luxurious designs.

Sustainable clothing is not only about material things, and their physical attributes, but also about the narratives that bring forth the societal debates that are linked to the phenomenon (Hepburn 2013). Generally, these narratives oppose mass-manufacturing and faceless fashion corporations, and, instead, champion what my interlocutors liked to call the 'good side of fashion'.

The Finnish designers were looking for 'objectively' sustainable textile materials, which often created strict categories with highly scientific and rigid definitions of material qualities. Conversely, my Ghanaian interlocutors considered material sustainability in a more

flexible way. To them, sustainability had always been practiced on the African continent, and supporting local weaving communities that produced high-quality, handwoven material or purchasing other types of fabrics from the local markets were just a few examples of these well-entrenched and long-standing practices.

Whereas, in Finland, polyester made from oil is regarded as a top offender in terms of environmental damage. In Ghana, as long as the fabric was bought from a family-owned, local market stall, the journey and story behind a polyester item could give it sustainable status. Interestingly, when used in African designs promoted to a Western audience, the fashion media, such as the Italian *Vogue*, labelled these polyester creations as sustainably sourced.

In the global marketplace, sustainability is often viewed as a singular quality of its own, which can be objectively calculated and traced through standardised materials, certificates, and production methods. These types of standards were, however, often out of reach for my interlocutors in both Ghana and in Finland. Instead, they relied on personal experiences and trust within the supply chain. In this discussion, I engaged with anthropologists Robert J. Foster (2008) and Brad Weiss (2016), whose works on both global and local supply chains helped me to understand how the fashion designers had to balance the local and subjective qualities of their fashion making with the logics of the global trade and the qualifying powers of the market.

Here, I mean that the qualities of sustainability the designers themselves wanted to underline could gain new meanings in the marketplace. Applying the work of anthropologist Webb Keane (2003), I argue that sustainability, as both an embodied value and material category, should be analysed as a bundle in which individual qualities gain relevance and irrelevance in relation to each other depending

on the context in which sustainability is being evaluated.

Lastly, social media, especially Instagram and TikTok, has become essential to sustainable fashion design, not only due to its branding and marketing abilities, but also in its ability to authenticate and verify the sustainability claims.

Indeed, posting content on making clothes and the everyday lives of being entrepreneurs acted as proof for the claims my interlocutors made regarding sustainability. Through this type of 'authentic' content, my interlocutors could show how and why their clothes were more ethical and sustainable than others. Through more intimate and personal content, online posts opened the doors into the lives of the designers, and acted in a similar way to face-to-face encounters in the marketplace, thereby reinforcing feelings of trust.

Building on the work of anthropologist William Mazzarella (2003), my interlocutors engaged in the creation of 'commodity images', which, through explanations of clothing production, aimed to counter their audiences' alienation from the detrimental effects of fashion, while simultaneously generating a desire to buy their clothing. However, the inescapable digitality and the neoliberal tendencies of social media platforms were also a source of much tension. The feeling of necessity entailed a lot of balancing between not seeming too eager for attention while still utilising visual tropes that followers could recognise. This often referred to remaining 'authentically' oneself, whilst still curating a stylistically cohesive and visually pleasing feed.

Many also had to anticipate how the algorithms would treat their content, since online visibility directly correlated with their sales. In Finland specifically, my interlocutors felt like they were constantly being assessed by their increasingly critical audiences regarding how to be a 'perfectly' sustainable brand—sometimes fearing the dreaded 'cancel culture'.

My Ghanaian interlocutors were clearly more optimistic about the possibilities that social media provided since the platforms offered a space for a supportive, global community that rooted for claims of African authenticity, enhanced by new forms of digital activism that championed their brands, and gained them followers from all over the world.

In conclusion, my research draws attention to some fundamental paradoxes of our time: how ideological and politicised topics are shaped by scientific categorisations on the one hand, and highly subjective narratives on the other. In addition, my research touches upon how the participation and engagement of individuals and scenes give meaning to these paradoxes, ranging from the production and consumption of material goods to the contradictive, market-driven undertones of social media platforms.

In a world where seemingly everything, and anything, can basically be labelled as sustainable, and where everything seems to be somewhat connected through the unparalleled influence of social media, my interlocutors wanted to bring forth qualities of goodness and fairness, whilst simultaneously competing with other designers to increase their audience and sales.

As I have hopefully shown in this lectio, navigating these worlds—the physical, the material, and the digital—was not always a straightforward matter. Marilyn Strathern (2004) explains the organisation and formation of meaning in the contemporary world through the notion of fractals. Whilst a challenging concept, fractals are perhaps best explained by using the imagery of a single snowflake, formed within the clouds, which can themselves be studied as an entity in their own right. Multiple

snowflakes then fall from these clouds, and create similar looking patterns, layered on the ground.

It is only when we zoom in that we can see that each individual snowflake consists of a unique and intricate pattern. With this in mind, although the fashion designers in both Ghana and Finland seemed to engage with a singular version of 'sustainability', zooming into the specific local and individual levels revealed a multiplicity of perceptions and definitions, some used concurrently, catering to customers and digital audiences which had their own perceptions of what true sustainability looked like. Indeed, often, when I talk about this dissertation, people share their frustrations, questioning why being sustainable or why dressing sustainably is so difficult. Many people seem stressed about the climate crisis and try to find meaning and community through social media, and the endless 'threads about threads'.

To make matters more complex, large fashion companies are often accused of using misleading terminology, or greenwashing, rather than prioritising transparent steps to reduce the environmental impact of the fashion and textile industries—the second largest polluters in the world. But, beyond individual preferences for 'good clothes', sustainability as a movement requires consensus and cooperation, to include acknowledgement and action from big transnational entities and to create changes within systems and regulatory bodies. When strengthened through pressure from consumers, and the power of social and political movements to amplify voices through digitisation, it is possible to imagine new directions from policymakers and the fashion industry working together.

In exploring the vague and varied definitions of sustainability, my dissertation has shed new light on the multiple ways we—as consumers and political actors—can make more informed decisions, and how we can find communities of like-minded individuals, even on the other side of the planet.

Honoured Opponent, I now call upon you to present your critical comments on my dissertation.

NOTES

1 The Main Building of the University of Helsinki.

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LECTIO PRÆCURSORIA

Conflicts over Duldung *and Deportation: West African Perspectives on German Immigration Enforcement and European Borders*

14 September 2024

Madam Custos, Madam Opponent, dear guests, I welcome you all to this defence.

In October 2023, just after Israel launched its genocidal campaign against Gaza as a response to the 7 October attack by Hamas, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz emphasised Israel's right to self-defence in an interview with *Der Spiegel*. He framed Arabs and Muslims in Germany as a threat and called for limiting 'irregular migration' and increasing deportations, claiming this was necessary to preserve Germany's social welfare system (Hickmann and Kurbjuwelt 2023). In January, investigative journalists revealed that the far-right party Alternative for Germany (AfD) and other groups planned to 'remigrate' millions of foreign nationals and non-white Germans to North Africa (Correctiv 2024). Two weeks ago, the AfD won one-third of the votes in two German Länder, campaigning on this 'remigration' agenda. Their victory was fuelled by growing public debate that increasingly linked migration with violence, terrorism, and anti-Semitism. This debate has also unfolded at the European level. In May, the European Union adopted reforms to move asylum procedures to closed detention and deportation facilities at Europe's external borders. These political shifts have coincided with a rise in racist street violence across Europe.

This is not the first time in European or German history that eliminating those labelled as 'others' has been presented as a solution to social and global problems. Deportation has deep roots in colonialism, imperialism, and fascism. Political scientist Antje Ellermann (2009) notes that, since the 1970s, West German deportation practices have focused on the asylum system. William Walters (2002), another prominent deportation scholar, observes that past practices of state violence continue to shape contemporary immigration law enforcement. Sociologist Avery Gordon (2008b) famously analyses how past and present forms of violence—such as enslavement, genocide, inequality, and dispossession—create hauntings or 'ghosts'. West African diaspora activists in Germany highlight how the asylum system, acting as a deportation regime, reintroduces violence from both the past and distant places to haunt the present.

My dissertation pursues two main lines of inquiry. First, it provides an ethnographic investigation into conflicts within the German immigration enforcement regime after 2015, focusing on the struggles of West Africans threatened with deportation. Second, it engages with critiques by West African diaspora activists on deportation and European borders. While West African migration might appear marginal in Germany—the largest EU member

state, with the world's second-largest foreign-born population—I argue that these struggles and critiques offer crucial insights into how deportation has functioned as state violence within the German asylum system since 2015. I challenge humanitarian readings of asylum by analysing the German asylum system as a contested regime inflicting both physical coercion and organised abandonment. As prison abolitionist Ruth Gilmore (2022) argues, these are two key aspects of contemporary state violence closely linked with racism. I also demonstrate how the struggles and critiques of the West African diaspora contest this violence.

Scholarship on postcolonial migration, including in anthropology, often focuses on marginalised and precarious migrant experiences, casting people as victims, villains, survival artists, or tricksters. As Julie Kleinman (2019) and Kien Ngi Ha (2003) have noted, this perspective tends to reproduce the racialising gaze of colonial anthropology on 'others' at Europe's margins. I ask what the gaze from these presumed margins reveals about the European nation-state and immigration law. Drawing also on the work of critical border scholars like Bridget Anderson (2013), Nandita Sharma (2006, 2020), Radhika Mongia (2018), Étienne Balibar (1991, 2004; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991), and Nina Glick-Schiller (2020; Glick-Schiller and Wimmer 2002), I question both the nation-state's view of migration as an object of governance and the very concept of 'migration' itself.

What I refer to as West African perspectives on deportation and borders encompasses knowledge related to postcolonial migration practices and their politicisation by diaspora activists. This analysis of situated knowledge on immigration enforcement and state violence in Germany is a key contribution of my dissertation. My interest in how black

activists have theorised the postcolonial and racial foundations of European borders, alongside my interest in the contested practice of immigration law, emerged during my involvement in migrant solidarity work with the Free Movement Network in Helsinki.

The slogan 'We are here because you are destroying our countries', coined in the late 1990s by The VOICE Refugee Forum and The Caravan for the Rights of Refugees and Migrants, two self-organised networks, have guided my research since 2015. During that summer, Germany experienced a so-called welcome culture. Progressive forces, from politicians to corporations to critical scholars, rallied around the slogan 'Refugees welcome'. Yet, few questioned the ongoing deportations or why people labelled as 'refugees' were coming. I first met the Stuttgart-based Nigerian activist Rex Osa in early 2015 at a transnational activist gathering in Berlin. He highlighted that paternalism—that is, conditional protection—and criminalisation are two sides of a longstanding 'culture of deportation'. Beyond deportation, diaspora activists like Osa critique the postcolonial division of the world into nation-states, recently analysed as global apartheid by Nandita Sharma (2020). These activists emphasise that borders are tied to dispossession—the theft of land, labour, resources, and knowledge, particularly affecting the Global South and the former East.

Osaren Igbinoba and Sunny Omwenyeke describe it as a 'colonial injustice' when those whose lands and resources were taken are now barred from crossing borders or are forced to leave (voice 2009; Feizi 2013). The West African region exemplifies this dynamic: severely impacted by the transatlantic slave trade and European colonialism, it is now framed by the EU border regime as a source of so-called illegal migrants. Contemporary European

borders expose West Africans to s state-sanctioned vulnerability to premature death, to quote Ruth Gilmore's (2022) definition of racism. Building on this historical awareness, diaspora activists have critiqued the concept of national sovereignty—particularly, European national sovereignty—as a phantom-like possession of territory by a 'people' imagined as ethnically homogeneous, culturally superior, and detached from non-European 'others' and 'elsewheres'. My dissertation engages with these decolonial, anticolonial, and abolitionist critiques, connecting them with scholarly critiques of borders, race, and postcoloniality. I treat everyday, activist, and scholarly knowledge equally, valuing the authority, respectability, and right to theorise—drawing on Avery Gordon's (2008c) methodology for studying state violence.

It is against this backdrop that I interrogate how German immigration enforcement operates in practice.

Considering the size of its deportation regime, German immigration enforcement remains little researched. I set out to investigate how the peculiar instrument of migration control, known as *Duldung*, operates. *Duldung* is often perceived as a puzzling legal limbo. By law, it means the temporary suspension of deportation due to obstacles, such as missing identity documents. Without a passport, the immigration authority cannot, in most cases, enforce the deportation and must instead issue a *Duldung*. *Duldung* is not a residence permit; the deportation order remains in effect and can be enforced as soon as the obstacle is resolved. Successive renewals of the *Duldung* in short increments often lead to years of illegalised residence under deportability, to use Nicholas De Genova's (2002) term.

From 2015 onwards, as German authorities sought to manage a perceived 'refugee crisis', the number of people holding a *Duldung* quickly surged to more than 200 000 on any given day. Public debates framed *Duldung* as an 'enforcement gap', a form of humanitarian protection, or a reserve workforce in a tight labour market. I wanted to understand how people holding this document experienced and influenced *Duldung* as an institution. From 2012 to 2014, there was intense protest in Germany against asylum camps and deportations led by people with a *Duldung*. My dissertation examines what happened after this protest cycle, during a humanitarian and repressive backlash since 2015. I ask: How did those ordered to leave Germany navigate, contest, influence, and reframe deportation and *Duldung* after 2015? How did the authorities respond? What do these struggles against deportation and the knowledge they generated reveal about German immigration law, its enforcement, and European borders?

I draw on ethnographic fieldwork and activism conducted between 2015 and 2022 with West Africans holding a *Duldung*, as well as with activists and lawyers. Most of the fieldwork was carried out in southern Germany—Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg—between late 2017 and early 2020; some was conducted in Berlin and in other European and West African countries. My fieldwork revealed that behind the most common reason for issuing *Duldung* after 2015—'missing identity documents'—was an intense conflict over identification and enforcement between individuals holding a *Duldung* and immigration authorities. I followed this and other conflicts over deportation over time and across different sites within the German asylum-deportation regime. I analysed everyday practices, such as concealing one's documents to avoid deportation, using Asef Bayat's (2010) concept of 'quiet encroachment'. This refers to discreet efforts by dispossessed groups and individuals to access

vital resources restricted by wealthy groups and states. I also studied direct actions and protests, and how all these struggles produced situated knowledge, political subjectivity, and abolitionist visions. Additionally, I analysed how authorities responded through repression, co-optation, or moral counter-campaigns. My scholar-activist approach aimed to contribute to the knowledge economies and organising efforts of individuals, collectives, and the activist community.

I collaborated with many activist groups. The most important of which was Culture of Deportation, which I co-founded with Rex Osa and Claudio Feliziani in 2015. We began by documenting the case of Yusupha Jarboh, alias Joseph Doe (Culture of Deportation 2017). Jarboh was a Gambian man who resisted deportation for 19 years by concealing his passport and adopting a second identity. Therefore, he was issued a *Duldung*. He was eventually deported to Nigeria in 2013 after being mistakenly identified as Nigerian in a so-called embassy hearing. These hearings are organised by German immigration authorities, who invite African and Asian officials to identify their presumed nationals. Later, embassies may issue emergency travel certificates for a one-time trip to the country of origin to enable the deportation. West African organisers such as Osa have protested this practice for decades, criticising its coercive nature and the racialising idea of 'identification', which resembles colonial anthropology. Like many people I interviewed during my fieldwork, Yusupha Jarboh had lived in Germany under the constant threat of deportation, a work prohibition, and frequent policing. He had to reside in a strictly controlled camp, with his movements restricted to his municipality, and he received healthcare only for emergencies.

During my fieldwork, I spoke with around 80 individuals in a similar situation after 2015 and with larger groups organising protests. In the dissertation's ethnographic chapters, I trace the conflicts over enforcement by focusing on specific institutions in the deportation regime: the *Duldung* document, the embassy hearings or Euro-African deportation cooperation, and the semi-open camps.

After 2015, as the German economy boomed, many rejected asylum seekers temporarily gained labour market access. **Chapter 5** examines how these individuals, often obliged to seek asylum to stay in Germany, avoided deportation by concealing their identity documents. By hiding their passports, they used *Duldung* to access rights and resources while authorities tried to enforce the deportation. Drawing on anthropologists like Madeleine Reeves (2013), Sarah Horton (2015), Saana Hansen (2023), and Apostolos Andrikopoulos (2023), and border scholars like Stephan Scheel (2019), I analyse documents as tools in disputes over resources. I show how the state used 'identity craft' to enact deportation and exclusion and how people labelled as unauthorised migrants navigated this to access paid work despite significant risks. I focus on the attitude required to defy state violence and resist its moral and affective force while pursuing a better life. I find Avery Gordon's (2018a, v) notion of 'in-difference'—written with a hyphen—suitable to describe this attitude. By in-difference, she means 'a standpoint and a mindset for living on better terms than what we're offered' (v). Following Gordon, I suggest understanding this as an abolitionist standpoint or attitude to enable more equitable care. However, the state's response to these struggles included highly selective granting of residence permits framed as merit-based integration and increased criminalisation and deportation, together producing ultra-precarious racialised labour.

In Chapter 6, I explore how protests by the diaspora in Germany and supporting actions in West Africa challenged the involvement of West African embassies and governments in German deportations. These protests, alongside the covert practice of concealing documents, effectively halted most deportations to West Africa. Protesters questioned the European idea of deportation as a 'return' to one's presumed place and a matter of national sovereignty protected by international law. They exposed the colonial origins of Euro-African borders as the 'Borders of Berlin' drawn during the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference. They urged West African authorities to end 'colonial collaboration' in deportations, criticised Europe's colonial debt to Africa, and reframed postcolonial migration as redress or decolonisation. This perspective implicitly legitimised the concealment of identity documents as a means to reclaim vital resources. Drawing on Third World Approaches to International Law, including Tendayi Achiume (2019), Balakrishnan Rajagopal (2003), and Siba Grovogui (1996, 2002), I argue that these demands and practices represent a perspective on 'international law from below' that challenges Euro-African power imbalances and the colonial nature of the nation-state system.

In **Chapter 7**, I explore the repressive state responses following the obstruction of deportations and conflicts in large, semi-open asylum camps in southern Germany. In these facilities, West Africans—who were primarily men—and others without a so-called prospect of staying faced police raids, Dublin deportations to other European countries, violence from private guards, racial profiling by the police, and criminalisation. I conceptualise the camp as a site of political policing and abolitionist struggles, examining everyday resistance, spontaneous solidarity, and organised protests. I engage with activist critiques of the camp, which have highlighted continuities in colonial and racial control. I discuss how camp residents' practices challenged the camp's role as a deportation and confinement site. From community organisers like David Jassey and others in the Gambian Integration Committee in the Donauwörth Reception Centre in Bavaria, I learned how the policing of the camps often functioned as counterinsurgency, aiming to intimidate residents and discredit them in public by reinforcing negative stereotypes of black men as violent and aggressive. These dynamics contributed to the normalisation of deportation, other policing and criminalisation after 2015, with the circulation of fear and moral panic playing a crucial role in this process.

Critical border scholars and anthropologists like Shahram Khosravi (2010) and Manuela Bojadžijev (2012) propose reversing the nation-state gaze on migration, seen as a problem or deviance, suggesting a 'perspective of migration' to critically examine the nation-state and its racism. My dissertation builds on this. Engaging with how West African diaspora activists have politicised everyday practices of migration, I propose an abolitionist perspective to examine conflicts over the nation-state order and nationalised citizenship: We need to see the struggles of postcolonial migration not just as struggles for mobility or access to territory. Rather, they are situated within broader struggles over life-sustaining resources, for social and global equality, and for ending systems of state violence, including immigration enforcement and imperialist dispossession.

In early 2018, 350 Gambians organised in the Donauwörth Reception Centre, refusing to accept deportability. After their petitions to the management were not heard, they went on strike, stopping all maintenance work they performed in the camp. One day, they took the collective

decision to leave the camp, and to head to Italy, the destination written on their deportation orders. A massive police operation blocked their way. Finally, they were persuaded to return to the camp. Notable is the determination they developed together. Just like people in a similar camp in Bavarian Bamberg, they acted on the conviction that access to rights, resources, and services can be organised in an egalitarian way without the reliance on policing, deportation, confinement, and criminalisation. While people exposed to brutal forms of state violence do not have the responsibility, nor mostly, the capacity to change the status quo, I argue that their approaches provide pertinent answers to questions arising from organising against deportation and borders: How can we imagine our societies beyond deportation and borders? And how can we take practical steps towards abolition?

Today, such questions and answers are often dismissed as merely utopian. Yet, I argue that the present escalation of racial violence across Europe and beyond emphasises their urgency and necessity. Additionally, the recent popular rebellion by young people across West Africa against austerity measures, loan conditions, Western imperialism, and resource extraction speaks to this necessity.

Madam Opponent, I now call upon you to present your critical comments on my dissertation.

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Final Thesis can be found at:
Korvensyrjä, Aino 2024. *Conflicts over Duldung and Deportation: West African Perspectives on German Immigration Enforcement.* PhD thesis. Helsinki: University of Helsinki. http://hdl.handle.net/10138/585060.

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Pirjo Rautiainen

LECTIO PRÆCURSORIA

Applying anthropological knowledge to the business field:
Three ethnographic studies in a commercial context

27.11.2023
University of Jyväskylä

I had been on the phone with an insurance company the morning I began to write this lectio. Following that call, I received a survey via text message: 'Give us feedback by answering three short questions.'

I also received messages via email. I had ordered our child's school photos the previous week. The image service company wrote: 'Your feedback is important to us. Please let us know how we did. Answering the survey takes a few minutes.'

I found other messages in my email inbox. I attend dance classes at a community college. The school approached me: 'Your opinion about the school's operations is valuable to us. With the help of feedback, we know which things work well and which things need to be improved. In order to improve the quality of the service, we would like your opinion on our success.'

I had finished an audiobook during my morning activities and immediately received a prompt from the audiobook app: 'Leave a review for the book to receive suitable book tips.'

And, then there was the icing on the cake: I had registered as a customer in a cafe chain, and then received a flirtatious email message: 'Testers needed. Are you a tester for the new muesli flavour?'

At this point, I was only halfway through the day. In the evening, even more inquiries poured in. I answered some of the surveys; I skipped others.

We are studied enormously as customers, consumers, employees, and members of organisations. The message of the survey messages is usually that the feedback helps to develop products, services, or company operations. Where do all the answers we give go? Do they serve as research data somewhere? Do we know how that research is conducted or how the research is used?

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In the 1980s, a strong subfield within applied anthropology began to develop both inside and outside the academic world. Commercial anthropology first gained strength in the United States. It established itself internationally as well as in Finland over the last couple of decades. Briefly defined, commercial anthropology is research that uses the methods, concepts, and theories of anthropology to solve business problems or to promote commercial goals. Three subfields can be distinguished: industrial and organisational anthropology, design anthropology, and consumer and marketing research.

Industrial and organisational anthropology examines organisations and management, with research approached from two perspectives.

The researcher can look at organisations from the inside, like the small societies that anthropologists have always studied. For example, companies, organisations, and institutions have their own distinct internal culture which consists of values, beliefs, convictions, stories, and rituals. The researcher can also approach organisations from the outside, because they influence the world around them. Both companies and other organised groups influence the environment in which they operate.

For decades, the sale of consumer products was based on the idea that the customer is a target for whom the company offers products and services. Driven by globalisation and increased competition, companies began to pay attention to a consumer- and user-oriented perspective. This changed the way new products and services were developed and introduced to the market. An anthropological field developed around product design, which was based on knowledge of customers' needs, wishes, and behaviour. Design anthropology is a trend that, in addition to user-centredness, offers ways to understand the context of the use of the products and services being developed.

Anthropological research on consumer behaviour examines consumption through the production and expression of cultural meanings. Anthropologists specialising in marketing study how cultural meanings and ideas are created and how they are communicated. The concept of the consumer tribe has also strongly influenced customer research. Consumer tribes have an object of consumption that expresses their own identity, and a community that has formed around this object.

During the last fifteen years, big data has opened up many new possibilities for research. People store, publish, and share material online. This consists of data that can be analysed from marketing and consumption perspectives.

Anthropologists, therefore, can become a key player involved in researching and developing products, services, and organisations. In my dissertation, I researched three projects funded and ordered by companies in which I have been involved. The main goal of the first project was a basic study of the mobile communication culture. The project was carried out at the University of Tampere and examined the emergence of a new communication culture at the turn of the millennium. The project lasted eight years in total.

Second, I discuss a concept development project. The goal of this project was to create a service related to property maintenance. My task was to examine whether there would be demand and potential customers for a new type of service. The purpose of the third project was to create a system based on algorithms that could identify consumer tribes on the web. The goal of the algorithm project was to improve the company's customer understanding.

My data consist of my fieldnotes taken during these three projects. The projects are also contextualised by everything I have experienced, read, and written in business research.

I examine how the goals of the example projects were defined, how methods and materials were chosen and used, how the research subjects were chosen, and how the results were reported and how they were presented. I aim to retrospectively understand the research process in commercial anthropology.

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Towards the end of my dissertation research, I began to consider the openness of research conducted for companies. Business research usually involves confidential matters. I had also signed confidentiality agreements during the projects. However, the researcher has the opportunity to address the methods, concepts,

and theories, discuss them, and evaluate their functionality.

I also think that customers, consumers—all of us—have the right to know how products, services, and organisations are researched and developed. The goal of open science is to open up research results, materials, and methods. Another principle of openness is that the public has the opportunity to be involved. In public sector planning processes, office holders have a legal obligation to search for and find people who are affected by services. However, companies do not have such an obligation. They can choose their operational goals and thus also their research goals.

I believe the central challenge to the openness and quality of commercial anthropology projects is that the research reports produced in these projects lack any external peer review. The report is written, commented on, and evaluated by the same people: the group working on the report and the representatives of the client company. Only once the product or service is on the market or the organisational change has been made do we see what users and customers think of it. Development projects usually do not end when the products and services are on the market or an organisational change is made, but are followed by a post-assessment with various metrics. It may sound cynical, but many times I have thought that the peer review of a commercial research project is done by a cash register. The success of a research report is measured by sales. However, I am more of an idealist than a cynic. Thus, I think that the goal should always be scientifically valid research. The ethical goal should be to develop products and services needed by people and more functional organisations.

Despite the problems in business research, there has always been much good in them: close multidisciplinary cooperation, rich data, and the joy of the usefulness of developed services and satisfied customers.

Today, companies increasingly emphasise openness and the transparency of their operations. However, companies do not really open up regarding how the product development process takes place. I believe that people are interested in how the surveys and feedback requests I described at the beginning of this lectio affect product development. I also believe that the ethical principles of companies should describe the process how product development is carried out. Is it based on research or other types of working methods?

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I return to my question concerning whether we know how products and services are designed. In my dissertation, I aim to increase knowledge about their development.

I became convinced during my first commercial project in the late 1990s that anthropology can provide important information for product design. The research focus of a commercial anthropologist lies in the everyday life. For decades, innovation has been a more fashionable goal than everyday research. However, the fundamental question is how products and services intertwine with our everyday lives. Everyday life is interesting, because innovation is only possible by understanding everyday life. Anthropology considers the contextual nature of knowledge; communities and individuals explain their surrounding reality based on their perspectives, at the everyday level.

All of the example projects I presented started with the company's order and the company's needs. After defining the goals, the researcher has great power and responsibility. The researcher modifies the goals, chooses the methods, and analyses the final results.

I consider the researcher's role as a conversational partner as equally important.

Based on my research, funders in the commercial sector define goals and other conditions for research. The researcher's task is to question these demands when necessary. During commercial projects, it is important for the researcher to reflect during each work phase and in each decision-making situation—that is, when defining goals, materials, methods, and methods of reporting. The researcher's power and responsibility are summed up in the fact that research can be part of the raw material of a product or service. Based on the research, the company decides on the solutions related to product development.

A machine or artificial intelligence (AI) interprets ones and zeros. Researchers are conscious, living beings. Researchers ask what, how, and why. The researcher interprets when people say one thing and behave differently. AI will certainly be able to analyse this in the future, but AI cannot yet reflect on itself or its actions, nor can it comprehensively consider ethical perspectives. In order not to be reduced to a mere tick on a questionnaire grid of consumer research, there is a place for anthropological information and ethnographic methods.

Anthropological knowledge consists of empirical observations and theoretical considerations that help explain human cultural diversity and values, social structures, and behaviour. Anthropological knowledge is accumulated through ethnographic methods, such as interviews and observations. Anthropology aims to identify the meanings and values associated with objects, product experiences, organisations, and consumers' lives. After data analysis, the commercial anthropologist interprets the results and translates them into business plans and instructions.

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In the final phase of this dissertation work, I also considered the placement of my work in the field of science. I noticed I was conducting basic research on applied research.

In scientific terms, basic research is defined as a form of scientific research that increases our understanding of the research subject, but does not lead to direct practical applications. Basic research does not have immediate practical goals. I hope that my research opens up how a discipline—in this case, anthropology—can be used as a 'building block' in a business project. I also aim to address the question of why it is important to conduct anthropological or other applied cultural research in companies. Through this, the work also gains elements of applicability.

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When I see a TV ad, pick up a new product in the store, or when a customer service person approaches me with a specific phrase in a store, I think about how this came to be. What kind of development process has the advertising campaign, product, or service situation undergone? Has an anthropologist been involved in this? Should an anthropologist have been involved in this?

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BOOK REVIEWS

Francesca Meloni completed a remarkable five-year ethnographic study among undocumented[1] children and their families as well as with community organisations and school boards in Canada. She started her fieldwork as part of a research team concentrating on the health issues of undocumented families, but during her fieldwork she noticed that participating mothers were more concerned and wanted to talk about their children's education—or, in this case, the lack of it. Although undocumented families live in the high-risk position of deportability, they still try to figure out ways their children can obtain an education and have a future in Canada. Recognising this pushed Meloni's research focus to children, schools, and a feeling of belonging. Thus, *Ways of Belonging* is a tribute to the children who participated in Meloni's research.

The main argument of the book is that the situation of these children as well as the state's attitude towards them are ambivalent. When trying to understand the lived realities of undocumented children, we must follow the unfolding dynamics of this ambivalence, both at the individual and institutional level. At the individual level, this ambivalence means that children develop an ambivalent sense of belonging to cope with a situation where the risk of deportation, which involves the risk of breaking affective ties, is always present. As Meloni (p. 11) states, 'they are caught between the desire to belong and the impossibility to fully belong'. At the institutional level, the ambivalence comes from the two intersecting positions of these children: their age, which makes them vulnerable and in need of protection, and their undocumented status, which makes them underserving and rejected.

Meloni introduces the concept of *structural invisibility*, the erasure of individuals at the social, legal, and political levels through norms and practices. This conceptualisation of structural invisibility is one of the contributions of this book; it can be utilised in the research on global migration which focuses on the everyday lives and experiences of migrants with insecure residence statuses. The everyday practices and norms carried out in institutional settings are neither inevitable nor accidental—the invisibility of certain marginalised groups stemming from these norms and practices is the outcome of a deliberate state strategy.

After the introductory chapter (pp. 1–17), where Meloni sets the scene by briefly presenting the situation in Canada and outlines the theoretical and methodological approaches, she moves to the empirical chapters. Chapters 1 and 3 examine the macro level, showing how state actors are involved in constructing the illegality and invisibility of these undocumented children. Chapters 4–6 zoom in on the micro level, focusing on the effects of the illegality and invisibility on the lived experiences of individual children.

In chapter 1, *Removable Children* (pp. 18–34), Meloni brings to the forefront four juridical cases involving family deportation. By

analysing the discourses used in these cases, Meloni shows how children are constructed as deportable non-citizens. The ambivalence between 'the best interest of the child' and deportability is well demonstrated.

Chapter 2, *Hidden Traces* (pp. 35–41), is more of an ethical and methodological chapter in which Meloni reflects the choices she made when deciding to do research with this marginalised group of children. The main questions are: Is it ethical to document the undocumented, and how can the researcher protect participants from the state apparatuses' gaze? Finding individuals willing and able to participate and gaining acceptance as a trustworthy person to enter the ethnographic field are always challenging. Meloni openly discusses various aspects of her involvement, including gaining trust and assuming different roles in the field.

In the third chapter, *Failing To Be Called* (pp. 42–60), Meloni explores the laws surrounding the school system. In some regions like Quebec, these laws are failing undocumented children. The law states that education is the right of a child, that it is obligatory to children under 18 years of age, and free to residents, including migrants such as asylum seekers. The failure of the law stems from its inability to recognise undocumented children as a specific group of residents and as children in need of education—the law does not mention them at all. Schools, which are important social environments for children, and places that could safeguard their futures via education (see, for example, Horsti and Khademi 2022), are also places with a high risk of denunciations. Meloni explores the ways teachers and school boards react in situations where there are pupils with an unstable residence status. This chapter also brings to the fore the voices of mothers, community organisers, and state agents.

Chapter 4, *Getting Used to Here* (pp. 61–79), is dedicated to the children and their ambivalent feelings of belonging. Analysing the stories of and interviews with Roberto, Julia, and Alicia, Meloni concludes that this ambivalence is a survival strategy, making it possible for the children to both connect to their social environment and simultaneously protect themselves in case of a possible rejection or deportation.

Double Binds (chapter 5, pp. 80–95) tells the story of Elizabeth and introduces some of her photographs. Through Elizabeth's story, the effects of the ambivalence of these children, as both minors and undocumented migrants, become inevitable. Elizabeth's asylum claim is seen as not coherent enough. Thus, she is evaluated as a person who should be capable of producing a coherent life story in a harsh situation. At the same time, the credibility of her story is questioned; the immigration officer finds it hard to believe that a child could have crossed state borders and survived the dangerous route alone. The traumatising burden of both a history of family violence and the presence of bureaucratic violence unravels in the photographs Elizabeth has taken. Meloni analyses the photographs, Elizabeth's dreams, and Ursula Le Guin's story *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas* in a novel way, portraying both the vulnerability and the agency of an undocumented child.

In the final empirical chapter, *Hopes and Departures* (chapter 6, pp. 96–108), Meloni turns to the stories of Elizabeth, Luis, and Roberto. The detailed narrative style is the soul of this chapter, and the children, with their somewhat familiar ponderings, come close to the reader.

In the concluding chapter (pp. 109–119), Meloni brings the reader closer to the present moment by introducing some legislation enacted after her fieldwork period ended. She also

returns to some of the children, describing their new situations. She then turns to highlighting the gaps in the laws, recommending new legislation that could secure the lives of undocumented children. In the final section, she reflects on the theoretical construction she offers through the concept of *belonging*.

One main contribution of this book is the nuanced exploration of both the concept of belonging and the picture of migrant children. In both cases, Meloni moves from dichotomies (belonging–not belonging, victimhood–resistance) to more diverse understandings. This is enabled by the rich ethnographic data she gathered and her empathetic way of writing about the children she met. Another contribution is the focus on children, their experiences, and their agency. That chosen focus and approach both enrich the literature on undocumented lives (see Gonzales 2015) and the active negotiations of belonging (see Korjonen-Kuusipuro, Kuusisto, and Tuominen 2019).

A more detailed description of the differing legislative systems in Canada's regions could have helped the non-Canadian reader of this book to grasp the overall situation, and the meanings of the laws and practices introduced. From time to time, it was challenging to follow an argument given the ambiguity of whether the case in question pertained to national or regional legislation. On the other hand, the rich empirical data and the thoughtful style of writing about these children, their dreams, and their struggles all compensate for the above-mentioned gap and made for a captivating reading experience.

Meloni used interview data as the primary resource for this book, and this choice works well with her argumentation by giving a direct and intimate perspective on the children's experiences. But, from an anthropological standpoint, this leaves a gap in relation to the sounds, smells and, feelings experienced in the field. The ambition for future research could involve crafting a 'thick description', which captures the nuanced everyday realities of these children, thereby offering a more holistic understanding of their lived experiences.

I highly recommend this book to all interested in the lived experiences of migrant children—whether documented or not. The unfolding of the institutional and individual level ambivalence is presented in a touching way, allowing the reader to relate to the struggles of these children and their families.

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NOTES

1   The concept of 'undocumented' is problematic, and I use it here only because the author also uses it.

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Damon Salesa's *An Indigenous Ocean* is a collection of 15 essays on Oceanic history and society, with a particular emphasis on New Zealand and Sāmoa. In disciplinary terms, the book falls somewhere in between Pacific studies and history rather than anthropology. But, as the author also notes, Pacific history is a sub-field where the disciplinary boundaries between history and anthropology have always been porous.

The book covers a broad range of topics, from ancient ocean voyaging or established viewpoints in Pacific history-writing to New Zealand's Pacific imperialism and discourses on race in the Pacific. Most of the essays re-narrate history from an Oceanic point of view. Salesa's aim is to write historical accounts centring on Oceania and, in so doing, to replace older, outside-looking-in accounts of events impacting the region; 'to reconstitute relations with the past', as he phrases it in an essay discussing the work of historian and author Albert Wendt (p. 324).

In order to depict the Oceanic point of view, Salesa tries to define that viewpoint. He wants to distance himself from bigger political totalities like 'the Asia-Pacific' or the 'Pacific Rim', but also the smaller constituent units of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia. He does this by specifically highlighting one socio-cultural feature from Oceania: interisland mobility, especially as exhibited by the region's maritime accomplishments. Salesa writes consciously in the wake of Epeli Hau'ofa's 'Our Sea of Islands' (1993) to argue that the Pacific Ocean has always connected rather than divided Oceania's various sea-going peoples.

Salesa's Oceania exhibits a marked preference for ocean voyaging and, in more recent times, various other sorts of mobility. The book opens with accounts of Oceanic peoples' past accomplishments in navigation and ship building to reveal the unique maritime history boasted by the region. At the same time, the author emphasises the importance of the region by repeatedly defining it as an area that comprises one-third of the world's surface and one-quarter of the world's languages unified by ancient mobilities. Later, Salesa shows us how Oceanic seafaring was transformed into work on cargo vessels and into routes and connections established by outside forces, until 'our sea of islands' gradually becomes a 'sea of connections, as geography, waters, and reefs gave way to journeys in the air' (p. 173). It is at airports like Auckland or Faleolo, Salesa argues, that 'we can still experience Indigenous mobilities', describing the 'sea' of airports and connections as 'a cultured ocean of stories and history' (p. 176). Judging by Salesa's account, this appears to be a fitting description with respect to people travelling between Sāmoa and New Zealand, but begs the question: What about those peoples of Oceania who neither sail nor frequently travel overseas? It is one thing to seek a common Oceanic viewpoint in a shared migration history, but to define the region in terms of present-day international mobility sounds a lot like privileging a privileged viewpoint.

Yet, Salesa accomplishes his mission in providing a Pacific history that refuses to discuss Oceanic people as merely acted upon—that is, as passive recipients of history. Salesa writes about a history made in the Pacific, even when he finds that history distasteful, such as in his analyses of the imperial–colonial aspirations of New Zealand. But he does not write about 'agency'—for Salesa (p. 60), the term implies a tendency to 'bring individuals and particular events into focus', while being 'less useful for capturing larger scales, structures, or comparisons' such as the Oceanic point of view he seeks to establish. For Salesa, agency 'severs rather than joins' histories (p. 60).

As an anthropologist reading work from a neighbouring field, I found Salesa's distaste for particularity thought-provokingly interesting. He deploys a familiar tool from the anthropological toolkit—comparison—but he uses it to find commonalities: to generalise from the particulars rather than to particularise through contrast. For me, this often results in a style of essay writing which, although well-written and thoroughly researched, zooms out from the most interesting questions.

Take, for example, the deliciously set-up comparison between Sāmoan and New Zealand legislations and discourses concerning the colonial category of 'half-caste' people: 'Sāmoa, a tropical country, raised completely different medical and health questions from New Zealand, which was temperate. Regarding Sāmoa, and the tropics more generally, it was occasionally suggested that native blood might fortify European blood, and allow Europeans to survive in the tropics. (…) In New Zealand it was not Europeans who were considered endangered, but, of course, Māori' (p. 217). In the end, however, the conclusion Salesa draws from this material is somewhat underwhelming, namely that 'the category of half-caste was

constantly in motion' and that half-castes 'forced the boundary [of race] to be actively and visibly policed' (pp. 219–220). For me, this reads something like a 'mid-range' generalisation, wherein the author seeks to find Oceania-wide commonalities from two highly disparate cases. I cannot but wonder whether the contrasting roles of the 'half-caste' category might have been better deployed to open up new questions about race, law, colonialism, or numerous other topics, instead of trying to make these cases answer an insipid question.

To be fair, however, this is not a theory-driven book, nor does it claim to be. Salesa's essays are an attempt to narratively draw up an encompassing view of Oceania, and, for this purpose, the theoretical threads developed in the individual essays are often just means to an end. They provide the 'plot', but one gets the sense that it is the socio-cultural and historical depictions that really motivate Salesa. The essays are calm, carefully weighted accounts, where each paragraph provides a further set of evidence. Salesa writes in a level tone and presents his subject matter in a clear, readable form.

The range of subject matter is broad, and so the book rarely goes very deep in its analysis. I could use chapters from Salesa's book as assigned reading in an introductory area studies or perhaps Oceanic ethnography course. Yet, I also assume Salesa has other intended audiences in mind, particularly in Sāmoa and New Zealand. The book sometimes appears to address an academic audience, at others a broader Oceanic readership. I find this slight sense of indecision regarding the book's audience refreshing, because it reminds me of a perspective that, I believe, we all could at the very least keep in mind while writing—that academic texts should not aim at alienating the general reading public, but go the extra mile

in accommodating readers from beyond our narrow fields of expertise. And, also, vice versa, that these wider audiences do not need to be protected from distinctly academic frames when our questions are embedded in or arise out of such framings.

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Matti Eräsaari's monograph is a well-observed account of how people think about time in Fiji and Finland. As he observes in the book's introduction, 'clock time' (in E. P. Thompson's sense) is a highly mobile cultural form. Most societies are familiar with the kind of precise time-reckoning that industrial capitalism both offers and demands, but not all societies evaluate it the same way. Indeed, Eräsaari observes, Fiji and Finland might seem to be polar opposites in this regard, with Fiji the home of stereotypically relaxed islanders and Finland a node in temporally disciplined northern European industry; yet both Fijians and Finns 'conceptualise time as a resource, a thing that exists regardless of our actions, and whose passing is loaded with moral significance' (p. 5). Unpacking these concepts is the purpose of this book.

The first part of the book addresses 'Fiji Time', a phrase with several meanings. As Eräsaari notes, the English-language phrase 'Fiji Time' is heard often in Fijian discourse, inflected both with the tourist industry's insistence on relaxation (toss aside your watch, you're on Fiji time now!) and the deeper colonial and Christian characterisation of indigenous Fiji as a not-yet-modern place. Eräsaari reports that although some indigenous Fijians do see villages as places of time-wasting—sites away from industrial and bureaucratic discipline, full of lengthy ceremonies and kava-drinking

sessions—some insist that the deliberate pace of village life is a virtuous rhythm of tradition and nobility. Eräsaari's fieldwork locus of Naloto village in the chiefdom and province of Verata is an apt site for a study of concepts of time, because Verata is honoured as the oldest paramount chiefly site in Fiji; 'while the Verata paramount is today outranked by numerous other paramount chiefs, Verata's claim to seniority persists' (p. 56). Seniority, dignity, slowness, and quietness go together in the most prominent model of indigenous Fijian authority.

In Verata, there is a specific way to 'waste time'—this term being used earnestly by critics and tongue-in-cheek by others. *Solosolo vakaVerata* connotes moving slowly, fiddling around and doing useless things. But it can also mean taking time to prepare and taking care to act with dignity and respect. Among Eräsaari's examples of competing evaluations of time and morality, kava-drinking sessions deserve special mention. From an arch-traditionalist perspective, drinking kava is legitimate work as it reflects and honours the social order, and adds gravitas to formal occasions. From a critical and self-consciously modern perspective, kava-drinking is the epitome of time-wasting, as hours spent at sessions means hours not spent working in the gardens or lagoon, raising children, or carrying out the mission of the church. The book offers telling examples of how kava sessions pull people in and join them in

a slow rhythm that for some participants is a disturbing example of undiscipline and for others is a reassuring example that ancestral ways are still remembered and respected. In both cases, and in other examples Eräsaari offers, time in Fiji is treated as a resource, underscoring the book's argument that one need not rely on clocks to worry about clock time.

The second half of the book moves readers almost 15 000 kilometres away from Fiji to Finland, Eräsaari's homeland and a place where 'time-thrift, punctuality, discipline, and the well-travelled notion that "time is money" (*aika on rahaa*)' holds sway (p. 75). The first chapter on Finland addresses a topic which will be well known to many readers: universities' curious systems of measuring, tracking, and reporting on workload hours using software programs which, perversely, call attention to the fact that the hours obligated by one's contract do not match the hours one actually works. Software that allocates academic staff members' working hours, Eräsaari observes, primarily serves the needs of administrators who are tasked with converting normative (and not really accurate) units of work into 'a receipt of sorts' for payment (p. 85).

The second chapter on Finland turns to 'timebanking', a system in which people exchange services without money changing hands. Labour is measured in 'whiles' (in Finnish, *tovi*), which, to make equivalence possible, typically count as an hour of work. An hour of dog-walking is equivalent to an hour helping someone update their computer, for example. Eräsaari notes the strong moral feeling that members of the Helsinki Timebank attach to the exchange system: when a newbie tells a

meeting of timebankers that someone has asked for 'several whiles per hour' to clean his 'extra-dirty' kitchen, he is sternly informed that that is not how the system works (p. 97). An explicit moral challenge to Finnish timebanking came in 2013 when the national Tax Administration declared that if people were exchanging professional services—that is, a gardener was not updating your computer, but tidying your garden—this would be taxed, and, like it or not, members would need to acknowledge the amount of Euros equivalent to whiles exchanged. This official declaration ran contrary to the timebank principle of social equality and the goal of using time rather than money to achieve it, thereby slowing timebanking's momentum as a social movement in Finland.

This book will be of interest to many scholars: those studying Fiji and Finland, obviously, but also those grappling with the big questions of how time and morality are articulated and evaluated. 'Time is not a uniquely great bearer of value because it measures everything indiscriminately,' Eräsaari concludes, 'but because it shows how our ideas of the good underlie the act of measuring and comparing' (p. 116). The book's argument is persuasive and well-written, the observations lively, and the implications far-reaching.

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