

A landscape photograph showing a large, dark blue lake in the background. In the foreground, three small, rustic wooden huts with gabled roofs are situated on a grassy bank. The sky is filled with heavy, grey clouds, suggesting an overcast day. The overall scene is a mix of natural beauty and human habitation.

# LIVING IN THE KOMI LANDSCAPE

*summer school and exhibition*

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LANDSCAPE**

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Edited by Timo Jokela, Mirja Hiltunen, Elina Härkönen & Antti Stöckell  
University of Lapland, Rovaniemi 2018

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Living in the Komi Landscape: Summer School and Exhibition

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Illustrations: Enni Remes

Timo Jokela & Mirja Hiltunen

## Living in the Komi Landscape

The exhibition is produced by the interdisciplinary Living in the Landscape (LiLa) summer school project, Environmental Humanities, Arts and Education for Sustainability in the North. The partners of LiLa, along with the coordinating Faculty of Arts and Design at the University of Lapland, were Syktyvkar State University, the Arctic University of Norway, Uppsala University's Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies and the National Library of the Komi Republic.

During the LiLa project, researchers and masters and doctoral students surveyed and analysed landscapes and people's everyday lives through multidisciplinary methods and theoretical approaches to natural science, anthropology and art. The focus was on the encounters between traditions and modern times: traditional forms of culture and contemporary practices in the North.

The LiLa summer school took place in the Komi villages of Kozlovka, Onezhia and Ovla in late May 2018. The villages we visited and lived in are located on the banks of the River Vym and surrounded by agricultural fields and forests. The traditional log houses in the villages originate from the end of the 19th century. The interiors and objects reflect the style of the beginning of the last century, but also references to the Soviet era and its dissolution were visible.

During the summer school, we enjoyed great hospitality, lovely meals and refreshing banya, walked along the riverbanks and in the forest, and climbed up a church tower to see the landscape, listen to the bells and feel the wind. We visited a community canteen and local families, drank many cups of tea and had marvellous encounters with our host and other locals.

During the short field trip, we understood that only local inhabitants – insiders – can identify all the cultural meanings of the peripheral northern landscape they are living in. Yet the view of researchers and artists – outsiders – is equally valid, because only through reflection can we really examine the landscape's significance as a catalyst for new ideas, its specialness of place, and uniqueness of its extremes.

The insider-outsider dichotomy make sense in other ways too. As researchers and artists, we often view the landscapes through the theories and the methods we learned to use as insiders in our academic fields. Collaboration with other disciplines opens up new, outsider perspectives and methods, and offers a stimulating forum in which to increase our understanding of the essence of northern peripheral landscapes and the places in which we are working.

The exhibition is built and the catalogue designed to combine different perspectives, research results and art-based methods as a whole. The exhibition aims, at the same time, to present our personal and social experiences and growing understanding of the Komi landscapes, but also the

developing multidisciplinary collaboration that took place during the summer school. The aim of the summer school was not only the multidisciplinary study of villages and the life there, but also to develop educational models and methods that could sensitively approach sociocultural situations of the northern and arctic regions in the future.

In the exhibition and the catalogue, the Komi landscape appears in writings, photo essays, drawings, paintings, photographs and videos, as well as serves as a medium for environmental art and installations. For many, it has become more about the "environment" or "social situation" than the traditional presentation of landscape. Instead of creating views, many are trying to get as close as possible to the direct bodily and sensory experience of the place or analyse the landscape's cultural aspects. In these cases, landscape becomes the place where value judgements are social and even ethical, rather than purely aesthetical.

We are pleased to offer visitors to the exhibition in the Komi National Library and the Syktyvkar State University Gallery, as well as the readers of this catalogue, a glimpse into the encounters we had with the Komi landscape.

*We pay our respects to our hosts Dmitry and Irina Alexeev. Special thanks for organising everything and helping in any possible case goes to the Senior Specialist Nadezhda Bazhenova from the International department, Piritim Sorokin Syktyvkar State University. We thank Irina Zemtsova for hosting the summer school in very warm but professional way. We thank the financier SIU Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education. Nordic-Russian Cooperation Programme in Education and Research for enabling the realisation of the LiLa Summer School.*

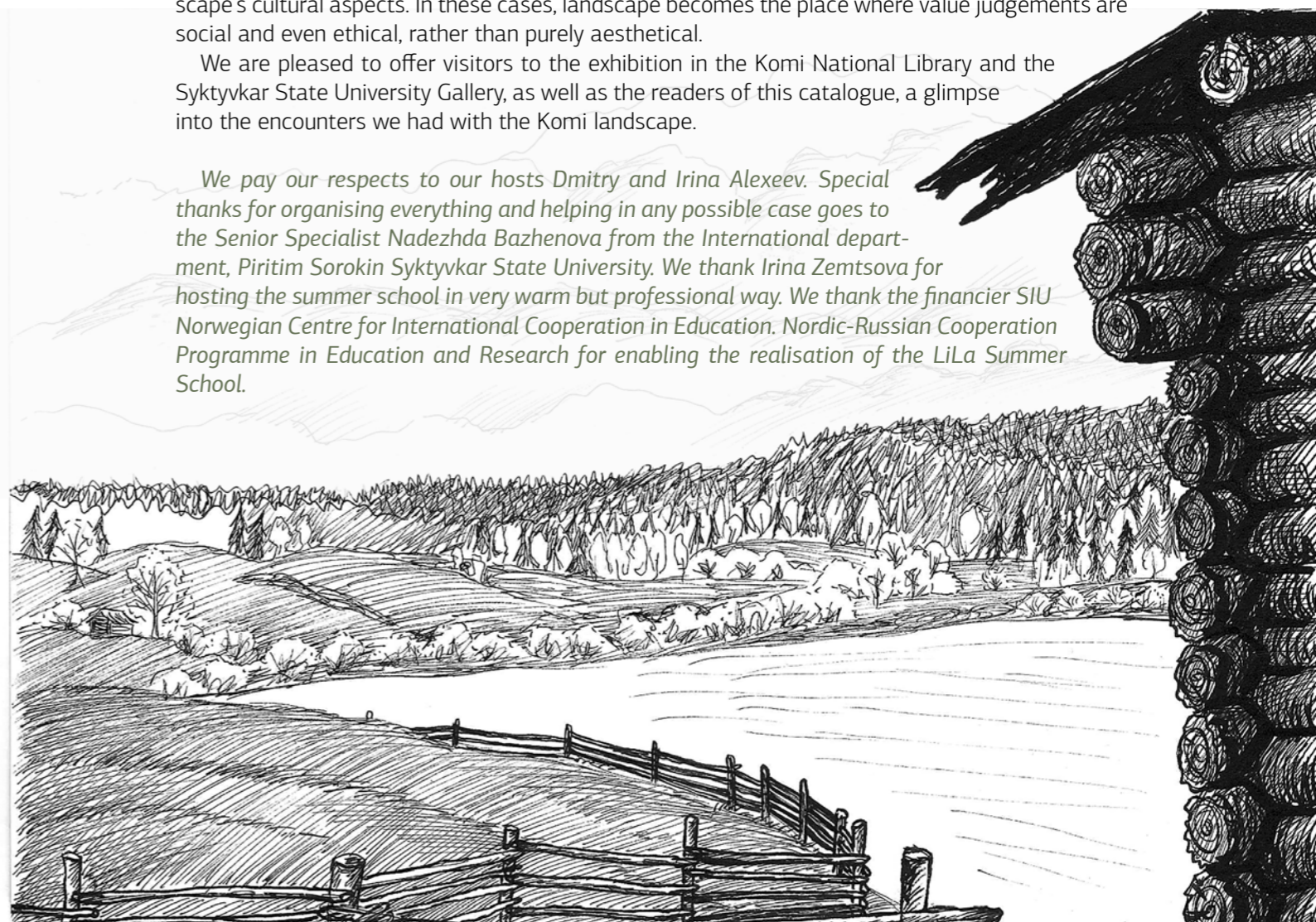


Illustration: Enni Remes



## Exhibition

19.9.–7.10.2018

Komi National Library

Syktyvkar State University Gallery

*Image: Antti Stöckell*

Irina Alexeeva *Visual Artist, Hostess of the summer school in Kozlovka*

## Small Tale

The circles on the cross-section of a tree trunk are the year circles of a tree.

Rounded scraps of fabric and circles of fabric blocks look like the year circles of a family. All the pieces of fabric are from previous epoch – they are parts of my mother' and grandmother' clothes as well as fragments of clothes that belonged to my sisters, my nephews and my grandmother's sisters. These pieces compiled into fabric blocks signify that the memory of the previous generations is not lost. These blocks are full of memories, impressions, feelings, meetings, experiences, live-togetherness.

The old curtain makes up the basis of the composition. This curtain with holes in it has lost its function a long time ago, but, in this artistic work, it has got a new function: to collect, to combine, to unfold the never-ending story of relations between generations, people, person and the world. The layers of the fabric blocks are different: they are of different colour, texture, motifs. The layers cover each other, each of them having its own history. In these layers, the Human image is depicted – imprinted – to live here and now, but to keep the memory of the Past. Only in this case the person can be ready to meet the future.

*Materials: curtain, fabric pieces, needle and thread  
150x200cm, 2018  
Image: Irina Alexeeva*



Aneliya Lyantsevich, *Lecturer in Design, Syktyvkar State University*

## Signs of the Place

The carved ornament, called komi pass, is a generic sign that is distinctive of Komi (zyrian). Widely distributed until the appearance of the Komi script, the tradition survived until the 20th century. Unfortunately, nowadays, no one is able to understand and interpret passes. This layer of culture of the ancient Finno-Ugric people has been irretrievably lost. The project, Signs of the Place, is a symbol of communication and memory of our ancestors.

*Fragment of a tree, which was found  
on the bank of the river Vym  
Laser engraving 15x4 cm, 2018  
Image: Aneliya Lyantsevich*





*The painted wooden door, 92x 67cm, with an image of a lion, is a fragment of the Komi-zyranian housing interior with a painted decoration.  
Image: Irina Zemtsova*

*Irina Zemtsova, Professor in Art and Crafts, Syktyvkar State University*

## A Unique Finding of a Lion, that had been Hiding for a Long Time

Our life sometimes surprises us. In May 2018, while taking part in the summer school, I have made a unique finding: a painted wooden door with an image of a Lion. The unusual finding was made on an unusual occasion. This was a cold day with a strong northern wind and the working programme did not include the search for ethnographic material. We travelled to one of the villages of the Knazhpogost District, Komi Republic, Russia, to meet local people and to visit the local attraction: the wooden chapel of the Entry of the Holy Theotokos, which was build in 1838. After a tour through the village and a photo session, all the participants assembled in one of the houses to meet the oldest inhabitant of this village. I did not stay there for a long time because the house, clean and freshly painted inside and outside, could not give me anything in terms of visual ethnography. I had been slowly ascending a dirty road toward our bus, when my eyes caught a pink spot against a dark wooden wall of another village house. When I came close, I saw a wooden door which closed the entrance to the basement. The owner of the house, a nice woman whom I already know, came out of the house and said: "You can take

the door if You need it". Since that time, I kept being impressed by this amazing occasion which did not only gave me new ethnographic material, but also provided me an opportunity to meet the past.

The item I found is a fragment of the Komi-zyranian housing interior with a painted decoration. The decoration of this kind was widely spread in the North of Russia since the 18th till the early 20th century. It is still poorly studied, particularly in the territory of modern Komi Republic. Many researchers of the traditional folk art even insist that this kind of decoration have never existed here.

It was only in July, when my classes in the University finished and I took my vacation, that I had a chance to study my finding in more details. With a help of my daughter Tatiana, a professional furniture renovator, I managed to fix the ink layer: this layer was partly lost and continued to flake. The careful examination of the item has shown the following:

The door 92 X 67 cm was made of 3 wooden planks fixed "in quarter". These planks were 3 cm thick and they were kept together by another 2 planks. The item is in satisfactory condition: the



construction is strong, and the planks do not fall apart. The lower part of the door has been cut of: a part of their decorative framework is missing. The painting was in unsatisfactory condition. The layer of ink was flaking, and the background painted in dark red was visible. The careful study, which I was able to do after the ink layer was fixed, revealed elements of another ink layer over the painting. This probably means that the painting was over-painted by a layer of brown ink. The long-term environmental impact (rain, snow, temperature fluctuations) caused this layer to flake and now we can see the

original painting which was hidden under this upper layer for a long time.

The painting was made by a Free-Brush-Method. It features the graphic image of a Lion as the central element. The composition consists of a floral motive: a "tree" which grows from the lower part of the door making 2 symmetrical branches making up a circle, a kind of wreath surrounded by several other circles of different colours. This so-called compositional circle is situated in the lower half of the door.

A Lion image is situated above the circle just



*The composition consists of a floral motive: a "tree" which grows from the lower part of the door. Image: Irina Zemtsova*

described. The Lion is jumping, its mouth is open wide showing the blue tongue. The image is made in graphic manner using a black contour line and painted white inside. The details of tail brush and of the mane represent small black semicircles. Despite the threatening open mouth, the image looks more like a domestic dog protecting its territory. The painting is made against a dark red background and put into a blue framework with semicircles in the corners. The branches of the tree have yellow and turquoise brushstrokes on them probably depicting leaves. The additional details in all parts of the composition are drawn with black colour. The technical and artistic techniques show the high level of professionalism of the artist. I suggest that the painting was made by a traveling artist who came from another region, probably from Vyatka or Kostroma. In 2009 I accompanied students in a practice tour to the Kirov area and had a chance to visit the local museum. There I saw fragments of house interior paintings made by the local folk artists. These paintings had much in common with my finding.

It is interesting to speculate about the semantic meaning of the Lion and of the floral motive, so-called "tree of life" in the painting. In Russia, the Lion image originally signified the orthodox faith. The Lion, the strong and horrible king of animals, signifies the power of church and the Tzar. On the other hand, this is a rather ambivalent symbol which, on one hand, signifies Christ the Protector, but on the other hand, can be related to the dark negative force: the Lion is closely related to the concept of death and to the image of Satan.

The lion images on church walls, window covers, entrance doors, wardrobes and chests had a protective function. Here the "king of animals" is often

depicted in threatening postures: it is often standing on its hind legs, its mouth full of sharp teeth is open wide, sometimes it is smiling. However, the image hardly can scare someone: the lion's body shape looks like that of a dog: of course Russian artists met dogs much more frequently than lions (if ever). Such images are particularly abundant in the stone décor of the St. Dmitry Church in Vladimir, where lions represent heraldic symbols together with centaurs, griffons and eagles. This church was built in 1194 – 1197 by the great prince Vsevolod Yurivich the Big Nest to celebrate his heaven patron st. Dmitry of Solun. Later the image of lion came to be used as one of the symbols of the Tzar power.

The second element, the floral motive, was also popular in folk paintings. The images of a tree branch or a sprout coming out from the lower part of an item (i.e. from the ground) have been used everywhere in Russia, from Onega till Siberia.

The finding from the Middle Ota village represent the second unique item of folk art I have found in the Komi Republic in the last few years. The fragments of the peasant house interior in the collections of the National Museum of the Komi Republic and the Vazhgort historical museum differ significantly in their compositions, colour palette and drawing techniques. The rarity of such finding is explained by the fact, that, since the early 20th century, the villagers used wallpaper. Later it became fashionable to paint interior of the house and many decorations of the house interior are now hidden under layers of the new ink. Therefore, these decorations are inaccessible for an examination. The new findings open new pages of the traditional folk art of northerners. The mysteries that have been hidden for so long time need to be exposed and carefully studied.

Vladimir Durnev *Senior Lecturer, Syktyvkar State University*  
& the participants of the summer school

## Beautiful Traces

LiLa participants and local residents were asked to find interesting, eye-catching surfaces in order to later create an imprint by applying and pressed clay. Our host Dmitry Alekseev called these clay objects, Traces of Time. As many imprints were created from the ancient tools and other paraphernalia used by ancestors, the name given by Dmitry is highly appropriate and, in a sense, conveys his personal attitude towards this village. Local children also participated in the process of making “traces”. They happily discovered that everything around them can be beautiful; we just do not notice it. Is not this the basis for harmonious living with nature, to be able to admire even the most inconspicuous details of it? This is exactly what I tried to achieve in this project. After firing, ceramics became orange in colour because of the high content of iron in the local clay. Some details were subsequently covered with a grey glaze in order to slightly emphasize the relief and recall the colour that existed before the burning of the clay.

*Komi local clay,  
glazes burning at 1000°C  
Installation, 200x90cm, 2018  
Images: Vladimir Durnev*



Emilia Mustajärvi, *Master student in Art Education, University of Lapland*  
Louise de Vries, *Master student in Cultural Anthropology, Uppsala University*

## The Thing 2



*Object installation sculpture,  
willow and trash, mixed  
mediums, 240cmx110cm,  
2018,  
Image: Emilia Mustajärvi*

During our time in Russia in May 2018, Emilia and I had a conversation about dualisms. We see them coming back in various aspects of the landscapes that we study. We try to understand why these dualisms exist and where they come from. Through our different disciplines and backgrounds, the same issues intrigue us. Ironically, the arts and sciences are sometimes seen as contradictory. Where the former is associated with emotion, the latter is approached as part of our rational being: a division that is already being debated.

What we spoke about was mostly concerned with how these dualisms have become clear to us through contradictions, which are constructed by our ideas of what reality looks like (or should look like). These dualisms are not just out there in any tangible or obvious way. Rather, they are defined and carefully designed by us. Somehow, we feel the need to create a mental maze of boxes in which we can put things in order to understand them. One of the dualisms that we encountered is related to the division between urban landscapes and rural landscapes. Here, it immediately becomes clear that there is a tension between what we humans touch or change and what we consider to be unspoiled. The unspoiled landscape is easily subjected to romanticized imaginations. For something to be considered natural, it seems that we humans should not have had anything to do with it. In this sense, humans are seen as essentially separated from the natural environment.

When we interpret landscape as a continuous process, we open new ways of understanding our surroundings. Humans and landscapes are relational and defined by and through each other's presence. We do not stand on a sideline, merely gazing at landscapes. In Kozlovka, behind a green field, hidden out of sight, there is a trash dump. This disposed pile of items, ranging from glass bottles to old TVs and pieces of clothing, has become inseparable from the landscape. It is an interaction with the landscape that engages with it. When we "dwell" in the landscape, when we move our bodies through it and interact with it, we take part in its very definition.

This artwork created by Emilia focuses on the contradiction that we humans see between constructed nature and "wild" or "real" nature. It prompts questions about our understandings of authenticity and aesthetics. We usually make a division between natural materials and synthetic materials. For instance, plastic is not considered to be a part of nature. As such, it is not seen as an aspect of the ideal landscape. However, plastics are ultimately made of components, which in their very essence, were extracted from our environment. Even when we are part of nature, we create materials from it that are harmful to it. This is a difficult dynamic, which is hard to potentially accept, not as two sides of the same coin, but the same coin in its entirety.

The objects used in the artwork, *The Thing 2*, are gathered from Rovaniemi, Finland. Emilia collected them in the backyard of the building that she lives in. The rubbish that we saw in Kozlovka is not particular to Russian landscapes. Our positions in different environments can be similar across countries. Our nationalities are not a defining factor when looking at our relationships to landscapes. Rubbish can be found almost everywhere. Through this artwork, we want to discuss the dualisms that support the idea that humans differ from, or are above, nature.

Mirja Hiltunen, Professor in Art Education, University of Lapland

## Баня– sauna– пывсян A Memory Play from Kozlovka Village

12 plywood pieces, 10x10 cm, laser engraving, birch branches.

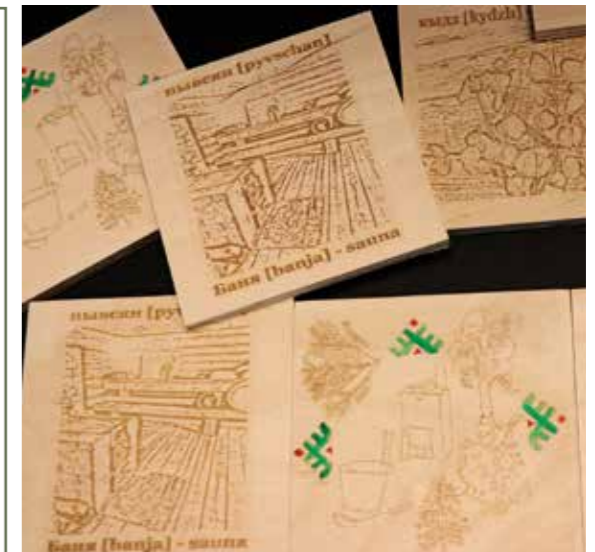
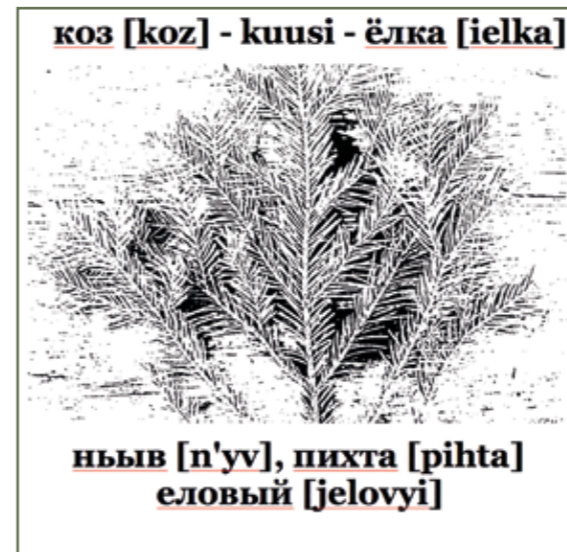
Ба́ня - мать втора́я - The banya is like a second mother

Feeding the body, healing the soul: the sauna is a sanctuary of peace and relaxation. There is not much difference between the Finnish sauna and the Russian banya [Баня], or, in Komi, ывсян [pyvschan]. In addition to bathing, the sauna is the place to have conversations about life and share ideas or beliefs with each other. People have treated the sick and given birth in the sauna, washed the dead, and taken care of many everyday chores. Both sauna and banya are also a way of living close to nature and maintaining balance with nature.

The Finnish people have always been linked with the forest. Around 72 per cent of Finland's total land area is covered in forest. Finland is most heavily forested country in Europe. Pine, fir and birch trees are significant features of the landscape. Besides wood production, birches are important to the biodiversity of northern coniferous forests. I can easily agree that light green birch stand at the lakeshore in the early summer is one of the most famous Finnish landscapes. Silver birch is the national tree species of Finland with a great importance to the Finnish culture and landscape. (Hunnunen & Niemistö 2009/ 2017.)

The *vasta* (also called *vihta*) is the birch whisk used in a Finnish sauna. They are made in a traditional way where the ends of the branches are bound together with a rope made of a birch branch. Komi people normally use a whisk made out of birch (кыдз [kydzh]), just like the Finns. But, the whisks that we saw in Kozlovka and used in the banya every evening were made of fir branches. It was an experience, a good one.

In Komi Republic the forested area covers about 300 000 km<sup>2</sup> making up 4.1% of the forested areas in Russia. According to Lopatin, Kolström & Spiecker (2006) the vegetation cover of Komi is dominated by middle and northern taiga forests, with the exception of mountainous parts of the Komi Republic where forest-tundra and tundra eco-systems have developed. Boreal vegetation is dominated by two pine species (primarily by *Pinus sylvestris* and rarely by *Pinus sibirica*), Siberian



Images Mirja Hiltunen

spruce (*Picea obovata*) and Siberian fir (*Abies sibirica*). Pubescent birch (*Betula pubescens*) forests are the first stages of post-fire succession. (Lopatin, Kolström &, Spiecker 2006.)

In Komi tradition the fir tree is a symbol of the surrounding nature. The pre-Christian worship of the Komi people consisted of various cults like the cult of trees, patron spirits and animals. Many forms of animism were common. Komi people living in the forest zone had rules for protecting nature with regard to respecting the forest, such as cutting the trees only in a case of necessity. In the past, Komi had original forest reservations, which were maintained by a public worship. It was also considered that trees could understand human speech and there are also legends of the forest spirit *Versa* and the water spirit *Vasa* among the others.

The Finnish god of the forest and ruler of the game therein is called *Tapio*. He was a personified form of various forest spirits important to hunters who were dependent on the forest for their livelihood. *Tapio* was sometimes depicted as being the size of a fir tree, fierce-looking, like a human being in the front, but like a gnarled old tree from behind. The various forest deities and spirits were generally capricious in nature and had to be constantly placated by those who were dependent on their favours. (Encyclopaedia Britannica.)

I discussed with Francis Joy, who works as a researcher in Sustainable Development Group in the Arctic Centre, Rovaniemi, Finland, about the trees. Francis is a Druid himself and he tells the fir tree is governed by the element of fire and the ruling planet is Mars. The resin - sap from the tree is the European equivalent of Frankincense, because of its qualities to help with healing respiratory problems and strong purifying powers when the resin is burned as an incense.

The ancient Celts recognized the fir's ability to outlive and outlast most other trees, and so gave it representations of resilience and longevity. The fir survives in torrid conditions, and is able to survive in challenging weather as well as substandard soils. The Celtic meaning for the fir is a symbol of honesty, truth and forthrightness. Their evergreen nature signifies hope, promise and renewal. (Celtic Meaning: Fir tree.)

The birch is known in the Druid tradition as 'The Lady of the Woods'. The leaves from the tree are very detoxing when dried and used in teas and are therefore, good for helping to clean the body of any impurities. Francis continues:

*Birth is governed by the element of earth and ruling planet is the moon. In Britain, Witches bind the birch twigs to a handle made from Ash wood in order to make broom sticks for flying to the moon (out of body travel) and therefore, the tree is also associated with ecstasy. The Silver colour of the bark when seen in moonlight brings forth the trees purifying properties and also is said to be associated with shapeshifting. On May 1st (Beltain), which is a fertility festival, beds of birch brush would be made for the mayday love-making, because of the trees strong feminine power regarding its associations with women and the moon.*

According to Celtic tradition birch is a powerful metaphor for our lives, while the birch is a brilliant symbol of renewal, it is also symbolic of stability and structure. The druids also held the birch as the keepers of long-honored traditions. (Celtic Meaning: Birch tree)

\*\*\*

There are many proverbs and sayings about banya and sauna in both Russian and Finnish. We say "The sauna without a birch whisk is like food without salt". But after I dipped the whisk made of fir into cold water and then smacked it briskly against my entire body, I also agree with my Russian friend who said, "The birch whisk is for losers".

In any case, all of us women on the benches shared the view:

"В бане помылся — заново родился. "Washing in the banya is like being born again".



Warm thanks to you ladies with whom I had the pleasure of enjoying the banya together on Kozlovka village during our stay. Special thanks Nadezhda Bazhenova and Kirill Istomin for helping with the Komi and Russian words and to Francis Joy for having interesting discussions about trees.

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Aneliya Lyantsevich Lecturer in Design, Syktyvkar State University

## Being Russian Outside

This project narrates how traditional clothes can tell a lot about the place of origin and visually change a person: isolating a person from the environment, while at the same time organically placing there. This inheritance from previous generations is a link connecting the artistic past of people with the present and future.



TATIANA KRAVTSOV  
(Russia — Israel — Finland)  
Master student in Arctic Art and  
Design, University of Lapland

*I was born in Omsk, Russia. At the age of 16, I moved to Israel with my family. The picture of my mom from her youth symbolizes an image of Russia for me. She was born and grew up in a small village Hmarovka. Russian soul is a part of me wherever I am.*

Clothing COLLECTION OF  
IRINA ZEMTSOVA  
Pavlov Headscarf, manufac-  
tured in Pavlov Posad city  
Sarafan (handmade, village  
Polovniki, Kniazhpogost Dis-  
trict) Shirt (handmade, city of  
Kotlas, Arkhangelsk Province)  
Apron (handmade, Veliki Ustug  
city, Vologda Province)

Clothing COLLECTION OF  
DMITRY AND IRINA ALEXEEV,  
Belt, handmade by Vera Alex-  
eeva, daughter of Dmitry and  
Irina, Russian Fur Coat

Series of 11 Photographs  
29,7x 42cm  
The village Kozlovka,  
May 2018

Images: Aneliya Lyantsevich

JUNO CROWN  
(Japan — USA — Sweden)  
Master student in  
Cultural Anthropology,  
Uppsala University

*I'm overwhelmed by the  
generosity and sincerity of  
the people in this country.  
Surprisingly — probably to  
many — the high-context  
culture reminds me of Japan.*





Irina Zemtsova, *Professor in Arts and Crafts, Syktyvkar State University*  
& the participants of the summer school

## Traditional Akan Dolls from Komi

On one of the village days, Irina Zemtsova organized a master class in making Komi dolls known as Akan. Akan denotes a little toy sister or a woman. It also resembles the Finnish word Akka, which means an old woman. In the Komi-zyryansky language, AK vezhan indicates a grandmother. The word Akan, meaning a doll, is formed on the basis of the Komi language. In the class, Irina instructed the participants in the secrets of the Akan and explained the meanings of each part of this very simplistic doll made from leftover materials. The grandmothers in the family usually teach their children and grandchildren to make these dolls. This has helped in passing on traditional knowledge of such handcraft skills.



*Installation of 6-8 dolls, 2018*  
Images: Antti Stöckell 1,  
Mirja Hiltunen 2,  
Tanya Kravtsov 3



Mirja Hiltunen *Professor in Art Education, University of Lapland*

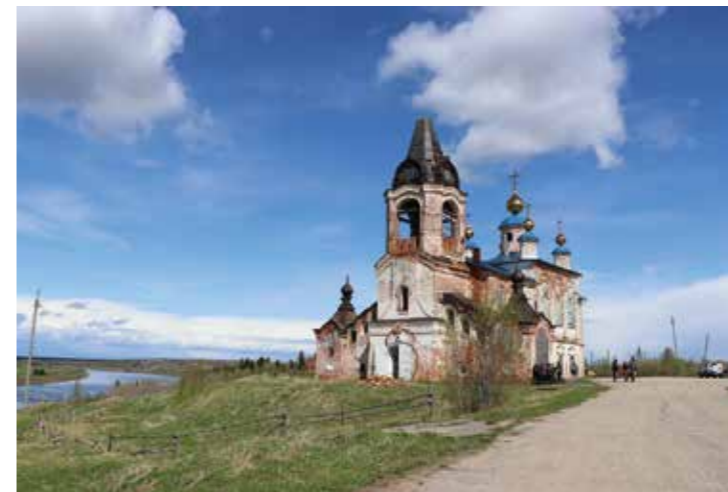
## In Grandma's Thoughts

*Part one: Онежье – Onezh'ye, Komi Republic, Russia 2018 (video)*

*In Grandma's Thoughts* is a story of thoughts from the heart, from a place of love and caring for grandchildren. It is a story of one sudden and simple encounter between two grandmothers, a story of values and world views.

I have a privilege to live with my family in Northern Finland, close to nature, within and in it. This is a good place to live and raise your children, I think. My body, mind and soul are part of the Arctic environment, landscape and its ecosystems. I am connected to it with many bonds through my senses and direct experiences, as well as through practical, political and symbolic ways when living in this northern hemisphere, pursuing research and art.

Nothing is dearer to my heart than my children and grandchildren. I am worried. The northern environment is facing a real threat here. The Arctic is warming more than twice as fast as the rest of the globe. The process is accompanied by other major Arctic-wide changes in the ocean, atmosphere and land. For the Arctic ecosystem, and for those of us who live here, this is a serious situation. Scientists have also recently linked Arctic warming to extreme weather further south. All this is happening in my lifetime. What will be the scale of change in my grandchildren's lifetime, can we still make a difference by how we live our life?



Онежье – Onezh'ye is the first part of a series of videos I am working on, called the Circumpolar North: Encounters and Conversations with grandmothers. In Kozlovka and its neighbourhood village of Onezh'ye, in Komi Republic, I wanted to stop and calm down, listen and learn. I asked what is important to a grandmother who lives in a beautiful rural Komi village, close to her daughter and her seven children. What would she like her grandchildren to learn from her? What are her thoughts on the environment and the heritage she wants to share with her grandchildren?





I met Galina Petrovna Ovsjannikova in Onezh'ye on 27 May 2018 in the entrance to the local church. I saw her taking care of tiny children during the service. She is not originally from this village, nor from this part of Russia. Her son-in-law asked her to visit them after the third grand-children was born. She stayed. This is an outline of her story:

*I'm not a local, I have moved here. My daughter has seven children and I came to help her. I am originally from Kazan in Central Russia. My daughter also lived in Kazan and came to visit Komi where she met her husband. So, it transpired that she married a local man and now they had seven children, the oldest being 12 years and the youngest seven months. Five of them are boys and there are two girls. The children go to school or to the kindergarten, and the boys help out at the church.*

*We participate in the church service every Sunday. I love my grandchildren and I think it is good that they go to church. I hope the boys have a good education, and an Orthodox education is good for children. The boys go every Sunday for the Lord's Supper and tell the priest about their sins.*

*I hope that children grow up righteously and fairly. There should be love for parents and love for siblings. And helping is really important. You should help not only your parents but also your friends. It is the basic and fundamental part of bringing up children. I love the children and I hope they also treat other people lovingly. And if they insult someone, they should apologize. You have to treat other people with love. In the village, a new children's playground is going to be built, which is a good thing because, otherwise, children have nothing to do. They just go outdoors and play some folk games.*

*Helping one another and taking care of one another are important in a family. The kids help their dad and mother and grandmother. They take part in the animal husbandry. They bring water to the cows and chop the firewood. Helping around the house is important. There is not as much to do in the city as there is in the countryside. We have a vegetable garden, a flower garden and a forest. I go to the forest in the summer with the children. Olga [the children's mother] takes us to the taiga woods and we pick lingonberries, cranberries and blueberries, which we make into jam. For whom? Everyone!*



Here is Anna, or Annuska, born on 26 August. Her name is given according to the glory of St. Anne, the grandmother of Christ, Mary's mother. Anna is in kindergarten and loves dancing. She sings all the songs that she is taught there at home. The boy's name is Afanasi and he is in second grade. He is very artistic, he likes to act and participate in the plays.

*This is our story, if there were anything interesting.*

I had a photo album of my grandchildren with me. We started to have a look at my dear ones. Galina Petrovna told me her grandsons share the bread and help the priest at church and that only the boys can go to the altar because the priest has given them his blessing; the girls are not allowed to be there. She told me that the boy, Afanasi, who just came to see the photos, is nine years old. He works hard at school; his studies are going well and he has good grades. I received many compliments about my grandchildren, about how handsome and beautiful they are. My oldest grandson is eight; the little girl is two and the baby boy is one.

We looked carefully at the photo where my grandchildren can be seen outside on a river bank in winter time. "That's a lot of snow, just like we have!" Galina Petrovna was interested about where my family live and noticed that our landscape looks like theirs. They also have a dog; I learned its name: Gorga. My daughter's family has a Lappish reindeer dog, whose name is Jarppi.

Galina Petrovna wanted to learn how long our summer is, and whether we have different seasons. "You do have that season when there's a lot of berries? This is probably the summer season when there are mushrooms and berries?" I heard they have many fish in the river and a lot of cloudberry and blueberry in the forest. She asked about us and what we have too. "That is the same, including the berries", she was happy to note. "Bow to your family for me. How nice it was to see them look healthy and well, and do come back with the whole family to our village!"

Galina Petrovna's faith, passion and belief can inspire her grandchildren to foster values that will help them personally, so that they will respect their living environment and nature, learn how to take care of themselves and others, and contribute positively and in a sustainable way to society.

*Thank you for sharing your story, Galina Petrovna – I bow to your family.*



Image: Tanya Kravtsov

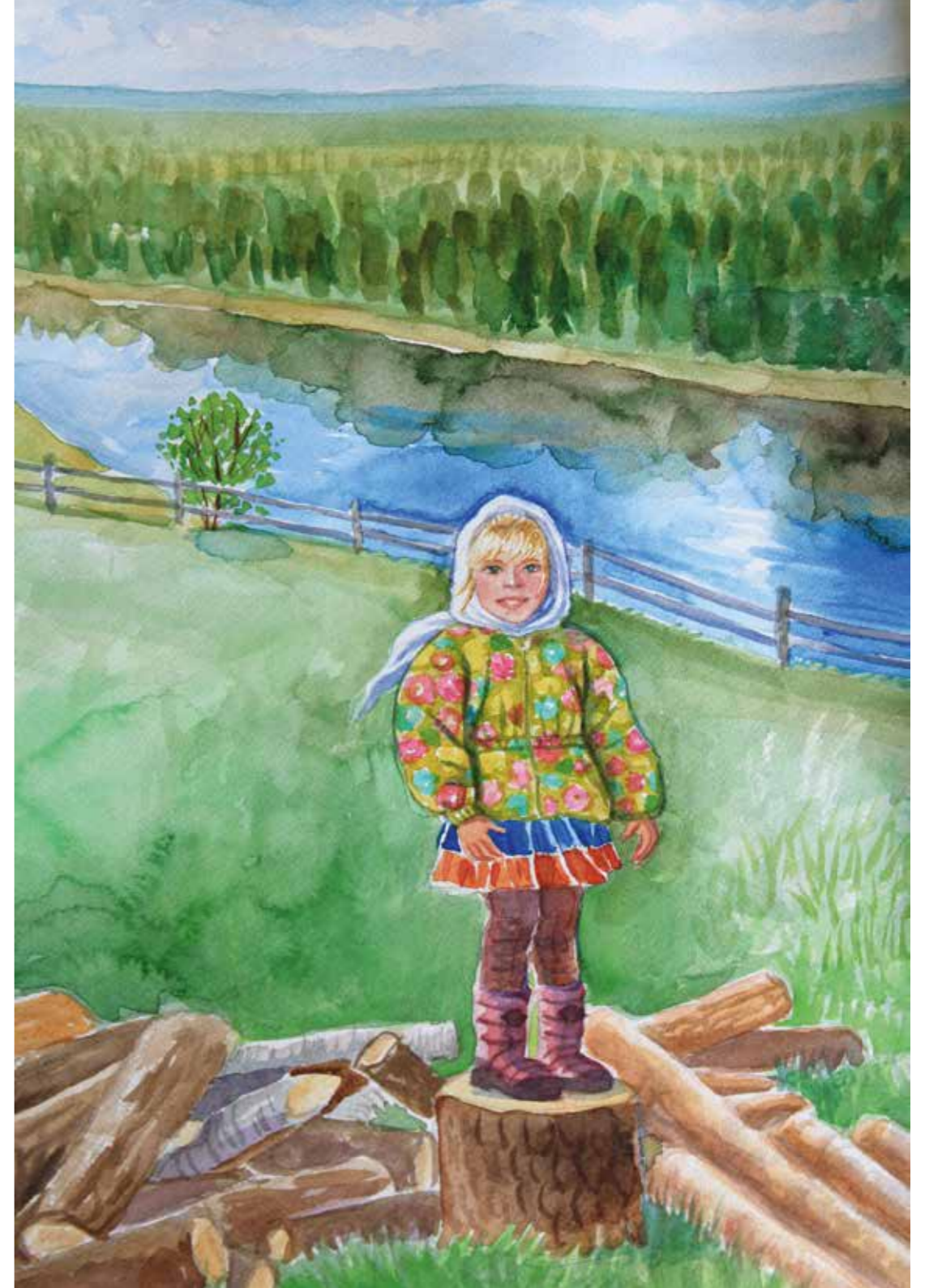


Enni Remes *Master student in Art Education, University of Lapland*

## Ladies in the Landscape

During my trips to Russia, I have always been fascinated by Russian women. Russian women are the backbone of the whole country. They are strong, bold, skilled, beautiful, stylish, feminine, classy, hardworking and vulnerable all at the same time. On our field trip to Kozlovka and the surrounding areas, I met many interesting females from different age groups, from a little girl to mature ladies. I wanted to portray them in watercolours, to draw attention to these females who are working, communicating and playing in the landscape. The landscape is circled around them and under their feet and they clearly and confidently belong to where they are. The River Vym is also present in my portraits. Its stream is as strong and unstoppable as the Komi women.

*3 Watercolour paintings  
50x70 cm, 2018  
Image: Enni Remes*





Hanna Enbuske, Master student in Cultural Anthropology, Uppsala University  
 Tanya Kravtsov, Master student in Arctic Art and Design, University of Lapland  
 Louise de Vries, Master student in Cultural Anthropology, Uppsala University

## Pen Pal - Друг по переписке

The installation is a collaborative artwork, assembled from nine letters based on our memories and experiences during our visit to Komi. We each chose three words to think and write about. The words that are discussed and illustrated in the letters are: 'Taska' or Yearning, Dog, Stove, Romanticism, Gaze, Memories, Nostalgia, Tea and the Sound of Church Bells. These were informed nine letters that we sent to each other. Two in English were sent to the others and the last we wrote to ourselves in our mother tongue.

In this artwork, we explored the action of writing letters, sharing our thoughts and processing our experiences on paper through handwritten words, drawings and embroidering. At the same time, we performed the act of folding the letters, putting them in addressed envelopes, going to the postbox, dropping them off to be sent and then waiting for a reply. Writing letters is a very tactile form of communication that draws your body into the process. It is also an action that gives physical form to time and where the passing of time is essentially felt. We think that letters are a private matter for the receivers' eyes only. "You should not open another person's mail", they say. We share our personal experiences and associations with Komi through the act of displaying the letters. These vulnerable communications enable us to expose the emotional bonds that were created during our time in Komi.

Installation of 9 letters,  
 150x120cm, 2018  
 Image: Tanya Kravtsov





Linda T. F. Kristoffersen,  
Master student in Social Anthropology, UiT - The Arctic University of Norway

## Essence

Even though I'm an anthropologist, not an artist, this experience has inspired me to explore my artistic side as well. As anthropologists we often look for «cultural icons» or symbols; those visual representations of reality that seem significant within a society. Symbolic meaning is neither instinctive nor automatic; it is interpreted and reinterpreted over time by the members of a culture, and as such they can contribute to a better understanding of a particular society. In this piece I have combined some symbols I perceived as «the essence» of our visit to Komi; tea, lace, and that elusive «Russian blue» I could never quite grasp.

*Installation, 3 porcelain cups on wooden pedestals  
30x60 cm, 2018  
Image: Linda T. F. Kristoffersen*



Lidia Kostareva, *Master student, the institute of Culture and Art, SSU, Piritim Sorokin*

## Clothes as a Part of Nature

This project is dedicated to the art of natural dyeing and the ecoprint technique. To create the works, natural materials and leaves of local plants were used. As a result, we produced a collection of clothes reflecting the nature of the locality: a simple cut, a calm colour palette, muted tones.



*Silk, 60x150cm, 2018*  
*Image Anelia Lyantsevich*

Tanya Kravtsov, *Master student in Arctic Art and Design, University of Lapland*  
Elina Härkönen, *Lecturer in Art Education, doctoral student, University of Lapland*

## Old, New, Borrowed, Blue

The installation represents our joint study of the Komi landscape we explored during the LiLa summer school in May 2018. It is a continuation of our previous artwork, *Subtle Russian Blue*, a photographic collage with elements of blue from the Komi landscape, which was exhibited in the Syktyvkar State University Gallery, also in May 2018.

After our journey, we continued to work on our experiences of the landscape. The handmade elements of the installation are our individual approaches, defined by different materials and ways of making. The title, *The Old, New, Borrowed, Blue*, refers to the way materials are used and combined in an installation. While the blue mainly represents ordinary 'paint on the walls' for the locals, for us, the visitors, it became a dominant and fascinating element of the landscape.

Tanya has used pieces of driftwood and bark collected from Komi and Finnish Lapland. The blue embroidery thread is travelling around and following the shapes of the wooden texture and represents her journey in the landscape. She sees the wooden pieces with subtle touches of blue as an act of borrowing and returning.

Elina has processed her relationship with the Komi landscape in her knitting. She has studied traditional Komi patterns and applied them to her handicrafts. The blue colour of the yarn connects her experience to the landscape and the act of knitting to common everyday traditions from Komi and Finland. The hints of ochre in her work are a gift of plant-dyed yarn from Lidia Kostareva. This installation is a mixture of a visitor's look and local knowledge, weaved together into a new poetic view of the everyday landscape of Komi.

*Installation 120 x 114 cm, 2018*  
*Images: Elina Härkönen / Tanya Kravtsov*





Emilia Mustajärvi, *Master student in Art Education, University of Lapland*

## Colour Maps

When we started this LiLa project, we were asked to describe how we perceive landscape. When I described “my landscape”, I wrote that landscape can simply be colours. At least in terms of how I see it, there is a totally different colour world in Russia than in Finland. In my piece *Colour Maps*, I depict a map comprising the dominant colours of Russian and Finnish landscapes or mindscapes. I am also a wall painter, so colour maps are familiar to me. I learned that, if I wanted to use the precise shades of colour, I must use colour pastes, which are used for mixing wall paints. On my maps, the colours are not flat, because they do not exclusively represent shades, but also mindsets and soulscapes.

*6 x acrylic on board, 120cmx45cm, 2018  
Images: Emilia Mustajärvi*





Enni Remes, Juno Crown, Hanna Enbuske, Louise de Vries,  
Alexander Sallstedt, Vladislava Vladimirova, Emma Mustajärvi

## The River

This artwork was created as a collaboration project between two art education students from Finland, four anthropology students from Sweden, and one anthropology student from Norway. The River is a large collage piece formed by individual photos we all took during our fieldwork in Kozlovka, Onezhie and Osla. Next to The River are a few quotes that were expressed by the inhabitants of the villages living alongside the river. The river appeared central to our fieldwork as it seemed to represent something beyond its material limits of meaning, but was a symbol of life, hope and history to the people we interviewed. The river continuously reappeared during several interviews and field visits, which centred on this beautiful and serene waterbody. This collage piece is a representation of the multiplicity of meanings, history and cultural ontology, as this collage is the outcome of an intercultural and cross-disciplinary group coming together, similar to the role played by the original river.

*Photo and object installation,  
size variable, 2018  
Image: Enni Remes*

Timo Jokela, Professor in Art Education, University of Lapland

## Homely and Unfamiliar Landscape

The landscape is flat and the flora, especially the forest, is very familiar. Bright hayfields open up around the village. They are proof of the similar kind of agricultural work found in my home village in Finnish Lapland. I can feel the nearness of the river, but the familiar sound of fast running water cannot be heard. The river is flowing slowly in deep sandy ground. In the evening, neighbours bring salted grayling to eat – the taste of the river is homely. The grey houses in the

village create a sense of timelessness. The blue-green paint here and there is a reminder of the time and the place where we are now.

I am looking for tools, boulders, scrapers and scraps, the equipment that villagers once used to create the essence of the landscape. Tools settle in my hands, prompting a bodily experience that awakes memories of familiar work in the hayfields. In addition to the sketchbook and the camera, I now have a measure of the physical work done in the landscape within my hands. With the tools on my shoulder, I walk in the footsteps of, and identify with, those people who created the village landscape of the past.

I wonder how it looks in the winter when the land is covered with snow and the river with ice. From my bag, I take out four photos of snow sculptures I made on the River Sysola a few years ago. I apply them to the grey walls of the old houses. The patterns of snow sculptures are the same as the textiles in the windows of the old houses. In the evening, the colours of the landscape change, while the river reflects the lights from the sky and its own silvery surface. I study the colours of the landscape by creating some pocket-size paintings. The same beauty, the same northern sky, curves above this village and my home village.

*Mixed media installation, variable sizes, 2018*

*Images: Timo Jokela*



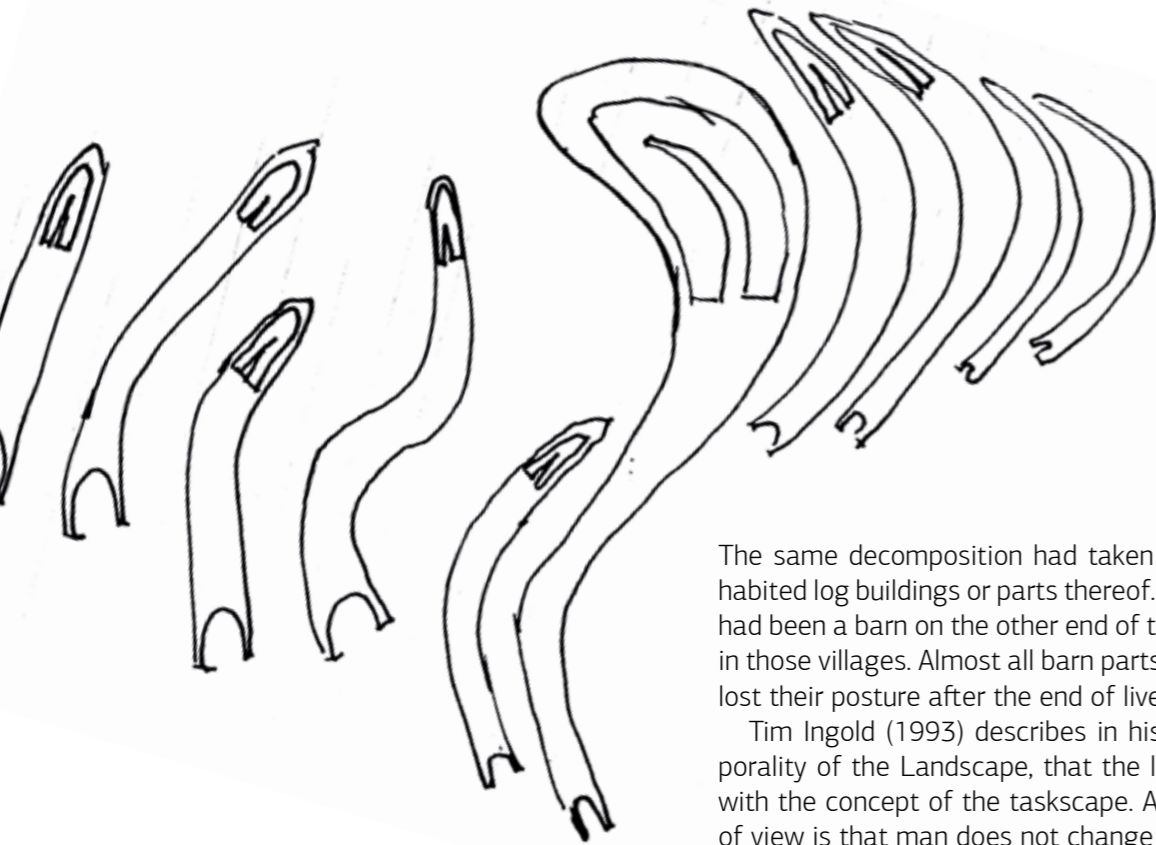


Antti Stöckell, *Lecturer in Art Education, doctoral student, University of Lapland*

## Komi River Landscapes as Fishermen's Taskscape

It was like a trip in a time machine to another era. The old grey log houses were a distinctive feature in those small riverside villages in Komi Republic, which we visited during the LiLa summer school. Almost everything was naturally grey, but the lowest logs were exchanged for new ones in some houses; and, somewhere, there was fresh fir wood amongst the old and grey logs. The village of Kozlovka, where we had accommodation, had somehow lost its connection to the river. There was only a partly collapsed boat shed in the midst of the riverside, where some old fishing nets and other gear were found. We visited Ovla village, where a living connection to the river was manifested in many ways. There were some boats on the shore of the river, which still flooded slightly. A bit further from the shoreline, tree trunks had drifted due to the spring flood, which villagers had towed by boat, as well as marked some trunks out for themselves. The closest buildings to the river were fishing or boat sheds that were still in use. Some of the decommissioned riverboats had already half decomposed in the riverbed. The cycle of life was so fascinating to see, because it did not look to be at the end of a particular era. Perhaps the end of wooden boats and wooden gears is not an environmental problem, as they will soon be used to transform the soil again.

*Images & illustrations in the essay: Antti Stöckell*



The same decomposition had taken place in the uninhabited log buildings or parts thereof. Traditionally, there had been a barn on the other end of the dwelling houses in those villages. Almost all barn parts of the houses had lost their posture after the end of livestock rearing.

Tim Ingold (1993) describes in his article, *The Temporality of the Landscape*, that the landscape changes with the concept of the taskscape. An interesting point of view is that man does not change the landscape, but he participates in its change by “resonating”, i.e., interacting with the different rhythms of natural phenomena. The life of riverside villages has certainly followed the natural rhythms of the river throughout the year. The starting points for my artwork came from two directions. My artwork was inspired by the use of wood as a building and tool material and, on the other hand, by Komi’s meandering rivers. Satellite imagery reveals an astonishing series of old curves in the rivers. They are like freeze-frames of past times, which show us even millennium-long meandering river changes.

The settlement and sources of livelihood have reacted to the slow change in the river flow over a long pe-

riod of time. The fisherman has reacted to changes in the river, on a daily and annual basis, or, in Ingold’s words, he has resonated with the river’s rhythm. Ingold refers to the taskscape as the landscape that is shaped in this interaction between man and nature over recurring cycles. Fishing does not change the landscape in the way it is visibly shaped, for example, in the field of farming. From fishermen’s point of view, the river landscape is living all the time and fishery is sensitive in reacting to those changes every moment.

What is most obviously the problem in these villages on the Komi riverside is the lack of a young population, which means that sharing experiences and learning traditional skills from elders rarely happen. Of course, times change, as do livelihoods, whereby unnecessary chores and skills are slipping away, while the last tools are decomposing. In the end, only an archaeologist, anthropologist or a researcher interested in folklore will find some slight references to previous generations, which resonated with cyclical natural phenomena. A new taskscape fades out the old one.





I carved traditional wooden fishing net needles, which are used for weaving and fixing the nets. Some of the needles carved by me are almost like the real thing, while others have different curves like the river. Making wooden tools resonates with natural phenomena too. Seeking good material for tools has been a seasonal chore in certain places, perhaps in the forest behind the meadows next to the village. Apparently, there was no need for new net needles that often; however, the work should have been done at a time when there was no rush to finish other seasonal chores, generally in winter, while weaving and repairing the nets should have commenced before the start of the fishing season. Men and women have both been knitting nets; but, obviously, men have been involved in fishing the most. Carving the needles and finally carrying out up-and-down weaving moves have surely brought to mind the coming fishing season, riverside feelings in general and many details in particular.

There is much in the way of tacit knowledge related to fishing and preparing fishing gears. The sharing and transmission of knowledge from one generation to another have been the lifeblood of a living fishing culture. Working together has offered the most natural environment in which to demonstrate and share knowledge about how the work is done. I tried to figure out the taskscape of fishing in its entirety by carving these meandering net needles. The movements of wood carvers, net weavers, rivers and fishermen blend together in this artwork – at least I hope so.

#### REFERENCE

**Ingold T. 1993.** The Temporality of the Landscape. *World Archaeology*, Vol. 25, No. 2, Conceptions of Time and Ancient Society (Oct., 1993), pp. 152-174

# Essays on Landscapes

*Image: Antti Stöckell*



Alexander Sallstedt, Master student in Cultural Anthropology, Uppsala University

# Meditations on the Landscape and the LiLa Project

This is not a typical anthropological piece of writing. Limited by the amount of time spent in the field, and inspired by the indeterminate and liminal disposition of art, I decided to write it in a less structured manner. Thus it is a meditation. It combines the time spent and reflections had in the field with scholarly writings about the landscape. In specific, it discusses the difficulty of defining the landscape and the capacity with which artistic practices can help overcome – or, work with – these difficulties. Intermingled in these discussions several philosophers are turned to in order to shed light on matters that are often abstract and theoretical. The process of writing this meditation was an enlightening experience that began with the somewhat too ambitious question: what is the landscape? It is also against this question, which serves as the red thread all through the meditation, that other related topics are discussed. The fieldwork from which this meditation emanates was carried out for ten days in late May 2018 in the Komi Republic of Russia. It was organized by the Living in Landscape (LiLa) project group, which involved collaboration between four universities: University of Lapland, Uppsala University, Syktyvkar State University and Tromsø

University. Together this research group spent five days in Syktyvkar and five days in the rural village Kozlovka.

## COMING TO TERMS

Many have written before me trying to construct or deconstruct the landscape. And many have surely asked themselves the same question as I did those wearying yet exciting days in Kozlovka. I was – despite living in the landscape, as it were – lost there and then; I did not know what to think, feel, or where to look. Perhaps this was the infamous devils work of Cartesian dualism. Then again, perhaps this was merely I embedded in a landscape that was not mine but someone else's. All the same, this landscape, whatever it is and whatever it is not, was at the same time familiar and strange to me: familiar because it was part of the Northern imaginary in which I had been steeped; strange because I had never experienced it before.

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A common mistake when deconstructing concepts of this kind is that their primary function, as abstract concepts, are often overlooked. Tim Ingold importantly noted that what characterizes the land-

scape is temporality. And while he emphasizes its change over time – ‘an enduring record of and testimony to the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it’ (1993, 152) – we must not disregard our academic pursuits, the fixation to define, as co actors in that change too. Werner Bigell and Cheng Chang mentioned this continual objectification though in a different context: “Projection can lead to [a] transformation of landscape...” (2014, 87, my emphasis). Thus, and as a basis for subsequent analyses, any definition of the landscape will but partake in its historical record of incessant objectification. This is an inescapable truism about us as dwellers in a world that is never true to what it once was, or to what we now define it as. Allow me to alter a famous assertion made by Ingold: even definitions of the landscape flow and researchers have to follow them.

With the above in mind: “Landscape is more than a projection unto nature or the environment: it is a multivalent frame – territorial, political, aesthetic, etc. – determining how the environment is perceived and shaped” (Bigell & Chang 2014, 86), my emphasis). Ingold would too agree with this statement albeit with particular reference to Cartesian dualism, which is made manifest when attempting to define the landscape in sole visual terms. Indeed, the landscape demands attention not only to its spatial and/or aesthetic aspects but so too its platial. While Ingold, in his pursuit to offer a general, true and meaningful definition, would not agree that the landscape is in need of a spatial referent – “You can ask of land, as of weight, how much there is, but not what it is like” (1993, 154) – it is still necessary to acknowledge that the landscape is and has been a political instrument, which thus demands attention to spatial referents such as territory and land

(Bigell & Chang 2014, 87 & 88). At least if we are to follow the definitional flows that have through centuries formed what, even if invariably, constitutes the landscape today.

## ARTISTIC MEANS AND ENDS

Insofar as the landscape is that which have been dwelled in it is something that is performed. We too dwelled – or performed – the landscape in Kozlovka. At least for me, the landscape had never felt so prevalent and present as when attempting to directly engage with it, even though that engagement was confused and disjointed. What is central here is not whether we did or did not engage with the landscape. The central question is whose landscape we performed and by what means. For it would be a mistake to imagine the past specific to this landscape being open to my remembrance. Indeed, it seems even more mistaken to refer to that landscape as this landscape. A concoction of theirs and mine – distinctly my idea thereof – that landscape effectively escaped me. Did we then bring into being that which we wanted to research? This seems unavoidably so. The spatial arena might have been at our disposal but the platial not so much – especially if we consider how little time we spent in Kozlovka and other neighbouring villages. An obstacle difficult to overcome, it is here that the at times unfruitful yet natural desire for concrete and rigid definitions can seek reconciliation with artistic practices in which open-ended interpretation is both the means and the end (as opposed to merely the means). Thus, while it is difficult to derive necessary truths about the landscape in Kozlovka, it is possible to say something about our making of it, as dwellers in it; and perhaps most ideally so by means of artistic practices.

In environmental art the communicative, representative, and communal aspects serve as its most central tenets (Jokela 2008). Also called place-specific (patial) art, the emphasis is placed on (ethical) representation; most generally, the culture and history tied to the place, such as that of a particular landscape. As it turned out, the LiLa research group featured environmental artists whose practical knowledge and experience came to serve as inspiration and guidance throughout the project. Informatively, it was at one point even declared how similar our research methods were, as anthropologists and environmental artists alike. To reiterate, what distinguished us as researchers was not necessarily the means but rather the ends with and through which we worked.

Betwixt in a landscape that was both strange and familiar to me I resolved to write poems. We all took pictures. Some made drawings. Classes were conducted in Kozlovka where it was taught how to dye using indigenous plants; we learned how to make traditional Komi dolls, and also how to make clay sculptures with local clay. In addition, there was a willow artwork that was constructed in the landscape using various – though primarily willow – materials found therein. Discussions took place between students and teachers alike about how best to communicate, using both art and more traditional academic work, what we had experienced in Kozlovka; that is, to avoid imposing too much of our own narrative and context: without making them the dwellers in our landscape. Artistic practices proved to be constructive for us to represent and come to terms with the landscape in Kozlovka in a non-determinate fashion. Together these different art projects, including many others, were featured in a public exhibition at Syktyvkar State University.

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I wrote this poem (p. 61) for Dmitry whom together with his wife Irina hosted us in Kozlovka. I do not usually share my poems, as I am not a professional poet, but thought – inspired by the ethos of environmental art – that it was due time to give something back directly to those one meet and become familiar with during fieldwork. Which the chapter title revealed, the poem is about the landscape in Kozlovka. Timo Jokela (2008: 9) noted, and which the poem is meant to reflect, that the idea of the ‘wanderer, traveller or artist seeking a grand, sublime natural experience’ relates back to a particular tradition of thought; in specific to 18th, 19th and 20th century German and American (environmental) romanticism. These ideas are still very prevalent today (Cruikshank 2005; Liechty 2017) and influence the so-called romantic tourist gaze and its almost obsessive like desire for what are considered authentic experiences. Indeed, the conception and commercialization of the North play along with these ideas (Jokela 2008, 8-9). In short, the non-authentic experience of nature and culture is one that is noticeably mediated and tinkered with – that which can be experienced as if staged.

The above can arguably be related to Dmitry and his desire for Kozlovka to be turned into a non-commercial cultural heritage museum. For, as Hannah Arendt (1998) put it, consumption destroys everything. In addition, the aforementioned tradition of thought has apparent theosophical (Western esoteric) undertones, which pertains to the idea that modernity has disenchanting the world; and as a result, that humans have been alienated from their true nature – that we have lost our spiritual connection with the world. This loss of meaning is then projected onto seemingly less modern places

## A POEM ABOUT THE LANDSCAPE IN KOZLOVKA

*wet grass and wind  
traversing this place  
conflicting thoughts  
an ephemeral world  
red cheeks and tea  
this foolish wanderer*

*seeing himself  
in the river of Vym  
the beginning and end  
a world without frame  
time stands still  
this foolish wanderer*

*songs echo  
in a landscape  
engulfed by the night  
warm fires  
worlds they create  
this foolish wanderer*

*how strange it is  
this world he sees  
mirroring himself  
in the river of Vym  
nowhere to be found  
this foolish wanderer*



in which said past and more meaningful and authentic ways of being can be reclaimed and/or reunited with. Historically this conserved past has been related to places like Tibet and Nepal (Liechty 2017) but seems to now be projected onto 'the North' as well. And if the landscape represents – or is – 'an enduring record of and testimony to the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it', as Ingold suggests, then such renders the landscape into an ideal means and platform for such ideas to transpire.

Jokela moreover notes: "The collectivism of images of the landscape that art has created programs the way in which we look at the environment and also ideologises [sic] this perspective..." (2008, 8). This takes us back to the beginning of this meditation where it was argued that the definitional flows of the landscape is something one must follow – owing to the temporality of landscape. The poem, insofar as it is indefinite, reveals this riddle that is the landscape – its fleetingness – but makes no attempt at explaining it. And lest we not also acknowledge that this supposed riddle is also situational and temporal. For it reflects not only the landscape as such but also particular historical ideas associated with it. As Walter Benjamin writes with reference to a work of art: "His creation is by no means all of a piece; it is composed of many separate performances" (1999, 223). With all this in mind, I would like to describe this poem, and all other art projects undertaken by the LiLa project, regarding the landscape in Kozlovka, as just that: complex and entangled landscape performances.

## CONCLUSION

We struggle as designers – as Homo Faber – to make order out of disorder in the (temporality of

the) world, and in our case the landscape. Søren Kierkegaard noted that philosophy concerns too much about what is and why it is instead of asking why we ask those questions to begin with. It seems that the order we seek is not due to disorder in the world as such but rather due to the disorder caused by our own coming to terms with it. As was asserted previously, artistic practices enable for this disorder to remain insofar as its methodological ends are open-ended. Therefore, art allows for the riddle to remain a riddle – for it is the riddle alone that stirs us. This can be extended to mean that there is a 'spiritual' element to art that resonates with something fundamental to us. Dmitry told us that Kozlovka moved him spiritually and that its landscape represented a portal through time – a timeless reference point to the experiences of past dwellers. He told us that he wanted others to experience what he and those before him had experienced, as I wanted him to experience what I had experienced through the poem – lost and confused in his landscape. When given the poem Dmitry told me that he too saw himself in this foolish wanderer. And with this meditation in mind I can more clearly see myself in his attachment to that landscape: as a fellow dweller alongside him. While the question about what the landscape is will forever escape me, by virtue of its temporality, that is neither good nor bad, but merely what is. And what the landscape is – and whatever it might turn out to be – denotes both platial and spatial elements. Thus, the landscape is at the same time yours and mine – theirs and ours – inside and outside. And perhaps art is the most ideal means with which to come to terms with the landscape and its definitional and conceptual fleetingness, owing to this dualism.

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## Chaipit'e (tea drinking) on the Bank of River Vym



Every visitor in the Russian North has been initiated into it, an essential part of Northern everyday life, hospitality, food routines, social life, and identity. It is chaipit'e, tea-drinking. It is part of teaching about the North, part of living in the North, part of the Northern world.

Some may find this ironic, because tea is an imported product in the North, irrespective of its long-term presence and significance. Like many other goods, including flour and sugar. And still, tea drinking is a deeply local tradition. Meeting us with tea on the bank of River Vym on a sunny afternoon in late May 2018, our hosts strived to show the important specifics, the unique character of local village life and aesthetics. To socialize us into their everyday life and welcome us into and teach us about the contemporary village of Kozlovka. Kozlovka, one of many old and depopulated villages along banks of the River Vym in the Komi Republic.

*Images of the essay: Vladislava Vladimirova*



Tea, as a rule is served with several accompaniments. Bread and butter, cheese and sweets, are musts. Jam made out of local berries, such as cloudberry, blueberry, and cranberry is what makes tea drinking in the North different and original. It provides sustenance and helps one recover one's strength after the uncomfortable trip along badly maintained and unpaved roads, or after a hard day's work in the cool Northern climate. But it is also a nurturing tradition, an introduction and initiation into an original culture. Tea drinking is deeply rooted in everyday life and its web of meanings.

Upon our arrival in our hosts' house in Kozlovka we all sit and drink tea. This is the way to get properly introduced to each other, to meet and build up our commonality, to identify as a group. A diverse group of teachers and students from different parts of the world, and of our host family, of course. Tea drinking is a deeply social activity. It is social in consuming the same food and drink, in sharing substances from the same pot and plates, in sitting together around the table, and in talking and laughing with each other.

Tea drinking is a recurring and regulated social behavior (Douglas 1987). It structures everyday life in individual and group settings. Tea drinking can organize life temporally, as we know from the familiar British example. More importantly in the Russian North, it is an important referent for the social timing of events. Even if we do not arrive at the time when people would normally drink tea, we are welcomed with tea. Our farewell with Kozlovka is yet another chaipit'e. These are the temporal markers of our life together in the village. They, however, are not exclusively linear, they do not imply an absolute end. Because,

as we learn from anthropologist, Haim Hazan, and many others, conventional social and cultural practices like these, belong to cyclic perceptions of time that are embedded in repetitive behavior and reproduce symbolic meanings (Leach 1961, Hazan 1987).



Welcome and farewell tea, as well as many shared tea occasions in the meanwhile, however, have a creational role. They expand our individual worlds and transform them. A transformation that is going to stay with each of us during the rest of our lives. Thus even upon parting, the togetherness and sense of belonging to Kozlovka on River Vym will leave an impression on our sense of identity. And perhaps a longing to get together again, to merge in the landscape along the river.



Apropos, about landscape. A notion that is historically inseparable from associations with aesthetics and contemplation. Tea drinking is a deeply aesthetic tradition. Besides its many artistic representations in Russia, it poses many practical aesthetic requirements. To take only one example, look at the emblematic samovar, at its enticing shape and beautifully decorated surface. In the old village of Kozlovka, water for the welcoming tea needs to be prepared in authentic old coal samovars. Our hosts arrange a performance around the starting of fire in the samovar and all following procedures of preparing the tea. Thus not only drinking, but preparation becomes an important social practice that we do together, even though our roles in it differ. We show and negotiate our positions in the group, those of hosts and of visitors. And our relations to each other. And we build up our experiences and attitudes to the place and its landscape simultaneously. Because it is 'through living in it, that landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it' (Bohm 1980). It is not by contemplation alone but by participating in social activities like tea making and drinking on the bank of River Vym that we perceive the landscape surrounding us. And learn about it from our hosts. Not through their stories alone, but by sharing their emotions, and through our senses in the process of tea drinking. Not through visual experience alone, no matter how impressive the view in front of our eyes is, especially a moment later when the sunset falls over the water. It is

through the full complex of sensual experiences, including the taste of cloudberry jam and strong black tea, the smell of the smoke from the samovars, the bodily activity of feeding the fire inside them with pine cones from the woods that we get acquainted with the landscape. And we become part of it, enter into its 'enduring record of – and testimony to – the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves' (Ingold 2000). And the landscape of River Vym becomes part of our personal records, of our lives.



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## Does Colour Perception Depend on Language? Evidence from a Comparative Study of Komi and Russian speakers

In the late 19th century, famous British anthropologist William Rivers shocked the academic world by the results of his study of Torres island inhabitants (Rivers 1905, 2012). This people insisted that the day sky above their head was black. They believed, that the sky did not change its colour from night to day, that it was always of the same colour and that this colour was similar to the colour of charcoal or the leather-cover copybook, where Rivers took his notes. Later it was discovered, that the language of Torres islanders had only three colour terms: 'black', which covered all cold hues, 'red', which also covered yellow and 'white', which covered all the warm hues except red and yellow. Rivers claimed, that due to this linguistic feature, Torres islanders perceived the world very differently to Englishmen and, hence, their way of thinking about such basic categories as day and night, light and darkness, sun and moon (they both were 'red' for them) and even good and evil were also different to ours (Rivers 1905).

Discussions about if Rivers was right when making such claims is still going on. Up till late 1950s,

most scientists believed that he was right: at that time, the so-called theory of linguistic relativity (also known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis), which claimed that human thinking occurs in a language, the native language of the thinker, and, therefore, linguistic categories and grammar influence both what people can or cannot think and how they can think that (see Whorf 1956). However, the works on universal grammar by Noam Chomsky (see Cook, 2007 for details) and several other discoveries in psycholinguistics made in the late 1950s and early 1960s changed the mainstream view. The prevailing theory became that if human thinking indeed happens in a language, then this language is 'Mentalese', the universal language of human thinking 'hardwired' into the human brain (Fodor 1980), while natural languages are just communication tools that express, with different degree of preciseness, concepts and structure of Mentalese: so-called theory or doctrine of linguistic universalism (see Pinker 2007 for a good review). In 1969, Brent Berlin and Paul Key published their famous

study on colour terminology in languages (Berlin & Kay 1969). In this study, which was based on data obtained from speakers of 22 unrelated languages, Berlin and Key demonstrated that basic colour categories are not arbitrary: although languages could have different number of colour categories, there can be only 11 basic hues that can serve as centers (best examples) of these categories. These hues are white, black, red, green, yellow, blue, brown, pink, purple, orange, and grey. Furthermore, hues that make up basic colour categories in any particular language is also not arbitrary: if there are only two basic colour categories in a language (in accordance to Berlin and Key, languages with fewer colour categories do not exist), then one of them is 'anchored' in black (that is has black as its best example) and includes all cold hues, while the other is anchored in white and includes all warm hues; if a language has three colour categories, then their best examples correspond to black, white and red (the case exemplified by Torres islanders), etc. Later, Berlin, Key and their colleagues provided a neurobiological explanation for this pattern: they argued that conceptual partition of the colour spectrum proceeds along the lines, which, due to the special anatomy and physiology of the human visual apparatus, make up psychologically sound distinctions. It starts from the psychologically most sound distinction between cold and warm hues and proceeds to less sound distinctions inside the cold and warm spectral parts (Kay, Berlin, & Merrifield 1991; Kay & McDaniel 1978).

The arguments by Berlin and Key fit perfectly the doctrine of linguistic universalism and, therefore, they have been eagerly accepted by the scientific community. However it did not take long until several important shortcomings of their model were

discovered and pointed out. Thus, it was demonstrated that the set of 11 'basic' hues is not enough to account for all basic colour categories even in the relatively well-studied European languages. One can recall, for example, two separate basic colour categories for red in Hungarian (*vörös* and *oros*) or two separate categories for blue that exist in some Slavic and Turkic languages, e.g. *goluboy* (light blue) and *sini* (dark blue) in Russian. More importantly, however, there are languages that use the same term to refer to yellow and green (or sometimes even yellow, green and blue) colours collapsing, therefore, warm and cold hues into a single colour category. Despite these languages are rather rare, their existence represents a problem to the neurological model of the development of colour terminology as proposed by Berlin and Key. The defenders of linguistic relativism, however, can always respond to these facts by pointing out, that a linguistic category does not necessarily corresponds to the category of thinking : that is indeed exactly the point they always differed from linguistic relativists. It is in any case rather doubtful, from their point of view, that a natural category (that is a particular 'word' in *Mentalise*) would give rise in all languages to linguistic categories with exactly similar semantic fields, connotations and lexicalizations. In some languages, therefore, due to various historical, practical or even phonetic reasons, can emerge linguistic concepts that cover several basic colour categories. People still discriminate between these categories in thinking (which occurs in *Mentalese*) – they just name them similarly when communicating to each other in a 'public language' (universalist term for natural languages).

It can look like this argument is impossible to check empirically and beat. However, such a test

is possible: one can test if differences in linguistic categories lead to differences in thinking in this domain detectable through non-verbal behavior tests. If people indeed think in universal categories, then these differences are not to be expected, while their existence, if proven, seems to show that linguistic categories at least take part in thinking. For example, in a recent study by Winawer and colleagues (Winawer и др. 2007), people were shown on a computer screen a stimulus square and two test squares of different colours. Their task was to respond as far as possible which of the test squares was more different in hue to the test square. It was demonstrated that Russians, who have separate categories for light blue and dark blue in their language, are significantly faster in this test than Englishmen when the stimulus square was either dark blue or light blue, while test squares were dark blue and light blue respectively. It seems like for Russians, one of the test squares was of the same colour and the other of different colour to the stimulus, while for Englishmen all the squares were of the same colour (blue) and they had to go into a difficult business of analyzing their hues. This shows that in this particular case the linguistic category is somehow involved in thinking, which of course represents a problem for the model of Berlin and Key and for linguistic universalism in general. However this experiment still does not demonstrate them being completely wrong, because from the viewpoint of the modern neurolinguistics version of the Berlin and Key's model, the discrimination between light blue and dark blue is not 'hardwired'. Therefore it can be argued that in the experiments by Winawer and colleagues Russians could simply use the categorical apparatus of their language to solve a cognitive task, which did not have a 'hardwired' solution

in terms of universal categories. It would be much more informative to check if the linguistic effects of the sort described by Winawer and colleagues could be found in the case of linguistic categories overlapping the 'hardwired' (from the viewpoint of Berlin and Key) colour distinctions. This particularly concerns the yellow-green category, which exists in some languages and collapses together warm and cold hues. Since the distinction between warm and cold colours is the most basic and 'hardwired' from the viewpoint of the model, a demonstration that a yellow-green linguistic category produces similar behavioral effects as the blue category (in comparison to separate light blue and dark blue categories) would be indeed devastating for the model.

This is exactly the study the authors of this essay performed. Our study involved speakers of two languages: Russian and Komi, one of the languages where green and yellow colours are referred to by the same word (*vizh* in Komi). Komi can refer to green objects as being *turun vizh* (grassy *vizh*) and to yellow objects as being *kolk vizh* (egg *vizh*), but this complex expressions definitely refer to hues of the same colour (like 'light blue' in English) rather than to separate colours. Besides the single green-yellow category, Komi language also has a single term (*löz*) for blue. In this respect, it is similar to English and most other European languages but differs from Russian. For our study, we also used a computer test. In this test, participants were shown combinations of 6 coloured squares arranged in a circle on the computer screen. Each participant was shown 160 combinations. 20 of them consisted of 1 yellow square and 5 squares of different hues of green; 20 combinations consisted of 1 green and 5 yellow squares (also different hues); 20 combinations consisted of one dark-blue (*sini*) and 5 squares

of different shades of the Russian goluboi (light blue) colour; finally 20 combinations consisted of 1 goluboi and 5 sini squares. Besides them, there were 20 combinations where all squares were of different hues of green, 20 combinations of 6 yellow squares, 20 sini combinations and 20 goluboi combinations. During the test, these combinations followed each other in random order. In each combination, the participants were instructed to choose one square, which, in their opinion, was most different to others. The test program recorded the time it took the participant to give his/her response as well as the square chosen. We expected that, just as in the experiment of Winawer and colleagues, Komi speakers will be significantly slower than Russians in solving dark blue / light blue combinations. However, in the case language universalists are right, they will be just as fast as Russians in solving yellow-green combinations, because the both groups rely on the same natural distinction between cold and warm colours. In the case relativists are right, however, Komi speakers should be just as slow in solving these combinations as they are in solving light blue / dark blue combinations, that is significantly slower than Russian speakers.

Komi-speaking group and the Russian-speaking group. The Komi-speaking group was recruited in villages Nivshera and Bolshelug, Kortkeros raion of the Komi Republic, Russia. In this raion ethnic Komi prevail and they comprise more than 95% of the population in the mentioned villages. The group of Russian-speakers was recruited in villages Lena and Kyrta, Lensky raion of the Archangelsk province (oblast), Russia. In this raion Russian population prevails. All the four villages are of comparable size and the level of economic development. The economic activities and the income of their populations are

also quite similar. The final data set of this study to be further processed included 114 participants: 63 Komi and 51 Russian-speakers.

The results of the tests were processed statistically using the SPSS software. The analysis confirmed that Komi-speakers spent more time than Russian speakers on choosing the response both in the light blue / dark blue and in yellow/green combinations. This seems to confirm that in both types of combinations Russians made choice between different colours, while Komi had to choose between hues of the same colour and, therefore, to support the linguistic relativist alternative. However, the results also revealed, that while for Russian speakers spent about equal time on light/dark blue and on yellow/green combinations, for Komi speakers it took significantly longer to solve light/dark blue combinations in comparison to yellow-green combinations. This seems to signify that while for Russian speakers the choice in both conditions was equally complicated (or, rather, equally simple), for Komi speakers it was significantly more complicated in the blue condition in comparison to the yellow/green. This means that despite green and yellow hues belong to the same linguistic category in Komi, the difference between these hues is more obvious for Komi than the difference between dark blue and light blue, which also belong to the same linguistic category.

These contradictive results can be interpreted in the following way. The distinction between warm and cold hues can be indeed 'hardwired' in the human visual system and, therefore, it is easily and automatically made. However the likely existence of this 'hardwired' distinction does not rule out the possibility of 'real' green-yellow basic colour categories despite the claims to the contrary made in some versions of the Berlin-Key model. Furthermore,

similarly to the categories that do not 'violate' natural distinctions (of which the single category of blue in English or Komi as opposite to the two different categories of light blue and dark blue in Russian represents a good example), these categories influence non-verbal behavior. In other words, language does influence thinking in important ways and that the universalists overestimated the role of biologically imprinted aspects and categories of thinking. On the other hand our results show that relativists probably underestimated this role. The truth, as it often happens, is likely to be in-between these two

extreme positions.

Recently several authors (e.g. Gomila, 2012) have claimed that the whole debate between relativists and universalists is poorly framed. Natural categories of thinking and perception can exist alongside the categories of linguistic origin and these two types of categories can mutually influence each other. It is this mutual influence that allows human thinking overcome the rigid biologically given borders of natural categories and makes it so flexible and productive. We think, that our results contribute to this line of thinking.

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## Komi through Knitting and Weaving

*When you knit these logical and sophisticated [Komi] patterns, consider that they have been passed down through the generations in an oral rather than a written tradition (Schurch 1998, 6).*

During the LiLa summer school, we all explored the landscape from different perspectives: anthropological, artistic, educational, touristic and local. The experience of Komi as a landscape turned out to be very complex, multilayered and controversial, which we all processed differently. I approached the experience by diving into the fascinating world and history of Komi handicraft patterns and processed them in my knitting.

### COLLECTING THE THREADS TOGETHER

I had some prior knowledge of the Komi region's handicraft traditions and knew a few people and their skills in knitting, weaving and plant dyeing. I carried my knitting needles with me throughout the time I was at the school and knew I would somehow put my encounters with my old and new friends into stitches. I did not knit during my stay in Komi but collected intentional and unintentional material to be put on the needles after the trip.

The experience of the Komi landscape and the taskscape (Ingold 2002) determined the direction of my knitting. According to Ingold (2002), people are not only forming the landscape through their tasks but also by following the natural cycles. Although we were visitors, we had a chance to follow and take part in the taskscapes in the villages. I noticed how everyday life ran from Sunday masses to cooking meals and washing dishes. I saw beauty and abandoned landscapes. I paid admiring attention to the peaceful blue colour paint on the walls of the houses and quite the opposite in the rather interesting colour combinations in the local handicrafts. I listened to stories and songs, laughed at translated jokes and was overwhelmed of the heart-warming hospitality of the locals everywhere we went.

The past and the future were combined with the present (Ingold 2002) in different ways: the peace and the freedom of rural life in the villages had an undertow of the worry of desolation and children leaving the place. In the city, on the other hand, the joy of the comforts of the modern

world mixed with frustration that nobody really cared about the common future of the place, leaving old houses to deteriorate and the cityscape to decline.

My knitting process started with these materials at hand. The colours I chose represented the landscape, while the items I knitted and weaved represented the people and living in the landscape. The forms and designs became a mixture of the past and future in the present, as well as a combination of my own knitting traditions and the ones I learnt in Komi. I knitted in honour of the people I knew, with each stitch reflecting on the encounters, the experiences and the landscapes. As in all my similar projects, studying local traditions through using locally produced yarn and distinctive patterns and having discussions with local artisans help me to pay my respects to the local people who have welcomed me into their places. It is an act of respect towards the culture I have been given a chance to become acquainted with.

Through this kind of knitting, the slow motion of stitching and the feeling of wool in my fingers give the space needed to process and understand the unfamiliar cultural features of the visited place. This also works as a counterforce to the hectic way of living. It is an effective way of paying honest attention to what has happened.



*I bought the stockings from a local knitter and was fascinated by the color combinations and style that seemed to differ greatly from my own traditions. These stockings inspired my exploration to the secrets of Komi knitting styles.*

*In one of the master classes Lidia Kostareva showed the basics of cold dyeing with onion skins. Image: Tanya Kravtsov She also gave me her plant dyed yarn escorted with a note: "I am waiting for the result"*

### MORE THAN JUST A DIAMOND MODEL

My enthusiasm for learning the local Komi patterns and handicraft traditions started when I visited the ethnographic museum in Syktyvkar, which is filled with more complex and beautifully weaved belts and knitted items. Komi patterning has its own distinctive features, which make it stand out from any other. The reason for diagonal geometric reticulations is based on the old tradition that the patterns were passed on orally from one generation to the other and were easier to remember. More precisely, the fundamental design element of the Komi patterns is the diamond whose appearance in soft handicrafts can be tracked back to the second century BCE (Schurch 1998).

Every Komi village used to have its own distinct variations in the basic patterning and the knitted garments, which often revealed where the wearers were from. According to Schurch (1998), not only the Komi region but also the other older Finno-Ugric textiles shared a similar ornamentation and, later on, influenced other internationally famous patterning. When I started finding references to the broader Finno-Ugric (that Finland and Komi share among other nations) knitting traditions, I started to feel connected. I was of the mind that learning these patterns was no longer only a visitor's tribute to an unfamiliar culture, but a way of placing my own cultural heritage in a wider context. I have found that showing interest in and sharing the joint heritage of knitting tend to connect people from different backgrounds. Knitting is a shared language, which is understood almost anywhere. If people do not knit themselves, they usually know someone in their family who has knitted. Schurch (1998, 8) puts it well: the common language of our stiches extends beyond the boundaries of time, cultural differences and geography.

I started to understand the Komi mindset better and find resemblances to my own cultural heritage. I realized that there had been hints to these throughout our stay in Komi, such as when I read the locals' dry sense of humour from their body language and laughed with tears in my eyes. I understood that we had many things in common, although the spoken language barrier hindered the fluency of communication.



*To these slipper socks I combined all the elements: The colours of copper and ochre were plant-dyed yarn by Lidia and me but the blue represented the Komi landscape. The pattern was traditional but the slipper socks were more contemporary design*



### MORE SIMILAR THAN DIFFERENT

The aspects of cultural sustainability as described in the above situations interest me. It is essential in cultural sustainability to perceive how lives are lived and the ways in which identities and relationships are formed in certain parts of the world. It is not about experts defining and researching the values of heritage and landscape; rather, it is about creating a grassroots approach where the inhabitants themselves determine what they value and how they want to express their sense of place (Auclair & Fairclough 2015).

It transpires that the act of knitting is connected with dimensions of contemporary artworks, as it is an activity that encourages dialogue between participants from different cultural backgrounds. By approaching communities with familiar and basic handicraft traditions, low-threshold art activities can be easier to create. The handicraft-based contemporary art practices with place-specific approaches create an open space for dialogue where the values and perceptions of cultural heritage can be negotiated (Härkönen, Huhmarniemi & Jokela 2018.)

The process of knitting and weaving has materialized into five different items, which are connected by the colour blue. Although I have approached the Komi culture mainly from a visitor's point of view, I have seen this particular act of knitting as a shared heritage between Komi and Finland. Through studying the local handicraft traditions and patterns, I have found more similarities than differences between our regions. The people and their traditions, as connected to landscape, have become even more meaningful than before the process.



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*I continued to examine the patterns to traditional band weaving and the similar diamond element appeared in those patterns as well. I created my own combination from few different patterns.*







Garden and greenhouse Image: Linda T. F. Kristoffersen

### RETHINKING ANTHROPOLOGY

Even though visual ethnography has had an increase in popularity lately, the most common outlet for anthropological research is still the text. While some think that «(...) written anthropology and visual ethnography are complementary (...)» (Nijland in Postma & Crawford 2006, 3) and «the visual is such an important component of human culture, cognitive and perceptual processes, that can be relevant to

all areas of anthropology» (Morphy & Banks 1997, 2–3), others argue that «visual anthropology [is] an altogether different discipline, outside, written anthropology, as audiovisual representations address us differently than words and written texts» (MacDougall in Postma & Crawford 2006, 2) and as such using visual media can leave our data open to interpretation and might lead to «(...) losing one's authority over the understandings people form (...)»



Visiting the Komi lady. The branches she carries are used to remove spiderwebs. Image: Linda T. F. Kristoffersen

(Madden 2010, 112). However, long texts are difficult to present at an exhibition, so we had to find a more accessible way to communicate our findings. In some ways the solution was to go back to what could be considered the earliest days of anthropology; the ethnographic museum. Placing material on display is a form of interpretation where storytelling takes form by defining, segmenting and group-

ing objects together to illustrate ideas and create a visual experience for the visitors. In situ displays, that is installations such as period rooms and dioramas, recreate a virtual world into which the visitors enter. Thus, exhibitions are fundamentally theatrical displays with certain conceptual frames, where the objects, determined by ethnographer, are the actors. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 3, 20.)

During our fieldwork in the villages we quickly got acquainted with the Russian tea culture. Our very first experience after arriving in the countryside was with the samovar; a heated metal container designed to boil water for tea. Pinecones were used as fuel, by setting them on fire and dropping them in the metal pipe. A small amount of concentrated tea was poured from a teapot into a cup, then hot water was added from the samovar to dilute the tea to the appropriate strength. Even though today samovars mostly have fallen out of everyday use, they are still considered a symbol of Russian hospitality and an indispensable element of Russian culture.

During our visit to the aforementioned Komi lady we unfortunately had very limited time, and the visit was cut short when one of the project participants advised us to leave before she offered us tea. Declining such an invitation would have been considered disrespectful. With this in mind we came up with the idea of creating a museum-like tea table at the exhibition.

We incorporated details from our visit to the Komi lady, such as quotes and images from her house. By setting up a chair at the table we invited the visitors to sit down and in some ways participate in the embodied experience which one could argue is the very essence of anthropology:

*It is a practice that values the idea that to know other humans the ethnographer must do as others do, live with others, eat, work and experience the same daily patterns as others. This approach is called participant observation, and it has been a fundamental aspect of ethnographic research over the past century. (Madden 2010, 16)*



Boiling water in samovars. Image: Emma Mustajärvi

Tea time installation, Image  
Linda T. F. Kristoffersen



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## Multilayered Ecosystem of the Cultural Landscape of Onega

We participated the summer school as environmental researchers. We had to work in a team with anthropologists and art educators to study and perceive the cultural landscape of the northern village of Onezh'ye on the bank of the river Vym. Perhaps, this village is inherent in many of the usual features of any other rural landscape of northern villages in the Northeast of the European part of Russia. However, people and the things they do and have done in previous history give it a special charm and uniqueness.

We became aware that it was in these parts that Pitirim Sorokin spent his childhood. He lived on the opposite bank of the river - in the village of Turya. The surprise was caused by the fact that the shipyard, organized by entrepreneur Kozlov in the 19th century, worked on the site of the Onega. Materials for the manufacture of vessels went already Veliky Ustyug.

During our stay in Onega, we discovered an amazing multilayered picture of the life of the northern village in the moments of the change of seasons. For several days while we were living in the village, we saw and felt the green fragrant spring, cold weather, more like a winter with a strong wind and wet snow and a little hot summer.

Fluctuations of the weather did not prevent vegetation from passing through the phenological path, predetermined by its genetics. We saw how the green foliage dissolves in the trees and the floodplain meadow plants begin to vegetate and blossom.

*Willow blossoming in Onegy.  
Image: Antti Stöckell*



The natural ecosystem, architecture and people living in the village form a multi-scapular and multi-layered landscape. The axis of the natural component of the landscape is the river Vym. Around it is built the life of both the animal world and the people living in these parts.

Vegetation is quite diverse. In the vicinity of the Onega, we can see all the plant communities characteristic of the taiga: light pine forests with cranberries and blueberries in a ravine-kustranichkovom tier and green mosses and bushy cladonia in the soil cover; spruce forests with well developed undergrowth and a variety of herbaceous plants; floodplain meadows and swamps.

Despite the relatively active agricultural activities, we did not notice any serious signs of disturbances in the natural ecosystems of the rural landscape. However, a certain problem is the lack of

organized places for collecting household waste by rural villagers. They simply throw garbage into the ravine, which somewhat spoils the aesthetic qualities of the cultural landscape.

Against the background of the picturesque taiga nature, we see the authentic architecture of the northern village and the old temples built in the north-Russian (Onega) and Komi (Otlá) styles. Villages are gradually emptying, because they can not stand competition with cities in connection with the more simple life of the latter. However, here we see examples of families who do not want to change the serene and free country life to urban fuss. And here they try to equip their lives in harmony with nature and God. Most of the locals are quite religious. The center of their spiritual life are the temples, where they come to worship with their whole family.

*Taiga forest in Zhiganovka. Image: Tanya Kravtsov*



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## Nature is the Thing



Images in the essay: Enni Remes © Emma Mustäjärvi

At the beginning of this project, as art educators, we approached the landscape with artistic methods, with the idea of creating art, something concrete. The first thing we discussed concerned the materials we could find from the landscape itself. The next step, as we already knew we would be working in groups, was to think about community art and its tools.

In art education, community-based and environmental art has been found to work well in addressing community problems and current phenomena. Art and education are both attached to a wider cultural and social structure, which is why a sense of community and thinking about it are justified and topical aims in art education and making art. Hiltunen states that art education should pursue an active role and become a future-oriented influencer, and not just the reflector of current circumstances (Hiltunen 2009, 21).

Recycled materials were easily found because there were no waste disposal facilities, but there were refuse dumps in every village. Environmental friendliness naturally became part of our artwork. We also wanted to use rubbish, such as glass bottles, which had been thrown away, in order to create something beautiful or interesting. In the fieldwork in Kozlovka, there were many willow trees and bushes growing on the fringes of the village, so it was only natural to use these quickly growing plant for creative purposes. Willow has been used in community artworks at the University of Lapland, Finland, so we were familiar with the material and its many possibilities.





In our willow group, there were people from five different countries: the Netherlands, the Komi Republic, Norway, Sweden and Finland. There were both students and teachers involved in creating this piece, who represented different age groups. The language used was mostly English.

The idea of working with the icon as an inspiration came from our local participants in the town. In the Komi area, there was once an animistic religion, where nature was sacred, whereas, nowadays, the area is Orthodox Christian and the icons are sacred objects. Using the icon as a starting point for making art caused some confusion and discussion. We had to clarify that we were not making a real icon, just using the idea of it. In the end, we all agreed to only use the shape of the icon, which is the shape of an arch. In addition, the artwork evolved to become more three-dimensional and not just a two-dimensional relief.

In the creative process itself, everyone found a

role for him/herself. For example, there were willow cutters, net weavers and designers. Along with these individual characteristics, the artwork foregrounded our existing community characteristics at that time, as Hiltunen describes (2009, 132). As our hovel started to grow mould, the thought of turning the artwork into a place of meditation or reflection evolved.

Even though our group comprised leaders and instructors, we remained on equal terms, with each participant's ideas and thoughts informing the piece throughout the process. Our task was mainly to look after the structure so that it stayed durable and strong, as well as explain and discuss the meanings that the willow installation piece prompted among the group members.

Karjalainen writes that we are weaving the net of meanings around us all the time. We have the need to decode, see, understand and comprehend something to be something and, at the same time, be

able to name the phenomenon (Karjalainen, 2013, 18). This also applies to landscape. Indeed, the complexity in naming and understanding the meanings of landscape started to become visible in the environment we were working in and with. Art is,

by many means, an important way of interpreting the world, or, as Karjalainen describes it: "A creative way of showing the world of meanings" (Karjalainen, 2015, 15).

While creating the willow and recycled material



installation, we truly got the chance to "live in the landscape" and to feel different weather conditions and temperatures on our own skin, all the way from wet snowfall to wind and sunshine. At the same time, we got to admire the beautiful river and countryside landscape around us, for we were making a piece of art on the high bench of the river.

Jokela says that, in the concept of art, the environment is experienced in terms of its social and functional content. People understand the environment through experiences, which they create by

their own actions and perceptions. The environment becomes concrete to individuals as places, as humans live in a world that is full of places, which are meaningful (Jokela 2001, 41-42).

We asked each person who had been part of making the willow installation to describe their relationship with nature by writing a few words. They were able to choose which language to do this. Karjalainen says that meanings place people in a psychic relationship with the world (Karjalainen 2013, 15). In this way, thoughts and recognized meanings





locate people and their points of view about nature and the environment.

We carried the willow piece to different sites in the village, based on wherever each one of us wanted to be photographed. We managed to move the piece with cooperation. Carrying the artwork together, we started to feel like what we were doing was performance art. As Hiltunen describes, it is about a holistic experience where each person present is involved in the art happening (2009, 123).

Some people chose the riverside as their location, some chose a landscape with cows and fields, some wanted to be pictured in the middle of Kozlovka, or even the village bus stop. Vilja-Mantere says that she does not stop in the landscape, but that the landscape stops her. In this moment, a person can confront themselves if they dare to do so (Vilja-Mantere 2016, 145). At the same time, something we call identity is formed, when the landscape becomes part of us and eventually, a landscape of our soul.



Marjo Räsänen (2015, 358) writes how environmental art usually describes an individual piece of art, but an art performance or an artistic act can be viewed as environmental art. Environmental art can foreground the values or problems of the environment. Even though some artworks are meant to solve environmental problems, usually environmental art is not presenting ready-made solutions but leading people to find them (Räsänen 2015, 358). People are already thinking their relationship with nature – or, in this case, the landscape – is important. When people steer their thoughts towards the landscape, they are able to perceive values, as well as problems that could be a threat to those values.

The participants were photographed alongside the willow art installation and the signs about their relationship with nature, in a place of their choosing. The location of the piece represented a place they found to be the most important to them, the closest to them or the most beautiful landscape they could think of. Vilja-Mantere explains that the meanings of the landscape evolve out of the interaction between the experiencer and the subject. In turn, the “view” transforms into a landscape, which has values and meanings to the person who experiences it (Vilja-Mantere 2016, 145).

We wanted to donate the willow installation to the villagers and let them decide the location of the



piece. Our host suggested the garden of a house, which had been used by women. However, we located it right next to the local sauna. The side of the sauna seemed like a great spot because at least Finnish people find the sauna to be a place to ponder, even meditate, and to enjoy silence. We hope the willow installation can also offer some of that. Describing their relationship with nature, many participants also talked about the inner peace they received from nature.

Every time the artwork was moved, it transformed a little, depending on the location and the people

who carried it, because the willow as material is so flexible. It was not only the shape that was changed, but also the whole piece of art, which was inscribed with new and more versatile meanings all the time. Recalling anthropologist Alexander Sallstedt’s text, our working title, “The Thing”, became official and in turn took on a totally fresh magnitude. The piece inspired the participants to create even more art and written texts about the landscape. We represented the process of making the willow installation piece with a 10-piece photo series (each photo in A3 size) and a short film, made from GIF animations.

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## Udora: The Beauty of Mowing the Grass Together

Narcissus did not fall in love with himself; he fell in love with his own image, his reflection on water. Narcissism rejects beauty, and also love. While mirrors only reflect existing surfaces, beauty is a window allowing a glimpse into something other, at what is not you, an alterity. We find it in our mysterious past and in our dreams of a future that is more than a prolongation of the present. Those who feel trapped in a modern artificial world find it in the refreshing materiality of nature, and those who see material body and world as a cage escape it through soothing or demanding spirituality. The beauty of landscape lies not in the eye of the beholder, but in the emotional repercussions of the many human and natural forces that form it. (Bigell 2018.)



Images in the essay: Werner Bigell



### I. TRACES OF THE DISASTER

After a long trip to the village of Patrakovo in the Udora District, I encountered beauty: the endless green sea of the forest with its suggestion of infinity and the northern summer with its brief and delirious vitality. It was June, the month of mosquitoes. I was told that, in Soviet times, there were fewer mosquitoes. Really? Why? Mosquitoes like high grass and, in Soviet times, there was a collective dairy farm here, where the grass was cut regularly. But not anymore. Patrakovo once had 120 inhabitants; now there are seven. My view of the landscape began to change (Bigell, & Cheng 2014). There was a shadow hanging over Udo-

ra's beauty; in fact, I was in an economic disaster zone. The signs of the meltdown were all over the place. Walking around, I found rusty machinery from Soviet times. I saw a sign for the store where, once, customers could not only buy products but sell what they produced or collected as well. I saw old maps showing the land use plans of the collective farm. There used to be an airport. There also used to be Bulgarian forest workers; a few remain and take care of their memories in a museum in Ussyorsk. The landscape I saw housed a void: it was an anti-landscape, where human projections onto the land had failed (Bigell, 2014).



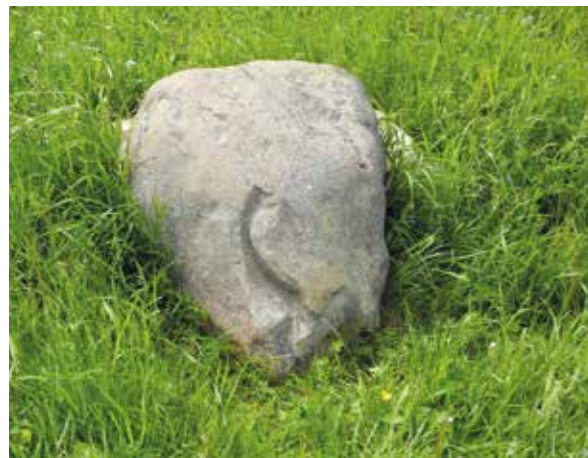
There were no more cows, no dairy production, and the milk pails are now used for transporting water. What I first saw as beautiful meadow was in fact abandoned farmland with uncut grass. The young trees on it suddenly looked menacing, the endless green sea of the forest reaffirming its superiority over the grassland.

In an abandoned school hung a portrait of Lenin. What was meant as a determined look on his face to build a new world now looks like the determination to figure out what went wrong. In the museum of the still-used school in Bolshaya Pyssa can be found a table with fanfares, a drum and a stack of red bandanas. The table did not look like a museum display; rather, the items had been put there for the next event that would never come.

Our grammar lacks a tense. We have the future perfect, the past of the future (“I will have baked a cake”), but we lack the future of the past (it could be formed, though, as in “Masha was going to be a cosmonaut”). The world of the past had futures. And now? As former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt once said, “Whoever has visions should see a doctor”, while, for Margaret Thatcher, “there is no alternative”. I experience nostalgia for the future.

## II. ENDURING PRESENCE

Not everything disappeared. The spirits are still there, as in a shamanic sign on a rock, in a field or in churches that were used for storage in Soviet times. Nature, as well as its rivers and forest, is the most obvious presence. But who owns it? What is the role of the local people in Udora when it comes to land use and resource exploitation? When you feed the printer with a new stack of copy paper, it may well be a tree from Udora, processed by the paper mill close to Syktyvkar.



There are still people and there are the stories of those people. Some came unexpectedly, such as personal stories from the war in Afghanistan. In many houses, I saw heritage collections in the form of artefacts: a fisherman showed me his collection of previously used spears, traps and nets. In this sense, Udora is a living museum, a so-called ecomuseum<sup>1</sup> (Bigell 2012) without having the status of one. There are still inhabited houses, some permanently so, some used as summerhouses, and some, as in the photo below, taken in Patrakovo, waiting for tourists.



With collective farming gone, people have reverted to a pre-industrial subsistence life: hunting, fishing, small-scale farming, berry picking and trapping (see the trap below).



<sup>1</sup>An ecomuseum is a museum where artefacts are left in their surroundings and where local people use and take care of them and are responsible for managing their heritage and museum. I argue that this pattern of heritage management is widespread but not always acknowledged.

Food is the common denominator for past and future, from Soviet dairy farming to today's subsistence. Landscapes provide specific crops, but consumption patterns also create landscapes. Infrastructure is needed; traditional refrigerators are used because of blackouts. Eating together is used in rituals, confirming a 'we' that includes the guest. Eating is participation in materiality and also connects to the spiritual world, such as in the Eucharist. In the years after Udora, I interviewed farmers from an ecological network in Thailand and allotment gardeners in Germany, asking them what was beautiful about their farm or garden. Their answers were in unison: natural diversity, community and the fact that you can eat what it produces. I suspect that people in Udora would agree. (Bigell 2018.)



### III. A NEW FUTURE?

Most people I spoke to were sceptical about a revival of agriculture in the region because of its latitude and poor roads (that was before economic sanctions boosted Russian agriculture). But, following an initiative by Dina Ivanovna, a network formed for the promotion of tourism, where people pool their resources and skills. Someone will offer a cooking course using a traditional stove, another has a car and will accompany hunters, and others will create a Pitrim Sorokin memorial route. I was shown the remnants of a salt-winning plant deep in the forest, planned by

German engineers around 1900. I asked how many tourists see it per year. "Oh, you are the first one", was the answer.

During my visit, the villagers of the region were arranging the Komi Spring Festival for the first time in many years. This was a hopeful sign. Whoever dreams of a new future for Udora must think in terms of a new 'we'.

While traditional landscape painting assumes a single perspective of a distant outsider looking at the well-composed elements of nature, with some human beings thrown in either for scale or for symbolic representation, there is a different way to look at the landscape. It is possible to discover the many human, non-human and sometimes inhuman forces creating it, as well as to listen to those who live and work in it. The well-composed singular view falls apart and real human beings, not symbols, emerge from this vernacular perspective<sup>1</sup> (Olwig 1996).

<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Olwig distinguishes between a spatial perspective on landscape of one outside observer and what he calls a "platial" or place-oriented one, with several perspectives from the inside. An example of the former is Caspar David Friedrich's painting "Wanderer above the Sea of Fog", an example for the latter is Pieter Bruegel's painting "The Harvest". The platial meaning, according to Olwig, is older and its meaning lingers on in the concept of landscape in Germanic languages.

Work, the transformation of the world, creates solidarity. This does not necessarily mean that we conquer and destroy the world, but create a home in it. When an invisible disaster struck Udora, many left their land and home. But there is a dedicated stubbornness in those who remain. They preserve the beauty of the past and see the beauty of a common future. It is not clear yet as to how it will look, but hopefully the grass will be cut again.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The photos show villages in the district of Udora in the Komi Republic, Russia. They were taken by the author during a ten-day long trip in 2012. My thanks go to the local organizer in Patrakovo, Dina Ivanovna Chuprova, my interview partners Albert Longinov and Alexander Morozov, and to Valeria Chudyakova for her interpreting.



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# Thinking about Beauty

Images in the essay: Tanya Kravtsov



CITYSCAPE OF SYKTYVKAR, KOMI REPUBLIC, RUSSIA, MAY 2018

Wandering on the streets of Syktyvkar, I realized how similar the cityscape is to my hometown of Omsk. I tried to capture with my camera the beauty and the ugliness of the surroundings, based on my memories and personal views. I found the wooden colourful houses to be beautiful, which unfortunately have not been restored and preserved for decades. Indeed, many of them are considered to be unsafe for living and will be soon destroyed. In my vision, these wooden houses are an integrated part of the cityscape in Syktyvkar, as in many other Russian cities, connecting the present with the past, keeping

*The article is based on interviews, notes and observations during the visit in Syktyvkar.*

people's memories and stories alive. Those houses have cultural, historical and aesthetic value. In contrast with the grey concrete high-rise buildings, they have individuality and charm, looking pleasant in their size, material, texture and colour, even their age. However, the aesthetics of the concrete housing blocks, which were built to answer social needs, can be argued over, while beauty can be found in their functionality and practicality: "the convenient place where one lives" (Bigell 2018, 191).

I grew up in a small neighbourhood with similar wooden houses in blue and green, surrounded by ash-leaved maples, linden trees and lilac bushes. The houses do not exist anymore, but I still remember the creak of the wooden stairs and the smell of linden trees. For me, as maybe for many others, the beauty of these wooden houses is 'easily communicated', having a nostalgic character (Bigell 2018, 193).



What I found not so beautiful were the parking garages. I never liked them, even as a child. I understand the need and functionality of these constructions; however, I consider them to be aesthetically ugly. Garages are common across Russia, mainly made of metal, concrete or brick with metal doors locked to protect their contents from theft. As a child, I remember that those garages were an attraction for kids in the neighbourhood. We jumped on the roofs of the garages, making a horrible noise and endangering ourselves. Adults were always angry and screamed at us when they caught us jumping on them. Now, I understand why. Another negative memory that I have related to the garages is alcoholism. Garages were considered to be a place where a man could drink alone or with friends, under the pretence of fixing the car. It became a joke, which was based on the dark side of reality. On the other hand, it was a safe place to leave the car and provided a personal space for men, where they could keep their tools and fix their car even on cold, dark winter days by heating and lighting the garage.

I was lucky to have company on the way to the ethnography museum: namely, Anelia, one of the participants in the summer school, a young, ambitious woman who worked as a lecturer at Syktyvkar State University. The stories she told me about the city, accompanied by emotions and feelings, touched my heart. She told me that the municipal authorities have neglected the area. For a long time, there have been no investments in the development of the city: "No one cares what the city looks like. Once it was a cosy place, but now I feel emptiness in my soul", she said. The locals cannot influence or change the situation. "Russia is a centralized state, and it is a commonly heard com-





Images above: Elena Chuprova.



plaint that local people have little power” (Bigell 2012, 24). Many trees have been cut down and the ones that are left are cropped very short, without any thought to their aesthetic value. When we passed near to a metal fence and benches, Anelia pointed to the benches as an example of an ugly element of the cityscape. She said that, in winter, they look like sharks when they protrude out of the snowdrifts. I would argue about the beauty of the benches, as it is a matter of taste. However, I cannot ignore the fact that the fence, rubbish bins and benches look rusty and require renovation and paint.

I had a chance to talk about the cityscape of Syktyvkar with Elena, a student of ecology at the University of Syktyvkar. I asked her to describe what is beautiful and ugly in the cityscape. She said that she likes the Sysola River embankment of the city. Sysola in the Komi language is ‘Siktyv’, while ‘kar’ means city; therefore, the name Syktyvkar can be translated from Komi as a city on the Sysola River. The beauty of the river is captured in a few photos given to me by Elena. According to her, the embankment is a great place to observe sunsets. From there, the open space and water reflection make it possible to experience sunsets in their full magnificence.

#### LANDSCAPE OF ONEZH’YE VILLAGE, KOMI, RUSSIA, MAY 2018

In Onezh’ye Village, I talked with a local young woman called Uljana, aged about 30. I asked her if she would prefer to live in the village or in the city. Her confident answer was the village, and she added that her dream is to build a house near the church; she pointed to the place and

I took a picture of it. I also asked her what is beautiful and ugly in her eyes in the rural environment she is living in. She considers her surroundings as beautiful: people, nature and the sky, which is low and magnificently beautiful. The ugly element in her eyes is manifest in the ruins left after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which no one has taken care of. She also mentioned one challenging aspect of living in the village: the lack of work. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the collective farms were closed and nothing new has been developed in their place. This situation is one of the



local landscape features, based on the ‘economic frame’, revealing the invisible to the visitor’s eyes about the ‘rural idyll’ (Bigell 2012, 24)

I agree with Uljana, that the sky has a unique beauty there. In this area, people settled on the hills along the River Vim. Being on the hill gives a feeling of low sky, which is dominant in the local landscape. The sky embraces you in its arms, while the endless space around gives a feeling of freedom and the immense power of nature. I tried to capture the sky in its unique appearance in the villages we visited: Onezh’ye, Otla and Kozlovka.

#### CONCLUSION

During the trip I was thinking a lot about beauty, and how we define what is beautiful and what is not. A sense of beauty can be very general and commonplace, depending on our cultural, social and educational background. However, it can also be highly personal, relating to our memories and perceptions of the world. During the trip, the word “beautiful” was heard many times, in reference to the landscapes we saw, the food we ate, the people we met, and the handicraft works we created. The interviews with locals and my

personal observations revealed a recurrent theme, which is bounded to beauty in both rural and urban areas: connection and care. One local woman from Onezh’ye Village told me that the earth is alive and that people should respect and treat it with care and soul. Conversely, there is the ugliness, which is associated with disconnection and carelessness, and visible in the ruins left behind by the Soviet era, as well as the abandoned old houses, cut-down trees and the lack of attention and care by municipal authorities. I got the feeling that the people there are emotionally connected to the place based on the memories of how it looked and was maintained in the past, but not anymore.

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