Nation-space and the transtemporal woodlands: The politics of the past in the heritagised narratives on forests in 21st century Finland

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Introduction

> All Finns have some kind of connection to the forest. It is, in some way, based on their life story, family background, living environment, work, recreation and/or shared cultural views of being a Finn.
> (The Wiki-Inventory for Living Heritage: *The Forest Relationship in Finland*.)

This quotation is extracted from the Finnish wiki-inventory of intangible cultural heritage that is an open-access publication by the Finnish Heritage Agency (FHA). The *Wiki-Inventory for Living Heritage* (*Elävän perinnön wikiluettelo*, 2016–, referred to hereafter as the WLH) is part of the Finnish implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The inventory is authored in co-operation with multiple Finnish communities and societal organizations, following the spirit of UNESCO's aims of inclusiveness and social participation.

The specific article, *The Forest Relationship in Finland*, was submitted to the WLH by an influential group of policymakers and related organizations, e.g., The Finnish Forest Museum Lusto, Finnish Forest Association, The Finnish Forest Centre, The Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners, The Guides and Scouts of Finland, and State Forest Enterprise. It carries a statement that can be interpreted as contradictory and exclusive in 2020s Finland where the national and supranational forestry sector dominates the

discussions on forest management, the forests suffer from biodiversity loss due to clearcuttings, the climate crisis violates vulnerable ecosystems, and the socio-spatial structures are shaken by processes of, e.g., urbanisation, immigration, and increasing inequality.

On a deeper level, the quotation tends to assume that the relationship between people and space would be innate and essential *per se* – a claim that has been challenged in many ways by contemporary landscape studies (e.g., Wylie 2016). Such an assumption disregards the context-bound and performative relations between people and multispecies forests, and fails to recognize that these encounters are characterized by intersectional and unavoidably political features such as gender, class, ethnic background, and nationality (see e.g., Low 2016). Besides, the claim of people and/or nation having an intrinsic relationship with forests is not distinctive to Finland only; similar assertions are constantly made in many other countries (e.g., Remmel & Jonuks 2021; Thurfjell 2020). The roots of these claims are exceedingly old: even the Roman historian Tacitus (2022) discusses how the barbarian Germanic tribes live in forests, damp and slippery swamps, narrating them, at least partially, as being one with the landscape.

Albeit problematic, the quotation is representative. The idea of Finns as a ‘modern forest folk’ that lives in a particular harmony with nature and forests is central to the Finnish institutional heritage discourses (Mäkelä 2021a & 2022). It is also constantly reproduced and recirculated in the WLH and related materials. In this chapter, we look behind this claim by analysing the multi-layered interplay between politics of space, past and forest environments, and examine the ways in which Northern forests are utilised and represented in the contemporary institutional heritagisation practices in Finland. Based on our research on the

WLH and the WLH-related *Mennään metsään* [Let's Go to the Forest] campaign materials (published on the national broadcasting company YLE's webpage in fall 2018), we show how different kinds of spatiotemporal dimensions of forests are exploited and represented in creating collective and individual heritages, identities and positions. We tie our case-study to the wider discussions on the contemporary entanglements of heritage and politics by cross-reading these sets critically, asking 1) how and why is a nation-state and/or nationality spatialised in forests in the heritagisation processes?; and 2) what kinds of (understandings of) temporal dimensions are being utilised and produced in these processes, and which political narratives do they serve?

We present the relations between heritagisation and forests through three inseparable narratives that interrelate the forest space, economic networks, people's bodies, and heritagised understandings of Finnishness. These narratives perform 1) 'mythic-ness', 2) 'modernity', and 3) 'new spiritual' and 'well-being' dimensions of forests. Drawing from the studies on critical heritage, landscapes, and banal nationalism, we claim that the forest-related heritage practices constantly participate in producing social and spatial hierarchies of nations, functioning also as vehicles for exclusion, oppression, and cultural elitism (e.g., Billig 1995; Lehtinen 2008; Crang & Tolia-Kelly 2010; Smith 2020). Furthermore, our study reveals that the intertwining of heritage and politics create new contexts and spatialities in which the mundane forms of national identities and human-environmental relations are being utilized, reshaped and reinforced by the transnational flows of neoliberal meaning-making. Thus, the heritagisation(s) of forest landscapes cannot be simply reduced to the state-led institutional and commemorative practices that produce the cultural ownership of certain environments and spaces (see Bennett 1995; Smith 2007), but it also needs to be seen as a constituent of

personal affects and identities that underlay the ways in which people understand, frame and exploit forests.

Northern forests, heritage, and national-neoliberal identities

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland (2021), forests cover more than 75 per cent of the land area in Finland. Private individuals own 60 per cent of the forestland, the state 26 per cent, companies nine per cent and other entities five per cent. Most of the wood is consumed by chemical pulp and sawmilling industries that are also the largest manufacturing sectors in Finland. Ecologically, the Finnish forests belong to the taiga (boreal forest) zone, and approximately three million hectares of them are protected by the state or private owners, or are under other kind of restricted use.

Due to their economic importance and dominant role in the landscapes, forests also entail symbolic values that have been both produced and utilised in the discourses on the contents of Finland and Finnishness. As the geographer Ari Aukusti Lehtinen (2008, 463–464) puts it, this forest ethos "is a kind of largely agreed and adopted mental orientation, within which human creativity is mainly aimed toward expanding control over the natural environment". Such orientation, sedimented in the canonical national landscape imagery, for example, has been largely depicted through scenic lake-and-forest representations (e.g., Häyrynen 2008) but, during the 20th century, also through representations of forestry (e.g., Linkola 2013). These nationally charged imageries have been very persistent, ostensibly consistent, and widely recirculated in both public and administrative contexts (Linkola 2015; Haapoja-Mäkelä 2019).

Our chapter emphasizes the cultural perspectives of forests in which the human-space relations are regarded as fundamental starting points. Such research on Northern forests has been done in the fields of landscape studies, folklore, literature, human geography, and comparative religious studies. These works have discussed, for instance, different kinds of forest representations, forest-related identities, and the experienced and affective aspects of forests (see e.g., Hiltunen et al. 2020; Lehtinen 2008; Remmel & Jonuks 2021; Tarkka 2013; Thurfjell 2020). However, even though forests have been a central object of heritagisation in Finland during the last decade, academic research has not paid attention to these processes, despite some sporadic mentions (e.g., Mäkelä 2021a; Linkola 2015; Halla et al. 2020).

The institutional heritage sector has discussed forests rather abundantly during the 2010s. In addition to the WLH, the inventories of the Built cultural heritage sites of national significance (Finnish Heritage Agency, 2010) and nationally valuable landscape areas (The Finnish Ministry of Environment, 2021) present several sites related to the forest use, and the Finnish Forest Museum Lusto has actively organized oral history collections, exhibitions, seminars, and published materials on this topic. By concentrating on the WLH and related materials, our article critically investigates these administrational framings, and suggests that the heritagisation of forests in Finland partly utilises and reproduces the former nationally charged forest-related representations, identities, and symbols, and, in a fluid way, fuses these into transnational, neoliberal flows of seeing the nature-space as a source of (spiritual) well-being for the individual.

The Finnish case functions here as an example of Northern European space-related heritage politics, and is important in the global context, as it illuminates the ways in which global forestry economy, heritage politics, and the individual experience intertwine and feed each

other. As we study textual and visual representations of heritagised forests and the social practices of producing these, we do not discuss these processes from the perspective of purely non-human ontology or new materialist thinking. Even though these approaches may fruitfully explore, e.g., indigenous knowledges on forests and human-non-human relations (e.g., Casi et al. 2021; Harrison 2015), we are rather interested in the interminglings of material forests landscapes and human meaning-making, as well as the societal consequences of these relations (see also Smith 2020, 19–37). Thus, we do not see the forest space as inherently 'primordial' or 'pre-political', but as a shared and relational arena of embodied being in which interpretations, meanings, and non-human actors meet and are constantly re-formed.

Similarly, we understand heritage as a performative process of meaning-making that shapes and influences people's physical-symbolic sense of place (e.g., Stedman 2003), belonging and constantly negotiated identities at different scales (e.g., Waterton et al. 2017, 3–4; Smith 2020; Lähdesmäki et al. 2019). Heritage is thus political: designating a thing as heritage is inexorably connected to decision-making and power relations of groups, as the processes of designating always negotiate – consciously or unconsciously – the sharing of resources and statuses between groups or individuals. For instance, as we will show in this chapter, the naming of the forest landscape as heritage instantly engages the conflicting positions and interests of, e.g., forestry sector, nature conservators, individuals, and the heritage management sector, despite the 'happy' and 'light' nature of the heritage practices related to the inventorying processes.

Furthermore, heritagisation is something through which the presence of the past in the present is negotiated and executed through strategically created connections, reconnections, and

disconnections (e.g., Waterton et al. 2017) that performatively bring different identities and senses of place into being (e.g., Smith 2020). This applies to ‘tangible’ as well as ‘intangible’ forms of heritage; these prefixes are here seen as ‘emic’ conceptualizations that refer to the administrational language and taxonomic systems of producing and categorizing heritage (see also Mäkelä 2022). By creating a constrained bifurcation between the tangible and intangible, these kinds of categorisations simplify the complex relationships between human activity and the material world (Kuutma 2009; Smith & Campbell 2018). Thus, even though the materials of this chapter stem from the inventorying of ‘intangible’ cultural heritage, we see the heritagisation practices as discursive-material manifestations of multiscalar identities and politics of past and space.

The heritagised narratives we introduce in this article are deeply rooted in the ongoing interplay between the national, heritage, and individually interpreted mnemonic processes. Heritage is one of the central categories through which the national enters people’s lives and through which it can be negotiated, manifested, and reinforced (e.g., Smith 2020, 38–61, 196–208). It is an essential part of *spatial socialization* that is defined as a process “through which individual actors and collectivities are socialized as members of specific, territorially bounded spatial entities, and through which they more or less actively internalize territorial identities and shared traditions” (Paasi 1999, 4; Paasi 2016, 24.) This becomes manifested in, for example, the forest-related narratives that powerfully participate in the negotiations of the national/state territory’s past, present and future.

Furthermore, recent studies on banal nationalism have emphasized the bodily, non-state-led and affective aspects of the mundane circulation of national symbols (e.g., Antonsich & Skey 2017). These notions have helped to trace the distinctive character of consuming, renewing,

and distributing the nationally charged contents. They have also offered ground for scrutinizing nationality as a part of postmodern or neoliberal subjectivities that emphasize individuality and blended identities instead of fixed positions associated with modernistic societies. The shift of focus from static, collective and institutional to fluid and personal has also challenged the ideas of spatiotemporal structures of national identities (e.g. Häkli 2008). We suggest that the temporalities of national identities, as well as the spatialities that are inherently included in these temporalities, should be understood as similarly fluid constructs that consist of interplay of individuals' social positions, bodily relations with spaces, and overlapping identities. As we show in our analysis, the heritagised contents of Finnishness, rooted in the forest landscape, provide a flexible frame into which different kinds of identity formations are applied in a seemingly harmonious manner.

Materials and methods

Our material consists of three datasets that include both text and photographs (see Table 1). The materials are related to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage that was ratified in Finland in 2013. The WLH is a CC BY 4.0 licensed open access publication that is an interface of institutional and vernacular heritage production: the intangible cultural heritage examples and the WLH submissions are identified and produced by different communities in the spirit of the UNESCO convention as well as the inclusive and interactive 'bottom-up' perspective that is currently a significant part of the new museology paradigm, adapted largely in the Finnish museology as well (see e.g., McCall & Gray 2013; Reidla 2018). However, the FHA controls, administrates and frames the process of publishing the WLH, which makes it somewhat formal and institutional. The submissions, varying from 'beer culture' to 'building clinker boats', for example, are written

in Finnish and Swedish, but some of them are translated into English, Sami and Roma languages.

[INSERT HERE] Table 1. Datasets of the article.

The *Mennään metsään* campaign consists of online articles published by YLE in fall 2018 (https://yle.fi/aihe/mennaan-metsaan), when YLE co-operated with the FHA and Suomen Latu (The outdoor association of Finland) to promote Suomen Latu's WLH submission *Everyman's rights* for a wider audience. The submission, titled with an antiquated term translated by the FHA from the Finnish expression *jokamiehenoikeudet,* discusses the freedom to roam in Finland. The campaign is intriguing since it was targeted to the Finnish audience to acknowledge the importance of the public rights of access and to encourage their inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The web articles include text, photographs, and video clips. In addition to this, YLE produced several forest-themed TV and radio broadcasts, but these are excluded from this study due to the large size of the material. *Elossa. Luonto ja elävä kulttuuriperintö* ("Alive. Nature and Living heritage") is a collection of articles that was published online as complementary material for the WLH by the FHA. It includes nine (non-academic) expert articles on the themes of intangible heritage and nature, targeted for museum professionals and NGOs.

During the analysis, both authors read the materials closely. In addition, the first author divided the photographs and pictures into themes according to the relationships between the forest landscape, human bodies, and non-human actors. The themes were then discussed further in relation to the textual materials, and by systematically structuring the texts and the

images of the datasets side-by-side, we identified three intersecting narratives (mythic-ness, modernity, well-being) in the data. The analysis of this chapter is structured around these three narratives and was based on constant dialogical discussion and ideation between the authors as well as on thorough reading of theoretical literature on forest, Finnishness, and heritage. In addition, we – as Finnish, white scholars representing two genders – used our cultural and bodily understanding in the reading the materials from the perspective of a 'cultural insider'. This helped us to understand the orientations and intentions of the submitters that are mainly rather large third-sector organizations, but also the relations between the human bodies and the forest space.

Mythic Forests

One of the most prominent ways to narrate the relations between Finnishness, forest landscape, and heritage is to refer to certain 'ancient' cultural features that are thought to bring forth the alleged temporal continuities from 'ancient times' to this day. In these processes, folklore elements, oral poetry, and mythological symbols related to the oral poetry are essential. This symbolism and the construct of Finnishness as an entity and its alleged stemming from the 'ancient times' is a production of 19th-century national romanticism and nationalistic discourses (see e.g., Fewster 2006). However, in this narrative, the forests are interpreted from the angle of deep temporal continuities, in which the relation between mythic oral narratives, forests, national territory, and Finnish identity is regarded as essential and inherently intertwined.

In the forest-related heritagisation practices, the mode of *mythic history* – a form of "historical knowledge that is understood to be inherited from the authoritative past" (Siikala

& Siikala 2005, 61) – is utilised to construct a historical continuation of the mythic time of (national) origins and creation, and locate as well as materialize these in the Finnish forests. As the folklorist Anna-Leena Siikala notes: "by creating a connection with the unchanging and foundational events of the past, myths, like sacred rites, possess a power to unite communities and act as a tool for national self-determination and political interests" (Siikala 2012, 35). This is manifested for instance in the WLH's *The Kalevalaic relationship with nature* submission, as the oral poetry, nature experiences, Finnishness, and the forest-dominated landscapes of the Koli national park are tied together in the following quote:

> The poems of Kalevala, as well as Finnish mythology, originate from [an experience] of ethereal nature connectedness. The Kalevalaic relationship with nature is a synthesis of human-nature and landscape-nature that is formed in the power of emotions of wonder and deep respect, and which can be experienced in an immemorable way as a 'Finnish state of mind' in the Koli national park. (The WLH: *The Kalevalaic relationship with nature*)

In the quotation, the Koli national park (located in North Karelia, the easternmost region of Finland, see Figure 1) becomes a nationalized space through the references to the Finnish mythology. Inherent 'nativeness' of the people experiencing the alleged 'Finnish state of mind' in Koli is legitimated and reinforced through the idea of mythic history (see also Crang & Tolia-Kelly 2010; Harvey & Wilkinson 2018). This is not surprising, as the national epic *Kalevala*, published in 1835/1849 by Elias Lönnrot, is one of the most significant emblems of the Finnish nationalistic symbols. Mentioning it is one of the most obvious ways to create a connection between the present forests and the mythic past. Consequently, *Kalevala*, or the 'kalevalaic tradition', is referred to in the materials when a powerful connection between the

Finnish identity and forests – or innate ‘nativeness’ or connection between ‘homeland’, space and people (Wylie 2016) – is wished to be brought forth (see e.g., WLH: *Finnish spitz and safeguarding the hunting tradition*; *The Kalevalaic relationship with nature*; *Traditional healing*).

The epic is based on the Baltic-Finnic oral *runo* singing tradition that, during the 19th century, when the tradition was collected and textualized by the Finnish folklorists, became a tool for nation-building and identity construction of Finnishness in a rather colonialist way (e.g., Haapoja-Mäkelä 2020). The oral tradition was mostly practised in Karelia in both sides of the Eastern border of Finland (see Figure 1), but these local and translocal traditions were merged into the generalised category of ‘Finnishness’ despite the linguistic, geographical, and cultural variety (e.g., Anttonen 2005, 133–143; Tarkka et al. 2018). The Koli national park is situated near these areas, and due to its old (yet not untouched) forests and traces of ‘traditional’ land use it can be said to represent their ‘uncontaminated’ past, which makes it open for interpretations that are fuelled with narratives of mythic history.

[INSERT HERE] Figure 1. The map of Finland and Karelia. The oral poetry was mainly practised in the areas of Karelian language and eastern dialects of the Finnish language. Samppa Mäkelä 2021. CC-BY 4.0.

Forests, indeed, play a central role in the Finnish and Karelian folklore materials collected during the 19th century. In the Karelian oral culture, forests have functioned as a central landscape of everyday life and mythic images. Forests surrounded the villages and framed the lakes, but they were also dwelling places of forest animals as well as being imagined as an otherworldly mirror image of a village community. Moreover, they provided warmth and

food in a form of game, wood, and slash-and-burn cultivation. In the epic poetry, forests were pictured as a landscape of all events: the heroes of the story worlds travelled in forests, and myths about the origin of forests were narrated in ritualistic language of the Kalevala-metric poetry (Tarkka 2013, 327–382). Forests were also regarded as frightening: "the forest represented a danger zone conceived to be fundamentally different from the world of humans, as the definitive 'other' opposed to both the human body and human community" (Stark 2006, 361). Thus, in the cultures in which oral poetry was performed, the relationship to forests was in fact rather anthropocentric, exploitative, and full of dangers, fear, and hard work.

In the forest-related contemporary heritage materials, features such as danger and fear are scrutinized from the safe distance of modernity, and the elements of mythic history seem to transform from life's crucial perspectives to mystified emblems through which the forest landscape can be experienced in rather sublime, elevated, and almost mysterious and otherwordly ways. Many of the mythology-related mentions in our materials wish to increase the sense of 'darkness' and allure in a similar manner as, e.g., in popular culture, fiction, and film (also Mäkelä 2021b). The forest-related mysterious and horrific associations are, indeed, widely used in Western cultural imageries and discourses: these vary from Dante's depiction of gloomy wood in *Inferno* and Tolkien's Fangorn Forest in *The Lord of the Rings* to contemporary drone shots over misty forests in fantasy tv-series of the streaming services. Furthermore, the crime genre of *Nordic noir* has increased the popularity of dark and hazy imageries of Nordic forests and rural landscapes (e.g., Waade 2017). Shadows and echoes of these images and meanings can be found in our materials specifically through the references to folklore materials: during the national broadcasting company YLE's *Mennään metsään* campaign, several web articles were published on the relationship between Finnish forests

and the mythic history. The following example is titled with two Kalevala-metric poetic lines, and it constructs Finns as “a nation of trees” because Finnish folklore includes mythological creatures such as the forest maiden Mielikki and male forest spirit Tapio mentioned in the title:

> Forests are logged, roads are built. The Forest itself covers the traces of the ancient life – old dwelling places, *karsikko* trees, and sacred wells are yielding.
> Nevertheless, the spirits of the forest remain as a part of the Finnish nature and its history. The Finns are a nation of trees. (Yle.fi 31.6.2018. ”Flatter Mielikki, appease Tapio! The spirits of the forest decided the fate of a human being only two hundred years ago – risks were not taken in worshipping the spirits”. Translation: Authors.)

The example also stresses the ambivalent nature of modernity that destroys the ‘ancient life’ but still is able to refer to it. The forest landscape in this example bridges the past and the present, even though the traces of ancient times are clear-cut and mutilated in the landscape. The forests are actually represented as ‘multi-timed’ spaces of Finnishness, in which modernity and ‘ancient’ time meet, even though, with few exceptions, Finnish forests as material entities are in fact carefully managed following the norms of modern forestry that produces forests that differ both ecologically and visually from ‘untouched’ forests or forests that have been exploited in pre-modern manners. The multi-timed forest space is a paradoxical phenomenon: it simultaneously constructs and underscores the gap between old time and the present, but still enhances the timeless discourse and the past’s presence in the present in a way that the temporality of the forest space becomes non-linear and fluid (see Harvey & Wilkinson 2018; Lehtinen 2008; Lowenthal 2005).

The multi-timed non-linearity in the narrative of mythic forests is such a complex formation, that the thought itself produces and brings a sense of 'the uncanny', and a touch of 'mystic-ness' into the forest space. The material emblems of the ancient time are considered as vanishing and weak but the reference to 'forest's spirits' brings the mythic history forth in a somewhat mystified and obscured – but at the same time very safe and modern – way. The strongest feature in this narrative is that it is – through references to 'ancient times', 'forefathers', and 'mythology' – able to legitimise and justify the (mythic-)historical foundations for the alleged native-ness and innate-ness of the relationship between the forest space and humans. This, in turn, is a catchy storyline for the heritagised narratives of the Finnish past that are being used as a keen part of Finnish identity politics: through this angle, the complex identity struggles of a modern individual can be somewhat easily spatialised, articulated, organised, and rooted in the distant past.

Forests and Modernity

The second narrative through which the relationship between forests, Finnishness and heritage is told in our data, associates the story of Finnishness with the processes of taming and utilizing forests in order to create a modern and civilised welfare state. In this discourse, stemming from the 19th-century conceptions on Finnishness, modernization, capitalism, and state politics (e.g., Snellman 1848[2021]), forests are simultaneously seen as 'primitive', 'untamed' and 'backward', and as a resource base subjected to intensive exploitation (e.g., Lehtinen 2008; see also Haila 1999). The narrative reflects the long era of 'high modernism' with respect to forest management (Kotilainen & Rytteri 2013): the 20th century was mostly characterized by a a forestry regime that was controlled by the state for national purposes. The policies aimed at increasing the growth of forests and managing both state-owned and

private forests with similar methods in order to provide supply for the partly state-owned forest industry. This ideological base was questioned as late as in the 1960s by the rise of environmental consciousness (e.g., Björn 1990).

The impact of the forestry sector in the current forest-related heritage practices is remarkable, with actors such as State Forest Enterprise having participated in the production of the WLH. One motive for the forestry sector to take part in the construction of forest-related heritage narratives is the possibility of using heritage discussions as a category through which to emphasize the role of forests as an important national resource, as well as to underline the inherent, sempiternal ability of Finnish people, many of whom are private owners of forestland, and institutions to manage and exploit forests in a sustainable way. Naming the forestry business as heritage can, hence, be used as a weighty reason for continuing the utilization of forests, while it at the same time 'greenwashes' and nationalizes the resource-based occupation that forms a part of the transnational networks of global economy (see e.g., Kröger & Raitio 2017).

In other words, the heritagised narrative on forests and modernity reconstructs and reimagines the national interpretations on forest space, drawing from the idea of a special national relationship with forests, and simultaneously merges the state territory, national economic space, forestry sector, and forests into a sociomaterial assemblage that sets the forest owners and users within the frames of historically motivated actor-positions. In the following quotation, the story of Finland is seen as linear narrative of development that is inherently interrelated with forests and forestry, as forests are regarded as 'providers' for livelihood and materials:

> The forest sector is one of the cornerstones of the Finnish economy: it is the only production industry in Finland that can compete in global terms. The forest sector is also the most important part of the Finnish bio-economy, which refers to the use of renewable forms of energy and their refinement into products. […] Finland is known as a forest industry country, where the forest provides both livelihood and raw materials. Timber, tar burning, slash-and-burn cultivation and forest food ingredients have sustained life in Finland for centuries. (The WLH: *The Forest Relationship in Finland*. Translation: Finnish Heritage Agency.)

Since heritagisation is a process that requires narratives that tie the 'now' to the 'bygone days' in concrete ways, the forestry sector is represented in our materials through references to its pre-industrial and small-scale industrial pasts such as tar burning or lumberjacking – both industries that are almost entirely vanished now (see Lehtinen 2008). Such representations are somewhat separated from the narratives of mythic forest, as the temporalities woven into the modern forest landscapes tend to emphasize the chronological-ness and historical periods instead of somewhat blurred 'ancient-ness' and indefinite chains of 'forefathers'. Furthermore, the modern narrative takes a powerful hold of the materiality of forest spaces, as the narrative underlines the organising, taming, elaboration, moulding, and structuring of forests into categories of resources.

[INSERT HERE] Figure 2. Making firewood 1956. Photo: Kalle Rautanen / The Collection of Kalle Rautanen, Lusto. Included in the *Elossa* collection, pp. 44.

The Finnish imageries of forestry have historically emphasized the masculine power of the national community (Linkola 2013, 172). Similarly, the materials of this chapter bring forth

the visual representation in which the forest landscape includes hard-working (white) male bodies that participate in the modern forest management business and simultaneously embody the masculine power of these practices. The bodies of modern narrative in forest landscapes negotiate the contents of Finnishness through activities that are considered as traditional but that are temporally not too far away: for instance, they burn tar or participate in lumberjack competitions. Figure 2, for instance, brings forth an image of a small-scale firewood management that emphasizes the bodily and material connections between the (paternal) generations, modern technology, and the wood itself.

[INSERT HERE] Figure 3. Chopping wood. Photo: Leena Partanen / Vastavalo.fi. Included in the *Elossa* collection, pp. 38.

Figure 3, an image stock photograph included in the *The Finnish Summer Cottage Culture* article in the *Elossa* collection, beautifully sums up the distortion of the heritagised forest imagery: even inside the borders of the modern, state-wide narrative, the scale of heritage is often zoomed into the individual and into the individual's small-scale, 'natural', and 'traditional' actions. The individually carried-out woodchopping thus becomes a performance of the nostalgised understanding of Finns living in harmony with forests. Paradoxically, these understandings are inherently dependent on the modernity and the development of state-idea, as the forestry-centred practices are reintegrated in a seemingly consonant way into the claim of 'traditionality'. In the contexts of contemporary heritagisations, such representations bridge the wood-chopping male bodies in their summer cottages to the alleged 'golden era' of the welfare state in which the gender roles and the materialities of forests were controllable, rational, and clear.

The New Spiritual Well-Being Forest

The last narrative connects the forest space with new spiritual and neoliberal dimensions through which Finnish heritage can be manifested in a way that it fits into the claims of global financial markets aside from the forestry sector. The narrative is highly influenced by the neoliberal turn and its rhetoric that has taken place also in transforming welfare states such as Finland (about the transformation, see Moisio & Leppänen 2007). The heritage discussions adopt this rhetoric and, simultaneously, in an obscure, way justify and legitimate the imbalances in class power. In our materials, this can be seen especially in the neoliberal discourses related to individual well-being and health (e.g., Cederström & Spicer 2015) that stress the health benefits of forests for individuals. This follows the societal discussions in general: In the 2010s, several studies have argued for the benefits to health to be in contact with nature, which increased well-being and rural tourism in Finland (e.g., Komppula et al. 2017).

These discussions are shaped by the idea, strongly supported by the neoliberal orientation, of a self-developing individual whose "responsibility and self-expression are morphed with the mindset of a free-market economist" (Cederström & Spicer 2015, 4), as the WLH depicts the individual as a decent middle-class Finnish citizen who appreciates the economic wealth that forests enable, but also has a 'special bond with nature', and who, through this bond, takes on their body's health and wellness. According to the material, the 21st-century individual respects the environmental values of forests but also enjoys the pleasures they give, most of which relate to the idealized Finnish citizenship of modern era: hiking, camping, sports, foraging for berries and mushrooms, summer housing, photography, and birdwatching. Through these, the individual also creates a bond with the lifestyles of imagined Finnish

ancestors. The following quotation intertwines this individual with the ‘national we’, as the use of the deictic pronoun ‘we’ indicates and promotes the national community, but the verbs ‘enjoy’, ‘deal with’ and ‘calm’ refer to the affective experiences of an individual:

> As Finns, we have a special relationship with nature, especially forests. […] Forests give us livelihoods, it [sic] is a place of growth and construction, a place to enjoy the pleasures of life and to escape any dangers and it also helps us deal with difficult situations in life. There are very recent research results concerning the calming effect of forests. (The WLH: *Jukola relay*. Translation: Finnish Heritage Agency.

As for the Finnish heritage discussions, the aspects of individual well-being in forests are embraced with pleasure, as they comply with the aims of the tourism and well-being industry sectors perfectly. Furthermore, the claim of well-being in forests is indeed rather ‘peaceful’ when contrasted to more conflicted forest-related heritage discussions such as forest and landscape management in relation to the climate crisis. The aim of well-being in forests is a seemingly harmonious area in which people ‘enjoy’ and fulfil the unspoken demand of living according to ‘research results’ and ‘scientific knowledge’ and thus perform the duties of a neoliberal citizen.

However, ‘slow leisure’ activities in forests such as meditation and forest bathing (Japanese *Shinrin-yoku*) have been acknowledged as producing somewhat white and class-privileged practices (e.g., Breunig 2020), even though the tourism sector and studies have promoted such activities in order to develop more sustainable ways to utilise natural resources, or, to foster economic development in marginalised areas (Farkic et al. 2021). In the WLH, the aspects of whiteness and class-privilege of the heritagised well-being practices in forest are

very similar than in the field of ‘slow leisure’, as, for instance, the bodies in the photographs of our material represent solidly the stereotypes of a Finnish citizen, that is white, middle-class, heteronormative, and Finnish-speaking by default (see also Mäkelä 2022). For instance, Figure 4, which is published alongside the *Everyman’s rights* submission, forms a harmonious image of a heteronormative, white, and happy family skiing in a wintery forest. The image recreates the naturalized order of national bodies, and the image is strongly grounded in the recurrent narratives of Finnish spatial socialization. The circulation of these bodily stereotypes in the forest landscape reproduces the banal socio-spatial constituents of a nation (see Paasi 2016, 29.)

[INSERT HERE] Figure 4. Skiing trip. Photo: Suomen Latu. The WLH: *Everyman’s rights*.

Furthermore, the heritage discussions intertwine with the well-being claims with spiritual aspects that may also be considered as a part of the neoliberal regime. The branch of *new spirituality* – which emphasises individual experience and well-being, a monistic conception of the divine, and the sacrality of nature (see Broo et al. 2015, 150–154; Lynch 2007) – is present in our data through references to the well-being economy and its trends such as modern yoga, as well as through the tendency to mystify and sacralise nature and forests in a neoromantic way that is emblematic for environmentally-driven new spiritual movements (see e.g., Taylor 2001). In these sacralisations, the ‘Kalevalaic’ narratives of mythic forests are frequently brought forth, but from an angle of the modern individual: since forests are regarded to be intertwined with the existence and origin of Finnishness, they possess mythic power and have the capacity to affect a contemporary individual’s mind and behaviour. In the following example, taken from the *Mennään metsään* campaign’s article, a Finnish yoga teacher who has developed a ‘forest yoga’ exercise emphasizes the role of forests as a space

in which internal fears and anxieties are confronted. In the article, forests are given a mystified agency that co-operates with an individual's mind and body: forests are seen as sources of spirituality that elevate one's mind. In this discourse, the narratives of people in forests are constructed in relation to obscure, mysterious, and uncanny elements that affect the human body:

> Going to the forest brings things from the depths of one's mind onto the surface. The forest may be too scary or too big, and one's mind may generate some strange images. [The yoga teacher] Jokiniva connects the anxieties experienced in a forest to the internal anxieties people have. – One is quite often afraid of the same things in one's life as in a forest. One may be afraid of getting lost, experiencing space or spacelessness around oneself, the unpredictability of the environment, the loss of control or the different kinds of "characters" that wander in the forest.
>
> In the forest, we learn something about ourselves and about the things we are really scared of. (Yle.fi 28.9.2018. "Step on a tree stump, sit on a trunk, reach the top of a spruce – forest yoga sets the body and mind free." Translation: authors. Accessed June 3, 2019.)

Concluding remarks: multidimensional politics of heritagised forests

In the chapter, we show how temporalities, identities, and nationally charged interpretations of forest spaces are woven together in the heritagised narratives of Finnishness. The WLH and related materials function as vehicles through which these pre-existing and exclusive stories of a nation and modern nation state are maintained and even reinforced in a peaceful manner. However, they are still open to or even invite neoliberal meaning-makings that

deeply shape the ways how a ‘decent citizen’ is understood in contemporary privileged societies. Simultaneously, these processes brush aside the complex power relations that are inherently included in such identity formations as well as the scales and ecological impacts of global forest industry.

We assert that forest-related heritagisations build on structures of banal nationalism, but also fluidly draw from contemporary trends, such as new spirituality and all-encompassing well-being. While combining these coexisting orientations, the heritagisations form ground for new individual identities and citizenships that both transfer national narratives into the contexts of neoliberal transnational societies and allow neoliberal individuals to have a sense of belonging to a spatiotemporally contextualised community. To be understood and accepted in contemporary society, the modernist institutional contents must match the multifaceted identities that are not only supported by state-led actors but also shaped by the transnational flows of consumption, information, and ideals. In other words, instead of explaining the plethora of mechanisms and agencies of national symbols through dichotomies such as ancient/modern, collective/personal, top-down/bottom-up or secular/sacred, these aspects should be understood as fluid elements of identities that are able to form seemingly coherent but elastic identities that possess a sense of nationality as a part of 21st-century subjectivity.

Furthermore, in the Finnish context, the heritagization of forests is all but a necessity: as the forest is and has been an environment that is simultaneously familiar and alien, the images related to it are easily tied as a part of peoples’ experiences and self-images, but they are also open to other meanings. The national narratives on forests, verbalized in this chapter as narratives of ‘mythic forest’ and ‘modern forest’, have been born at the same time with modern memory institutions, and it is thus obvious that the mnemonic practices supported by

these institutions are tied to the spatial framework of the modern nation state. Furthermore, these narratives, and moreover, the emergence of the modern state, have served as a tool to bring forth the development of 20th-century forestry, and, in the current contexts, they have given the forestry sector a possibility to act as a responsible representative of Finnish nature connectedness and spatial continuances.

However, both narratives are merged into the contemporary neoliberal images and narratives of well-being. On the one hand, the forest nature provides a stage for performances of responsible Finnish citizens that take care of themselves, and simultaneously creates a bond with 'forefathers' and 'traditions'. On the other hand, forest becomes a place for transnational spiritual trends that are blended with nationally charged myths in an agile way. All of the three intermingled narratives examined in the chapter reinforce spatialised understandings of Finns as a 'forest folk'. This, in turn, reproduces multi-timed, but exclusive discourses and imageries in which the forest environment becomes a partly nostalgised, partly mystified, and partly commercial stage for hegemonic, gendered, and normative performances of, for instance, race and class.

In this chapter we have illuminated the processes in which the politics of forest space currently become one with the heritagised forest-related narratives. The Finnish case provides a window to the Western and privileged practices in which nationalised narratives intertwine fluidly with neoliberal subjectivity. The example shows that the national scale has not lost its significance in heritage practices that are related to nature; it is one of the options for individuals to draw inspiration from for identity construction. At the same time, different kinds of heritage performances feed this experience, as the starting point of the national scale is embedded in institutional practices and operational environments. Furthermore, as there

has been a boom of new nature-related practices in the Northern Europe due to the mobility restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Fagerholm et al. 2021), the heritagised forest space, with all its mythic, mysterious, and modern aspects, has provided an ostensible sanctuary in the global crises of climate change, pandemic, and war. We assert that in the future, such practices and discourses will become increasingly significant, as the geopolitical instability of Northern and Eastern Europe will provoke the national scale to appear in a 'hotter' (Billig 1995, 43–46) form in relation to past and space. Thus, the understanding of the emotional and political aspects of heritagised and nationalised forest narratives will be crucial.

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