<1> Co-composing a village history in the archipelago of Southwestern Finland

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Abstract: Nostalgic narration as such is not religious, but it can be recognized to have an ontological function. I have conducted oral history project in Lypyrtti, an old pilot's village on the southwestern coast of Finland. The fear of losing knowledge of their local history in Lypyrtti arises simultaneously with the fear of losing access to clear water. Time has passed and the future seems to promise the rather unwelcome change of eutrophication. Most likely due to this sense of impermanence, the past spatial practices or old ways of living in the reminisced village are almost sacrosanct. The nostalgic, enchanted village lives in the memories of the present inhabitants, and the present ominously changing environment reminds them of it, prompting them to remember.

This oral history project had two literal results: a history book on the village and my ongoing research project in comparative religion. It was a reciprocal signification process in many ways. The production of narrated data was an act of interaction and dialogue between the locals, the environment and myself. As I understand, cultural knowledge, rather than being imported into the settings of practical activity, is constituted within these settings. Every step of the conceptualization – from the observation to the verbalization – is social. I combine the ideas, concepts and methodology of oral history and place research. I bring into the discussion the double agency of researcher as experiencer (in the field) and as conceptualizer (in the textualization process). I draw inspiration mainly from anthropologist Tim Ingold's and sociologist Bruno Latour's thoughts, in order to elaborate how various kinds of actants and actors mediated information in the process and influenced each other, thereby extending conceptualizations of agency from human to non-human actors.

Keywords: Actor-network-theory, autoethnography, environment, nostalgia, oral history, place research, textualization

<2> Ethnographic notes on a meaning-making process and agency

> I made most of the journeys to interview the villagers by rowing a little boat. One evening when I was returning home, I stopped to watch the waterways extending in five different directions. My geographical position was in the centre of the village. There was no church – as is customary in Finnish villages – only water.

The above description of a landscape experience is from my field diary of conducting oral history research in Lypyrtti, an old pilot's village on the southwestern coast of Finland. It adheres to three themes concerning empiricism that I wish to discuss in this chapter, which is based on my ethnographic fieldwork. The first concerns the village itself as a *place* or many places. The second concerns the researcher's *agency* among other agencies. The third is methodological and concerns the importance of local *practices of placemaking*, particularly in the environment of water, as an essential part of the study. These themes were also some of the main constituents of the textualization process, which had two literal results: a history book on the village and my ongoing research project in comparative religion. For this chapter, I draw inspiration mainly from anthropologist Tim Ingold's and sociologist Bruno Latour's thoughts, in order to elaborate the co-composition of different agencies and my involvement as a researcher in this process.

The locals in Lypyrtti expressed their interest in collecting oral history on their village in 2006. As one of the local summer residents, I decided that I wanted to do this. I was also a postgraduate student planning to do dissertation work, so I decided to combine these two endeavours.[1] It was a reciprocal signification process in many ways. First, I was interested in meanings as what Latour (2005, 114) calls "matters of concern". Latour writes: "The discussion begins to shift for good when one introduces not matters of fact, but what I now call *matters of concern*. While highly uncertain and loudly disputed, these real, objective, atypical and, above all, interesting agencies are taken not exactly as object but rather as *gatherings*." Secondly, my research was an experiment and "an exploration of a thing and its relationships, rather than an explanation of or for the thing", as Mika Lassander (2012, 246) has translated Bruno Latour's term 'network'. According to geographer Doreen Massey (2005, 28), village is "not a representation, but experimentation". As such, the production of narrated data was an act of interaction and dialogue between the locals, the environment and myself. I travelled on a

1 I published a book of collected stories, *Lypyrtti-Lypertö – Kylä väylien varrella*, concerning the history of the village in 2011.

horizontal plane, on a landscape, and in temporal spaces of narration. In this way of telling things, village is, to quote Massey (2005, 130) again, "the dimension of a multiple trajectories, a simultaneity of stories so far". Obviously, this article is not the whole story from the beginning to the end of that process, but it discusses some examples of my itinerary to the village, and it is an element of a more detailed description of marking interest in and co-composing the meaning of the village.

In his book *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Latour proposes the following definition or way of understanding "the social": "it doesn't designate a domain of reality or some particular item, but rather is the name of a movement, a displacement, a transformation, a translation, an enrollment" (Latour 2005, 64–65). For Actor Network Theory, the social "is an association between entities which are in no way recognizable as being social in the ordinary manner, except during a brief moment when they are reshuffled together" (Latour 2005, 65). Latour (2005, 114). emphasizes that this shift in focus should allow us to renew from top to bottom the very scene of empiricism – and hence the division between "natural" and "social". Sociologist John Law proposes the idea of method assemblage to broaden the notion of "method" to include not only what is present in the form of texts and their production, but also their hinterlands and hidden supports. It is "a continuing process of crafting and enacting necessary boundaries between presence, manifest absence and Otherness" (Law 2006, 144). In other words, what is central to such a view is an understanding of sociality and culture as a form of making, doing, and acting, as well as an understanding of sociality through pragmatic, sensuous intentionality and interaction between human actors and non-human actors (Vannini 2009a, 4).

<2> A dwelling place

To begin with, I pull back to illuminate a panorama of Lypyrtti and describe how the "locals are *localized*" (Latour 2005, 187, 195, his emphasis; see also Oppenheim 2007, 478). Lypyrtti is an independent and distant part of another municipality, Kustavi, where the church is located. Lypyrtti is nowadays a village of about 50 houses on the coasts of three bigger and a couple smaller islands. The houses are located in an area of approximately two sq km, although the water areas of the village extend even further. In the archipelago, the borders of a village are actually drawn on the water. Since the time of the general parcelling out of the land in the 18th century, the area of the village has been about the same as the largest farm in the village. Lypyrtti has been first and foremost an uninhabited fishing and hunting area. After about 500 years of active piloting, small-scale farming and husbandry, hunting and fishing, it became "an

island dwelling place", as one of the interviewees expressed it. In his book *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (2000), Ingold discusses the relation between the concepts of building and dwelling. He refers to Heidegger's view of building as a container of certain life activities. If people are capable of dwelling, the people build (Ingold 2000, 186). In the part of the archipelago where Lypyrtti is located, this basically required – at the time when the first inhabitants decided to stay – two or three things at the same time and a good combination of them: enough land to collect hay for animals, good possibilities to fish, and access to extra income from piloting. Here we can see a kind of macro co-composition, a balance of survival maintained through several different sources of livelihood. With the passing of time, the more important piloting would become. Nevertheless, in 1961 the Finnish Maritime Administration decided to terminate piloting along the Ströömi, which had traditionally been an important passage, and it closed the Lypyrtti pilot station, requiring deeper waterways for ships to safely carry more cargo. After this change, the history of the village has been – if I may simplify – a story of the depopulation of a vital community.

Both the idea of who belongs to the village and the areal idea of the village have changed through time, depending on what has been the centre of the villagers' activity (Kouri 2011). These perplexities reminded me of what Latour calls "the first source of uncertainty", from which one should learn that there is no relevant group that can be said to make up social aggregates, no established component that can be used as an incontrovertible starting point (Latour 2005, 29). Anyhow, Latour's idea of a "center of calculation" afforded the concept of examining the village as not one place but many places. It is any concrete site where calculations – such as decisions for action, value judgments, and interpretations – are made about issues presently at hand (Latour 1999, 304; see also Lassander 2012, 248–249). In Lypyrtti, the centre of calculation has changed over time from the biggest farm and large sailboats to the pilot station and nowadays to the common wharf, where villagers keep their boats to get to the other islands.

After 2008, when the mobile grocery shop stopped coming to the wharf (Kouri 2011, 208), there has not been a clear locus for a definitive centre of calculation, only those in memories or in the past. Furthermore, today the identity of a summer resident is more or less like a visitor in his/her ancestral home, as opposed to a local inhabitant.[2] Most of the 50 old houses are summer

2 I ended up thinking that an inhabitant of the village was anyone who considered themselves to belong to Lypyrtti, or who talked about themselves or was referred to by someone else as a villager (see Latour 2005, 29–30, 32).

residences of the relatives of the families that once lived in the village all year round. There are also some villagers whose parents were summer residents already in the 1960s, so these people also spent parts of their childhood in the vibrant pilot's village (Kouri 2011). There was neither one clearly defined village with boarders and inhabitants nor concrete centres of calculation. This ambiguous situation didn't remain the last one. Older associations mutating into slightly different ones became the rule – not the exception (see Latour 2005, 36). However, there were places to calculate in the narrative past. This nostalgically remembered village figured in my experience and observations as a "landscape of the soul" (*sielunmaisema* in Finnish), a place that was already infused with significance, not least because time has passed and the future seems to promise the rather unwelcome change of eutrophication. Most likely due to this sense of impermanence, the past spatial practices or old ways of living in the reminisced village are almost sacrosanct.

<2> The sacralization of a landscape

Before discussing examples from my fieldwork, I shall focus briefly on two concepts of environment: "landscape" and "sacred". The relationship between religion, tradition and environment has enjoyed increasing recognition in the analysis of ethnographic data since the 1980s. Also, recent literature in religious studies includes a great deal of consideration about spatial categories such as landscape, location, place and space (see e.g. Anttonen 2003, 2013, 2014; Knott 2005; Tweed 2006). Adding "sacred" to this perspective renders the discussion even more complex. The process of sacralization of a landscape involves the landscape becoming, or being viewed, as sacred (e.g. Nordeide 2013, xix). In anthropology, the conventional dichotomy between naturally given and culturally constructed worlds is commonly expressed by means of the contrast between the "etic" level of objective description and the "emic" level, on which an environment is made meaningful by cultural subjects. Already in the 1980s, the Finnish folklore and comparative religion scholar Lauri Honko introduced what he called "the ecology of tradition", which distinguished between two interrelated methods, perception and action, through which people interacted with their environment. Honko concluded that an individual's concept of her or his environment proceeds from subjective perceptions to objective concepts, actions and their results. In classifying his or her perceptions, communicating them or acting in nature according to his observations, an individual objectivizes the concept of his or her environment, whereby it becomes intersubjective. In this way, a subjective observation of the

environment becomes social. A subjective observation needs and uses products of language and tradition, names and concepts (Honko 1985, 67, 69).

Honko's concept of "total" milieu thus calls for an outside observer and information that is often not even available in the culture under study. Honko (1985, 67) also points out that the researcher may have to assist in the description of the "effective" environment or the "perceived" milieu, particularly as regards the verbalization and systemization of ideas and attitudes that do not occur in the culture or tradition in verbal form. This is why there may be benefits to being a researcher that is an "anthropologist at home", an insider of the group and a practitioner of its dwelling places. As I understand it, every step of the conceptualization – from the observation to the verbalization – is social. Perception or observation is not only a mental operation in the human mind. It is one part of a social co-composition, where we also take other agencies than human minds into consideration.

The term "landscape" has been defined in many ways (e.g. Wylie 2007, 2). Certainly it is not easy to draw a distinction between landscape and environment, but the main distinction seems to be between diverse researchers' characterizations of the agency that they accord humans and cognition (Ingold 2000, 193). Ingold begins by explaining what landscape is *not:* It is neither "land", "nature", nor "space". He basically rejects the divisions between inner and outer worlds – respectively, of mind and matter, meaning and substance. For him, the focus is the familiar domain of our dwelling and how, through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it. It is this relational and compositional context of people's engagement with the world from which each place draws its unique significance. Thus, whereas with space meanings are *attached* to the world, with the landscape they are *gathered from* it (Ingold 2000, 190–192, his emphasis.) Or, as I prefer to conceptualize, *co-composed in* it. Although I pay attention to the agency of the ethnographer and the significance of the researcher's engagement and involvement, I want to emphasize that endowing spaces with value is not something that I do *alone*. Rather, I co-compose the meaning of the landscape in the space of negotiation. I recycle the metaphor of *conversation*, which anthropologist Anna Lund and geographer Karl Benediktsson introduced as enabling recognition of the more-than-human character of all meaningful exchanges involving humans and landscape. It points towards a two-way communicative process and enables us to understand human and non-human life in more dynamic ways. They understand landscape as involving "a more-than-human materiality; a constellation of natural forms that are independent of humans, yet part and parcel of the process by which human beings make their living and understand their own placing in the world" (Lund and Benediktsson 2010, 1, their emphasis).

<2> The researcher's agency among other co-composers

Anthropological theories of the nature-culture relationship have throughout their history centred on the topics of perception and cognition. Ingold (2000, 153) writes, that the main question seems to revolve around the distribution of agency: is landscape or environment the world we are living in, or a scene we are looking at and giving meanings to? Two main assumptions have persisted as endpoints of the continuum. One of these is the assumption that people construct the world, or what for them is "reality", by organizing the data of sensory perception in terms of received and culturally specific conceptual schemata. The other, more recent assumption is the "practice theory". Its advocates argue that cultural knowledge, rather than being imported into the settings of practical activity, is constituted within these settings through the development of specific dispositions and sensibilities that lead people to orient themselves in relation to their environment and to attend to its features in the particular ways that they do (Ingold 2000, 153; see also e.g. Honko 1985, 59–60; Wylie 2007, 1). My aim with this chapter is to present parts of my fieldwork, the settings of practical activity, as examples of and in light of the latter perspective. I draw inspiration from Ingold's thoughts, particularly from the following description: "In wayfinding, people do not traverse the surface of a world whose layout is fixed in advance – as represented on the cartographic map. Rather, they 'feel their way' *through* a world that is itself in motion, continually coming into being through the combined action of human and non-human agencies" (Ingold 2000, 155, his emphasis).

If the emic level is understood as reality constituted in *relation* to the beings whose environment it is, it is apparent that the world becomes a meaningful place for people through being *lived in*, rather than by having been constructed along the lines of some formal design (Ingold 2000, 168, his emphasis). Because my own position as a researcher was that of an "anthropologist at home", an insider and outsider in the village at the same time, exploring my own agency in composing the study became particularly important to address. In the field, the entire situation turned into a dynamic interpersonal experience, the world between me and others (Okely 1992, 1–3, 14; Skultans 2006, 2–3). My research context was produced by reciprocally localizing myself in the environment. I was – in Latour's terms – a full-blown *mediator* (Latour 2005, 128), as were the interviewees. The "social actors" began to include environmental phenomena and other non-human actors. I was in the position of a bifurcation, an event, or the origin of a new translation (Latour 2005, 108). Those events were temporally liminal spaces, one after another in the process of becoming. Social anthropologist Vieda Skultans explains that translation involves the personal engagement of the researcher.

Translation is involved when we move from one modality to another, be that from culture to culture, from person to person, from orality to textuality, from experience to narrative, and from local embodied knowledge to generalization (Skultans 2006, 10).

The construction of knowledge in this analysis is based on my experiences in the field. It was built up in my process of reflecting those experiences by writing about the choices I made and the thoughts and associations I had during the research work. I realized that meaning is immanent in the contexts of people's pragmatic engagements with its constituents (Ingold 2000, 154, 168).[3] Next, I describe how I experienced present realities in the environment – "out-there", to quote Law – and created as an ethnographer knowledge of those realities as "in-here" (Law 2006, 13). With those mutually penetrating autoethnographical and reflexive practices, I was exposed to "a hinterland" of pre-existing social and material realities (Law 2006, 13). The history of a village is a "collection of narratives" (Massey 2005, 9) picked up from the stream of an ever-changing environment: events, voices and still indescribable experiences, such as intuition or "senses of place" (Feldt and Basso 1996). This stream is what Latour (2005, 242; see also Oppenheim 2007, 480) calls "plasma", namely something that "is not yet formatted, not yet measured, not yet socialized". "It is in between and not made of social stuff. It is not hidden, simply unknown" (Latour 2005, 244). Law defines (2006, 34) this unknown "hinterland" as "an overall geography" and "a topography of reality-possibilities". With the last definition he refers to his disagreement with the claim of Latour and Steve Woolgars that in its practice science produces its realities as well as describes them (Law 2006, 13; see also Oppenheim 2007, 482). My focus here is to describe *how* various kinds of actants and actors participate in a meaning-making process, not to solve ontological questions concerning their applicability to the co-composition. I prefer to keep the perspective open for all possible realms and actants and actors, humans and non-humans. As a researcher of religious studies, I also take into account beings conventionally referred to, for example, as "spiritual" or "supernatural". Therefore, as ethnographer Phillip Vannini stresses, rather than focus on agency alone or on wherein it lies, it is best to turn the ethnographic attention to the creative ways of relating between humans and non-humans. Understood in this way, agency is not something that a human being has, but rather the diffused potential for action present in a social and material setting. In this sense, to speak of diffused agency is also to invoke an ecology of interaction from the level of practice to

3 In these words, Ingold summarizes the psychologist James Gibson's (1904–1979) central ideas of "ecological psychology" (Ingold 2000, 165–168).

the level of conceptualization (Vannini 2009b, 76–78).[4] The interviews were a particular situation where the level of practice – in the form of reminiscences of past ways of living – met the level of conceptualization. Let us now take a closer look at them.

<2> In the space of paying attention

Oral history researcher Alessandro Portelli has reflected that "every interview is an *experience* before it becomes *a text*" (Portelli 1997, xiii, his emphasis). He has also stressed that narration in interviews deals rather with the meaning of the reminisced situations than with the situations themselves (Portelli 1991, 50). The meaning of the reminisced experience is not usually performed verbally, but quite often emotionally. In the interviews, I found new topics by listening with sensitivity to the interviewees. In particular, emotional "hotspots" or peaks and those things that aroused great interest during the narration, and which I reciprocally experienced more strongly, opened up meaningful dimensions of the history of the village. I had some kind of intuition or pre-understanding, which at the time was still an indescribable experience, of the place. However, only my own history of residing in the village, living there in the summer, doing the same things as the other villagers and listening to its voices and silences, I believe, helped me to better understand what it is to be a local of Lypyrtti and what is meaningful to such a person in that specific place. The way in which you recollect and react to things from the past depends, of course, on the place and time you are reliving. Humanistic geographers have argued that place is best understood as a locus of meaning. According to geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1977, 6), space is more abstract than place: "What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value". The meaning was co-composed by all of the actors between the present interviewing event and the remembered situation. The experience of conducting the interviews was more like participating than witnessing. Together we produced the meaning of the village (as a place) in the space of negotiation of the village history.

As Lassander (2012, 249) stresses, emotions play an important role in the calculation, as do

4 Ever since Clifford Geertz (1973) introduced the idea of "thick description", it has been a self-evident method in ethnography. Likewise, Bruno Latour (2005, 136–137, 184) also stresses that "the task of sticking to description is the highest and rarest achievement" (see also Lassander 2012, 245, 247).

rhetoric and other means of influencing emotions.[5] In the interviews, I interpreted emotions as micro-historical footprints and as signals or clues to meaningful things (see Ginzburg 1996, 37–76, especially 39, 44, 48; Fingerroos and Haanpää 2006, 30–32). In narrational spaces, spatial and temporal orientations intertwine (e.g. Tweed 2006, 97, 123). Nostalgia is an emotion of longing, where the narrator and the listener move backwards in time to bring something into the present, something that the narrator has experienced before. Nostalgia (from the past) is to share (in the present) the fear of losing something (in the future). The interviewees picked things up from the past. By re-awakening memories and particular reminiscences and allowing them to speak again, the narrators brought them back from oblivion.

The place in the past is like an anchor although the environment has changed as time went on. Jonathan Z. Smith (1987/1992, 25) writes, "So it is with memory: it is a complex and deceptive experience. It appears to be preeminently a matter of the past, yet it is as much an affair of the present. It appears to be preeminently a matter of time, yet it is as much an affair of space." Nostalgic topics and the actors in those reminisced places, spaces in narration, were meaningful things, which the villagers wanted to commemorate and transform for the future. In Lypyrtti, the villagers' emotional and nostalgic narration primarily included three themes: childhood memories from the piloting times, stories about the previous locals and their relationship with nature, and nostalgia for clear water. People described how the preceding generations had practiced the place: observed nature, rowed a boat or walked on ice during the wintertime. What has made those memories or events in the past particular or meaningful enough to be brought back? Why were they more meaningful than others? I presume that the nostalgic telling is a reaction or even an effort at solving ontological problems. To clarify what I mean, let me provide an example that illustrates one kind of practice of place, namely rowing.

<2> Rowing as a spatial practice

In Lypyrtti people have made watercourses or paths on the surface of water, so to speak. From a historical viewpoint, Lypyrtti was born in the junction of watercourses. The significance of the village is connected not only to its geographical position but also to its "waterway" location, which co-compose the experience of spatiality or sense of place. Moreover, water is the centre,

5 Studies in oral history have also pointed to the importance of paying attention to emotions during narration (see e.g. Anderson and Jack 1998; Portelli 1991, 8–9).

the fairway and the all-around matter or essence of the village.[6] Historian Terje Tvedt and archaeologist of religion Terje Oestigaard write that water is unique as an element also in the sense that it is *both universal and always particular* (Tvedt and Oestigaard 2011, 16, their emphasis). Moreover, the surface of water is at the same time carrying and sinking, moving and changing the borderline between what is above and beneath it. This becomes evident by considering a particular situation on a particular physical platform, which Honko would call (yet another environmental term) the "micro-milieu" (Honko 1985, 69). It comes close to Ingold's concept of *taskscape.* The term serves to vitalize a landscape, which is very useful when examining more closely, for example, rowing in terms of practicing a place: "*[T]he landscape as a whole must likewise be understood as the taskscape in its embodied form*: a pattern of activities 'collapsed' into an array of features" (Ingold 2000, 198, his emphasis).

How to row depends very much on the winds, the direction and intensity of the current, the shape and weight of the boat, and the rower herself. This external world came into being through my experimental self (see Skultans 2006, 3). I made most of my journeys to interview the villagers by rowing a little boat. When you are rowing, you are sitting with your back towards your destination. But that's not all. If there is no wind, remaining aligned with your destination is relatively easy. Yet this is seldom the case. So you have to feel the winds and allow your body to sense how the waves are taking the boat downwind. You should not lose track of your destination; you need to constantly check your alignment between a shifting point of departure and destination. All the while, you need to *feel* the currents; you cannot know them by looking at the surface of the water, but through the immediate experience of your body's involvement in the compositional movement of wind, water, boat and body. Maintaining balance in following the trajectory is attained through a very corporal engagement and by observing everything at the same time (water, winds, currents and the environment as a whole) and co-operating with it. Rowing is a good example of the practice of co-composing in action, where the actor is the one who rows and the actants are all the phenomena of nature in the taskscape. I use the concepts of actant and actor as Latour does: the actor is anything that modifies a state of affairs by making a difference – or, if it has no

6 Naturally, drinking water is also essential for living. There is a lack of freshwater on land, although salty seawater is found all around. Previously people collected freshwater from distant rock holes and kept those holes clean. There is still a lack of freshwater, although there have been wells on the islands for years. At the time of my fieldwork, many summer residents brought drinking water from the city. In 2010, the villagers formed a water cooperative, which brought pipes from the nearby town to the islands.

figuration yet, it can be called an actant. The technical word originates from the study of literature. It could be a structural trait, a corporate body, an individual, a loose aggregate of individuals, morphisms or individuals (Latour 2005, 54, 71). The political theorist Jane Bennett (2010, 38) describes the same idea about agency through the analogy of riding a bicycle on a gravel road. She writes that even though agency is distributed across a mosaic, "it is also possible to say something about the kind of striving that may be exercised by a human within an assemblage".

In the textualization process, all of the aforementioned actants or actors, including myself, were narrators or voices in co-composing the meaning of the village. Some of the actants and actors of the taskscape became literal actors, while some participated only in the composing phase. Aside from all the phenomena of nature, like the wind and currents, the deceased locals also participated. There are some stories in which the skills of past villagers are described reverently as almost supernatural. For example, one interviewee laughed when she told me that a particular old woman could walk on ice so thin that not even a cat dared tread on it. When I interpret the narratives of practicing place – where a local is rowing, for example – he or she is simultaneously an actor in the past taskscape, an actant of the narration in this moment (during the interview), and the becoming actor in the composition of the written history of Lypyrtti. He or she is both human and non-human, according to the temporal space. What kind of actors are the deceased people in the narration? Are they spiritual non-humans, spiritual humans or supernatural humans? Historian of religions Jonathan Z. Smith (1987/1992, 112) addresses these questions in his description of the transformation of an ancestor among the Arandas in Australia:

> In the words used there, the transformation of an ancestor is an event that bars, forever, direct access to his particular person. Yet through this very process of metamorphosis, through being displaced from his "self" and being emplaced in an "other" – in an object, person, or mark – the ancestor achieves permanence. He becomes forever accessible, primarily through modes of memorialization.[7]

From the point of view of landscape, Ingold suggests that a landscape is constituted through an enduring record of – and testimony to – the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it and, in so doing, left something of themselves behind (Ingold 2000, 189). Tilley (1994, 40) considers landscape as a fundamental reference system in which individual consciousness of the world and social identities are anchored. How this anchoring is understood to be

7 Smith informs that he has been greatly influenced by N. Munn (1970), "The Transformation of Subjects into Objects in Walbiri and Pitjantjatjara Myth", in *Australian Aboriginal Anthropology*, edited by R. M. Berndt, 141–163. Nedlands (Smith 1987/1992, 176, n. 64).

achieved varies. Ingold, for example, sees it quite concretely, stressing co-compositional agency: “Human beings do not, in their movements, inscribe their life histories upon the surface of nature as do the writers upon the page; rather, these histories are woven, along with the life-cycles of plants and animals, into a texture of the surface itself” (Ingold 2000, 198). The past generations of Lypyrtti participated in and contributed to the oral history of the village by providing testimony and meaning, something that I as a researcher made possible through a transformation process of oral to literal history of the village. In the history book, they survive in narrations from the past to the future. Another translation happens when a reader opens the book. With regard to my research, could we see here some antecedent for sacralization of the past taskscapes and landscape of the village, which I translated into a visible text? The reader gets the last word.

<2> Water as a place

An emotion which manifested itself in many of the interviews of villagers – along with the concern or fear of losing the knowledge of local history – was a sadness or nostalgia for the lost clear (sea)water. So far I have examined the landscape of the village of Lypyrtti, with Ingolds (2000, 193) words “as a world, as it is known to those who dwell therein, those who inhabit its places and journey along the paths connecting them”. Now I want to take a step forward, to elaborate Lypyrtti as a water environment, to explore water as an element or a place – under the surface. As noted before, it is not easy to draw a distinction between landscape and environment. Ingold (2000, 193, his emphasis) thinks of environment primarily in terms of *function*, of how it affords creatures – whether human or non-human – with certain capabilities and projects.

Many historical studies of environmental philosophy since the beginning of the 1980s, as well as the modern environmentalist movement, have been criticized for disregarding the fact that nature consists of different elements and that the relationship between society and nature varies, depending on which natural element is being focused on. Images of and ideas about water have been and are prevalent in religious texts from all over the world. They also seem to be an interminably gushing reservoir of linguistic metaphors. The literature on the history of perceptions and images of nature and the environment is extensive. (Tvedt and Oestigaard 2011, 1–3.) From the perspective of Actor Network Theory, it is not important to judge a priori whether an object of study necessarily has anything to do with religion (see Lassander 2012, 251). However, as a researcher of religious studies I have a particular interest also in the supernatural or spiritual – besides the deceased locals – actors or actants in the narration.

There were only a few. One of them was a water spirit (*näkki*). The narrators had been told by their parents or grandparents that this was a spirit that lived in wells and by the seashore, places where children should not go for fear of drowning. The shore is a borderline between land and water. The surface of water is, similarly, a borderline. It is also a borderline between death and life, if you do not know how to swim, which was the case for most people in the archipelago before the 1960s. The scholar of comparative religion Veikko Anttonen assigns particular importance to sacred-making behaviour as a human tendency to invest special referential value and inferential potential to boundaries of temporal, corporeal and territorial categories. He argues that they are established in social thinking through the category of the "sacra" and that their illegitimate crossing or passing is made binding by references to supernatural dangers and sanctions (Anttonen 2013, 5). According to Anttonen (2003, 297), wells are documented in ethnographic accounts as ritualized spaces. Even though wells are not ritualized in Lypyrtti, the water in them is "spiritualized". The *näkki* was not a sacralized being, but a kind of guardian spiritual actant, whose function or agency was to frighten.

While there are plenty of stories about fishing and fishes in the oral history of Lypyrtti, another main theme of the nostalgic narration was eutrophication. This refers to the marked environmental change in the landscape, which has rendered many seasonal activities such as swimming or fishing almost impossible. The situation is worst in July, when many residents have their holidays. One of the interviewees lamented that there is no need for July. Many people mentioned that it is no longer possible to see the yellow flowerage of seaweed through the water, as one could do in the 1960s. People today no longer caution about *näkki* – perhaps because most of them have learned to swim in their early childhood. Instead they warn about blue-green algae (*Cyanophyta*). It is almost as invisible as the *näkki* was. Water polluted by blue-green algae and bacteria could be interpreted as a non-human actant, a significant co-composer of their nostalgic narration.

As a term, "ecology" refers to the totality of relations among human agents, non-human agents, and their environment (Vannini 2009b, 73).[8] In this chapter, I have explored Ingold's idea of a "dwelling perspective": humans are brought into existence as organism-persons within a world, environment or lifeworld that is inhabited by beings of manifold kinds, both human and non-human. Therefore, relations among humans, which we are accustomed to

8 According to Vannini (2009b, 74), an ecological way of conceptualizing their subject matter is central, for example, to pragmatism, symbolic interactionism and performance theory.

calling “social”, are but a sub-set of ecological relations. (Ingold 2000, 5, 153.) Ecology is not a structure, but an ongoing process whose perspectives need to be sensitive to change, adaption, integration, reintegration and disintegration (Vannini 2009b, 75). Moreover, the same applies to the textualization of these ecological relations and the humans’ perception of it through temporal space. Ethnography in the form of travel accounts directs attention to the process through various spaces. Any cultural operation might be represented as a trajectory, relating to the places that determine its conditions of possibility (Tweed 2006, 58). The relationship between emic and etic, for example, is reciprocal, and the product of that relationship is a dialectical landscape that is a resolution of environment and culture, of practice and theory, of reason and imagination, of biology and religion.

The researcher of religious studies Timothy Fitzgerald (2000, 137) has argued, “It seems likely that purity and danger, the protection of boundaries and structures from pollution and distribution from a vast range of imagined enemies, involve the deepest concerns for all societies and social groups.” Some anthropologists similarly conclude that anything connected to matters of “ultimate concern” for a specific collectivity can involve religious experience (Tweed 2006, 50). Furthermore, the folklorist Lina Būgiene has pointed out (2012) that changes in the surrounding landscape also find their expression in narratives. The contemporary manifestation of narratives and general public discourse is an emergent ecological consciousness that perceives the preservation of the surrounding environment as a significant common value. Tracing back the reasons or actors of polluting, we witness human actions, both global and local.

<2> Conclusion

My study began as a village history project, but transformed into an exploration concerning what kinds of practices can be considered relevant to place research, what kinds of actors participate, and how they participate in the co-composition of the meanings which local people give to their village and its environment. I also brought into the discussion the double agency of researcher as experiencer (in the field) and as conceptualizer (in the textualization process). The research process directed my attention to the practices of place-making in their environmental context.

In the textualization process, the villagers of Lypyrtti engaged in nostalgia as a spatial practice of a place. However, at the time of the textualization of the village history, the forthcoming book was a space to calculate. Through narration, the villagers brought meaningful things back

by verbalizing them. I continued the process by textualizing them, making them available for the future. As one of them and as a researcher, I transformed the history of the village, editing and writing a published space, and later on, my doctoral thesis. In the textualization process I was one of the actors. I was dependent (and continue to be dependent) on a flood of entities enabling me to do the work and influencing its development (see Latour 2005, 54, 212– 213, 218).

In ethnographic texts, readers are already used to the idea of "polyphony" in ethnographic fieldwork – the many different "voices" present in the actual discussions and dialogues through which ethnographic understandings are constructed. In this chapter I wanted to examine how various kinds of actants and actors mediated information in the textualization process and influenced each other, thereby extending conceptualizations of agency from human to non-human actors.

The nostalgic, enchanted village lives in the memories of the present inhabitants, and the present ominously changing environment reminds them of it, prompting them to remember. The fear of losing knowledge of their local history in Lypyrtti arises simultaneously with the fear of losing access to clear water. The environment reminds the inhabitants that it has demands of its own and that there needs to be conversation. It reminds people not to forget, and to engage in nostalgia. In other words, the environment, particularly water as such, has become a moral witness of human actions, both local and global. Nostalgic narration as such is not religious, but it can be recognized to have an ontological function.

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