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Minding the field: sensory and affective engagements with high Arctic fieldwork

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ABSTRACT

This introduction to this special issue considers various approaches to understanding ‘the field’ as an object of archaeological and anthropological research, and researchers’ own engagements with it. We draw out some theoretical and methodological approaches to the field as a way of interrogating the cognitive and physical engagements of the researcher with it, not only as a place and process of data gathering and knowledge production, but one of reflexivity and self-understanding. This seeks to appreciate the effects that the fieldwork experience has on the researcher and, thus, on the science they produce for their (disciplinary) field. Building on reflexive approaches to fieldwork and ethnographies of practice, we explore the implications of fieldworking in, particularly, the European Arctic. This paper further considers several entanglements in the past and present of the European Arctic as a field more generally as a way of framing the specific field site that we have focused this special issue around: the village of Kilpisjärvi (Gillbjesjärvi) in Finnish Lapland.

KEYWORDS

Fieldwork; finland; lapland;
arctic; reflexivity;
temporality; consciousness

A lot could happen in a week. Just look at the last one.

— Julia Quinn, *To Sir Phillip, With Love*, 2003

It’s a mystery, the doing part.

— Andrew Shryock, *Ethnography: Provocation*, 2016

Introduction

Archeology and anthropology have long had a complex relationship to fieldwork. Fieldwork, though considered a foundational practice to the two disciplines, also remains somewhat shrouded in mystery, a process during which

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technical and performative tasks are put together in often prescribed ways in order to generate (if we're lucky) new knowledge. Yet fieldwork is not merely a means of gathering data and of producing knowledge (and publications); it is also a personal adventure and a source of 'heroic' stories, becoming even something of a vocational *rite de passage*. Fieldwork is core to the identity of archaeology and anthropology, both as they are conceived by those disciplines' academic practitioners and in the public perception of them. These common associations are particularly pronounced in the case of archaeology, whose digs and excavations regularly feature in popular culture and news, but anthropology also figures into the cultural imaginary as a journey to some place, often seen to be remote, in order to study some people, often seen to be 'primitive'.

Conducting an initial substantive period of fieldwork is regarded as a rite of passage for both archaeologists and anthropologists, and being able to do good fieldwork is a hallmark of professionalism. As any good anthropology graduate student knows, 'it is fieldwork that makes a "real anthropologist"' (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 101), just as archaeologists who do not carry out fieldwork are derided *sotto voce* by many as 'armchair archaeologists' (Holtorf 2006, 82). For a long time, exotic fieldwork was the gatekeeper to Anglo-American anthropology jobs: if you didn't go far and foreign, your anthropological street cred was weakened and you were quite simply less employable (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 132). While it is generally accepted that the field does not (anymore) need to be far from where we live or where we are from, there is some sense that it should be in some way distinct, since generally home is for cultural sameness but it is out there that we find difference. There have been exceptions over the years: anthropology at home was sanctioned as legitimate at least several decades ago (e.g. Rapport 2002), and archaeologies of the contemporary past (e.g. Buchli and Lucas 2001) have removed some of the 'remoteness' of archaeological research. Such exceptions are permitted because they either tell us more about ourselves or they feed into better-known, more recent histories. We are also now more receptive to the physical and psychological limitations of fieldwork, not only in terms of what can be undertaken in the field, but also by our own bodies and minds, in turn influencing how and where we 'field'.

Though the process by which fieldwork is successfully carried out is 'often presented as mysterious and inexplicable' (Blommaert and Jie 2020), it is concomitantly portrayed as a rigorous and essentially rationalist pursuit characterized by the mastery of the seemingly mechanical tasks and techniques of collecting and documenting 'data'. Students now (it wasn't always so) are instructed in matters of fieldwork, yet there is still often the sense that fieldwork and what it comprises in reality (i.e. outside the classroom) remains something of a black box. The notion of 'discovery' is one illustrative example of the disparity between (field) realities and how they have traditionally been portrayed in field manuals and fieldwork pedagogy. Archaeology is closely associated with discovering, but the act of discovery has gone undertheorized and is

rarely mentioned in discussions on field methods (Lucas 2001a, 39), and yet, ironically, it is discovery that often fuels the imagination of students. It is exactly this specter of discovery, this 'magic' occupying the gap between the epistemological expectations of the scientific community at large and the often non-orthodox methodologies we engage in order to actually make fieldwork happen, that inspires the imagination of many students and compels them towards studying such disciplines (Stocking 1992). The process sounds simple enough: one apparently goes 'to the field', performs various essentially technical practices (e.g. surveying, digging, observing, interviewing), and then somehow whatever is collected turns into, say, an ethnographic analysis of an Amazonian rainforest dweller or an archaeology of daily life in New Kingdom Egypt. But are we able to know, either collectively or individually, what actually happens in the field? Are we able to understand how the field and processes of 'fielding' magically transform scabbling around in the dirt or loitering about a pasture for a few months (see Heikkinen, this issue) into something that deigns to be upheld as 'science'?

These questions have been taken up by many scientists, among them archaeologists and anthropologists. Let us consider the case of the former. Academic and research-led (as contrasted to rescue) excavations are typically designed to answer a specific set of research questions. Traditionally, one of the rules of archaeology is that *archaeological excavation is destruction* (contra Lucas 2001b), something which Philip Barker (1993) calls 'the unrepeatability experiment'. The question then arises: how does physical and topographical destruction of land, soil and rock result in the epistemological construction of life in the past? Another traditional rule of archaeology holds that *fieldwork is preservation by record*. But what more could and should be consciously recorded beyond the data that constitutes the archaeological record? These questions highlight some critical aspects of archaeological and anthropological fieldwork, including the nature of fieldwork, empirical data or 'the record' and their relationships to the overall research process, and the relationship between empiria and theory. Critical and theoretical approaches to fieldwork over the past two decades have engaged with these questions (e.g. Hodder 1999; Lucas 2001a, 2001b, 2012) and challenged the traditional, seemingly atheoretical and naïve views on fieldwork. Fieldwork across all disciplines involves specific epistemological and (un)conscious principles, but these are often unwritten and unspoken codes that are rarely challenged (cf. Ingram, Mullins, and Richardson 2019).

One theme that critical and more theoretically oriented approaches to archaeological and anthropological fieldwork have raised – a theme central to this special issue – is the significance of doing fieldwork as a particular type of performance, practice and engagement with the world (e.g. Tilley 1989; Lucas 2001b; Pearson and Shanks 2001). There has in recent years been increased interest in the very practices and processes of how scholars actually engage with and make sense of their research material, as well as in the production and

representation of knowledge through language (e.g. Joyce 2002; Marila 2017; Lucas 2012, 2018). It is readily acceptable in a general sense that 'mind' is at work in fieldwork. But what does this in fact mean in practice and what are the implications of such a view on knowledge production (in a broad sense) within the social sciences and humanities? How do the subjectivities of fieldworkers and the technical practices they undertake affect their experiences and their work in the field, and the work that then emerges of fieldwork? What impact does the field have on fieldworkers, and what is their impact on the field?

It is seldom obvious how matters of mind and practical techniques in the actual experienced context of fieldwork are in interplay with each other. To this end, ethnographies of the doing of archaeological fieldwork and the doings of archaeologists have been fruitful in producing theoretical and practical interrogations of such issues (see especially Edgeworth 2003, 2006a). One now famous example of this was Ian Hodder's invitation to ethnographer Carolyn Hamilton to observe the archaeological field team working on site at Çatalhöyük in central Turkey (Hamilton 2000). Hamilton fed her observations and results back to the team, which in turn helped shape their practices.

Hodder's own early work on reflexivity and multivocality at the excavation site of Çatalhöyük was instrumental in drawing attention to the politics of both self and other in scientific knowledge and textual production. In *Towards Reflexive Method in Archaeology: The Example at Çatalhöyük*, Hodder (2000) worked at outlining the importance of reflexive or post-processual methods in the production of knowledge through fieldwork: interactivity, multivocality, contextuality and relationality. The excavations revealed new insights into Neolithic urban life and ritual, but they raised perhaps even more questions about the relevance of human bias in the production of archaeological knowledge. In other words, this work pointed us to yet another rule of archaeology: *the past is made in the present*. The supposed 'scientific' approach which characterised to archaeology in postwar North America and Europe largely (though not entirely) sought to eliminate 'unscientific' data, such as historical writings, oral histories and other intangible materials in order to produce an apparently objective, empirically based picture of the past, free from the biases of the present and the mechanics of (unwittingly) subjective scientists. Thus indigenous, marginalized and generally non-authoritative voices were excluded, and archaeological experts did not consider their own influences on the narratives of the past they were constructing. The greatest challenge to this 'scientific' approach came in the 1980s, though the challenge remained largely theoretical: a matter of principle rather than a matter of practice.

The majority of writings to come out of Çatalhöyük, which became part of the staple diet of many archaeologists training in the early 2000s, were empirically detailed historical studies produced out of the archaeological evidence itself. These included titles such as 'Daily practice and social memory at Çatalhöyük' (Hodder and Cessford 2004); 'Women and men at Çatalhöyük' (Hodder 2004);

'The spectacle of daily performance at Çatalhöyük' (Hodder 2006); and 'A living archive for Çatalhöyük' (Grossner et al. 2012). The subject matter across these works was everyday life in the Neolithic period, but the titles could easily have been used as ledes to articles about the subjectivities of fieldworkers during the excavations themselves. We thus take Hodder's (2000) work – which, much like us in Kilpisjärvi in August 2020, also focused around a single place and time – and the debates that followed it, as a point of departure for this special issue.

This special issue follows in that now well-established tradition of archaeological and anthropological reflexivity, applied at once deep in the field and far away from it. But, in contrast to the majority of ethnographies of archaeological practice, many of the papers in this volume (Heikkinen, Herva, Seitsonen, van den Berg) take a distinctly *autoethnographic* approach to 'being in the field', rather than being composed by an external ethnographic observer. Why this approach? Anthropology has of course long employed autoethnography as a method (see e.g. Khosravi 2016; Cluxton-Corley 2017), but what about this approach for archaeologists? Asking a fieldworker in any discipline to look within lets one delve further reflexively into the cognitive, physical and emotional engagements with the field. But prompting several researchers in a single, shared site to consider their own practice also presents the opportunity to disrupt approaches that see a field team as a single monocultural group producing a single body of work. The 'group' is often a starting point for many ethnographic-based studies, yet, as Todd Richardson has shown us through his comic and poignant 'misanthropelore' (Ingram, Mullins, and Richardson 2019, 55–84), group *disaffiliation* and outliers are often overlooked in their role of a scientifically coherent product or output. In this way, we reconsider and contest conventional representations of fieldworking as a wholly collaborative, holistic endeavour, such that the field becomes a nexus of various observation points and ontologies, working against the still often obscured colonial overtones of fieldworking with its coarse divisions between 'informants' and 'researchers' – now sometimes recast as 'participants' and 'co-creators'. Other papers in the volume (Seitsonen) take on more collaborative dimensions: engaging with people who often participate in field projects but are never heard from: children. Another (Norum et al.) brings into discussion a shared 'enemy' in high-latitude fieldwork – the common mosquito – and considers its role as a productive inhabitant of perceived and lived Arctic worlds.

Fielding place and time

Q : What do Arctic fieldworkers do?

A : They field.

Yes, fieldworkers observe, they dig, they photograph, they interview, they record, they measure, they compare, they reflect. And of course they write. But increasingly, they *field*. They *be* in the field; they think about themselves in the field; they write 'notes from the field', they consider what the field is doing to their work and what their work is doing to the field. There, amidst the empirical data one is intent on collecting, finds relationships in among place, tasks, time, schedules, events, activities, permissions, rests, sleeps, and so on. In verbalizing the field, in turning it from a substantive to an action, we would like to cast the field not just as a place for reflection and thought about the world but as a process of reflexive knowledge production between the self, the other and the world. Relationships between colleagues, too, develop in ways they might not have done out of the field. The adage 'what happens in x, stays in x' is no doubt applicable to the experiences of many fieldworkers, not merely in consideration of sensitive data but with respect to sensory and sensuous relationships with others, both human and non-human. These assemblages of phenomena, too, constitute their own data and are part and parcel of field 'work'. While Geertz and Hodder were considering a 'paraphernalia of writing and representation' (e.g. Geertz 1983, see also Fabian 1990) that signalled a shift away from the mechanics of fieldworking or from bodily engagement with excavated soil (or voiced silences), we want here to draw our attention back to the spaces in which we field our relationships with others, with ourselves, with land, with objects and with ideas. Our hope with this collection of essays is that, by returning fieldworkers' own attention to the field – and by returning their own analytical attention to the various affects of field *work* – we can better know how we come to know the things we know, why we come to think and write about them in the ways we do, and how we come to understand ourselves as 'co-producers' (Bruns 2009) of knowledge.

Understanding the nature of knowledge production has become a prominent concern of multiple disciplines for some time now, and the field seems as good a place as any to start. Anthropologists have at times indulged in the practice of field-gazing (see e.g. Dresch, James, and Parkin 2000), though perhaps not as intently as in what the Greeks call *omphaloskepsis*, that is doing the same about the navel. In both archaeology and anthropology, 'the field' is a metaphor that pervades data collection and knowledge creation, one which reinforces 'the distant, objective fixity of the recording process' (Hodder 2000). Rich in symbolic and literal associations, the field in its more basic, geographic sense suggests a simple area of open land – one typically planted with crops or pasture, and often bounded by hedges or fences. Indeed, the word 'field' has rather agrarian, pastoral and even wild connotations – it is somewhere out there in or not too far from nature. It can denote an area marked out for a game or sport ('a football field'), a large area blanketed by a single substance ('an ice field'), or an area that is the site of a military campaign ('a field of battle'). Indeed, many features of formal archaeological expedition fieldwork have their roots in

military operations and lexicon, which were largely rooted in colonial endeavours and have military associations (see also Immonen 2003). We dig a *trench*, go on *reconnaissance surveys*, in some parts of the world ‘local diggers’ are still hired to do much of the heavy lifting. Many of the figures of nineteenth to mid-twentieth century archaeology – among them Augustus Henry Lane Fox (Pitt Rivers), Jane Dieulafoy, and Mortimer Wheeler – served in the military before embarking on their archaeological careers, applying their skills and experiences across ‘fields’. Many academic archaeologists, such as Dorothy Garrod and Glyn Daniel, were conscripted into the military and intelligence services during World War II. Coming full-circle, archaeological fieldwork has more recently been used as a means of supporting military veterans (see *Waterloo Uncovered* n.d.), suggestive of the personal impacts being in the field or ‘doing archaeology’ might have on the individual. The field is also, of course, a place where a subject of scientific study or artistic representation can be observed in its natural location or context. These associations all play into what our notion of what the field is and what it can be. The sacrosanct physical field and the fieldwork that magically takes place on it lies at the core of many disciplines’ ‘methodological values’, those taken for granted, pre-theoretical notions of what it means to do intellectual work (Stocking 1992, 282).

‘Imagine yourself suddenly set down ... along on a tropical island beach’ (Malinowski 1932[2010], 4) is just one textual origin myth that lured many a curious, wanderlusty young explorer into a career in the social sciences. Even if seminal texts such as *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* comprised ‘a metaphorical journey into nature and human nature’ (Thornton 1985), they were also narrative paeans to the potentiality of elsewhere, the possibility of other. Indeed, when we depart the lab or the office or the laptop for the field, we do cross some sort of threshold. The field is somehow ‘somewhere else’, denoted by an ‘eliveness’ whose decontextualisation is ‘important in creating an objective distance’ (Hodder 2000). These distinctions between the local and the holistic also define our relationship to the field and to ourselves while we are in it. The writing-up process post-fieldwork can often serve to reinforce binary opposites: us and them, self and other, objective and subjective, general and local, empirical reality and analytical interpretation – much as our work might at once be striving to do away with such binaries (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Although we do not always need, as Hodder (2000) suggests, to disperse ‘field’ and ‘site’ in order to work contra colonialist hegemonies, at times binary oppositions can be rather productive relations to think through, between, and with. What is more, the field can become diffuse, such as by considering archaeologies and anthropologies of the digital, or of scattered or displaced persons such as migrants, prompting us to ask whether we can even know ‘where is the field?’ (Hirvi and Snellman 2012). And if we consider the rapidly changing nature of the Arctic, with its melting permafrost and shifting glaciers,

we really must question what it means to consider a space or an area as a field site.

The physical field is of course not the sole place where fieldwork gets done. The field spans relational networks and assemblages of communication, interaction and engagement: the university, the department, the local archaeological society, the funder, the community of colleagues, the line manager, the family, the home, the office, the home office). Yet the physical space of the field is not merely a site of knowledge production; it is the locus of the aforementioned nodes and is where data that leads to knowledge is assembled, where connections between such data are first made. Importantly, too, the field is a rather different *experiential* space from the laboratory or office; these experiences are themselves elements of knowledge production as well. Hastrup and Olwig (1996) called for a revision to the political economy of the field by integrating field method and staff within a multiscale, multivocal and multistaged process. In a similar vein, Hodder (2000) has suggested that the lacuna between the worlds of the academic archaeologist and the contract archaeology field professional – a divide between research and field staff – might be transcended through a restructuring of archaeological knowledge gathering, acquisition and production. But not all disciplinary field research processes are alike, nor do these roles absolutely need to be integrated in all disciplines. In anthropology, the logistics of ethnographic fieldwork and the practices of anthropological knowledge production tend to operate somewhat differently, as does maneuvering or manipulating them. While there may be field assistants who assist with tasks such as translating, transcribing, digging or network building (e.g. through snowballing), and while collaborative and team-based fieldwork is becoming more and more common in anthropology, generally speaking the anthropologist has most often tended their field as a sole proprietor, as it were.

The particular subjectivities of the fieldworker are important for understanding not just the ways in which knowledge is (co-)created and relationships (e.g. with informants or community participants) are negotiated, but are in fact deterministic of the scientific insights and results that emerge out of the fieldwork endeavour and encounter (see e.g. Latour and Woolgar 1986). Investigations into the affective experience of field research – how being in the field and carrying out empirical data gathering are part and parcel of a relational engagement between the fieldworker and the field – are still markedly understudied (cf. Edgeworth 2006a; Davies and Spencer 2010; Skoggard and Waterson 2015). And yet, more and more, scholars are compelled by academic institutions, funding agencies and licensing and regulatory bodies to relate in evermore emotionally entangled ways with the complex components and multiple actors of the field. Many academic institutions now encourage researchers to 'co-design' their research subjects and questions in line with issues of specific relevance to local interests and needs, more explicitly than was

done in the past (Gearheard and Shirley 2007). We are prompted – by our funders, our colleagues and our consciences – to consult and engage with members of indigenous or local communities throughout the lifespan of a given research project, to provide capacity building programmes, or to communicate project results effectively to those outside our disciplines and outside the academy. In one way, this reciprocity suggests the field to be a processual space, giving back to the earth from which crops have been sown.

The processes and practices of how we carry out research in our fields are shifting. As such, we field scholars may need to embody a more conscious and reflexive engagement with both time and place in the field experience. In order to learn how to adapt ourselves to changing field contexts, it is therefore important to understand how field researchers are responding to critical issues in fieldwork such as the challenges of negotiating research relationships, building trust and rapport, securing research and ethics permissions. Such thinking will undoubtedly provide further insights into the relational, experiential and temporal nature of the fieldwork we undertake to understand the socio-cultural and ecological legacies we seek to elucidate.

As is the case for many in life, the contributors to this volume have been limited by time and space. They were bound to where they were in the lived reality of present time. And they were limited by the physical confines of where they were based for the week. In order to show who and what the fieldworker is in the field, we have encouraged the authors to loosely make use of a praxeological framework as a means of framing their reflections through substantive considerations of the local, of self, of experience, and of the moment. This, we reckon, can show the ways in which the field is made, and how it is formed into a space for the exploration of research ideas and for the creative generation of spaces for data collection. The authors herein have thus been given creative license to knead their papers into a form reflecting their experience of being placed in one field for one week. While each shared this physical, cognitive and emotional space with others, each was also interpreting the material and symbolic world in which he or she was emplaced on their own.

Previous work on specific epistemological topics typically takes both broad temporal and spatial approaches, encompassing contributions and insights from across a wide range of time periods and geographic regions. Such a methodological approach, while undoubtedly generating excellent comparative data and useful insights, also results in ‘a rather fragmentary view of individual, “special cases”’ (Herva and Lahelma 2019, 172). We seek to depart from this fragmentation and the (at times admittedly unavoidable) exceptionalism that comes from using radically diverging individual cases so as to offer insights about how scholars interpret the world and thus how new worlds of knowledge are produced. For this reason, in this special issue we both zoom into a specific place while also zooming into a specific, minute temporality,

reaffirming a practice-based approach. Though in temporal terms our fieldworking was comparatively short, the points of observation are exponentially expanded. Our aim here has been to compel the authors to concentrate on the extant material, affective and relational aspects of a given field moment in scholarly time. While relevant disciplinary knowledges are clearly part of the field experiences of archaeologists and anthropologists, it is rather here the 'fieldological' data collection, analysis and interpretation that we are interested in. Moreover, furnishing scholars with a particular limitation of time and space may work as a strategy of constraint, fruitful for producing potentially novel findings and forms of perceiving and understanding phenomena.

The Arctic and the North: notes on (the) place

The Arctic takes its name from North Star, the Greek *Arkturos*, the 'guardian of the Great Bear' (the constellation of Ursa Majoris), a seemingly fixed point around which the northern skies appear to revolve. Mythical ideas of high northern skies, lands and people date back for centuries and millennia, with northern people having identified a special relationship with the heavenly great bear, as well as ancient Greeks placing Hyperborea (a land 'beyond the North Wind') somewhere in the far North. In contemporary usage, the term 'Arctic' is usually conceived in geographic terms, for instance, as the regions north of the Arctic Circle, which in its 'technical' character runs the risk of masking the deeply cultural dimension of the 'far North' that characteristically and prominently intertwines empirical and experienced high northern realities and myriad cultural ideas and imaginaries about northern worlds. The far North – real or imagined, formally located in the Arctic or otherwise – has fascinated European mindscapes since classical antiquity. It has been conceived as a land of natural and supernatural marvels through centuries both in 'positive' utopian and 'negative' dystopian terms (e.g. Davidson 2005; Naum 2016; Herva and Lahelma 2019).

As the North has in concrete terms been poorly known to outsiders – and in many ways still is – it has been open to all kinds of cultural projections and fantasizing, and in an 'outsider' perspective the images and understanding of the far North largely reflect the exoticization, romanticization and colonialist 'Othering' of northern lands and peoples. On the other hand, however, northern cosmologies, lifeways and modes of perceiving and knowing with the environment are quite different from 'modernist' ideas and ways. Traditionally, northern modes of being in the world are shamanistic-animistic, or relational, in character; there is an awareness of a dialogic, reciprocal and deeply interconnected coexistence of humans and non-humans in the world. These relational northern worlds are inherently unstable; everything is constantly moving, changing and coming into being, a principle central to northern animistic-shamanistic cosmologies. This has important implications for knowledge, as knowing such

a dynamic world is essentially situational. It requires continuous and active attentiveness to one's surroundings, as well as negotiating one's place in the world, which frequently calls for improvisation and adapting to particular situations of interaction (see further Herva and Lahelma 2019). All this has potential implications to doing fieldwork or 'fielding' in the high North.

Contemporary researchers in the North follow in a long tradition of travellers and explorers fielding the Arctic, developing polar imaginaries and disseminating their encounters. Travellers during Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe variously imagined and encountered the Arctic as a personal challenge, a scientific curiosity, and a social, cultural and environmental antithesis to the classical world (see e.g. Barton 1998; Klitgaard Povlsen 2007). Eighteenth and nineteenth century accounts of travels to the northern periphery reveal that such expeditions were as much about self discovery as about geographical exploration, recording both 'scientific observations' and recounting personal dramas and sensations (Ryall 2007). Even Carl Linnaeus, whose *Flora Lapponica* (Linnaeus 1737) was (and still is) the epitome of scientific observation and classification, kept a narrative diary, interspersed with illustrations, of his travels through Lapland that culminated in his famous taxonomy. Published posthumously in English in 1811, *Lachesis Lapponica* detailed Linnaeus's personal travails, alongside observations and enquiries about Laplander customs, lifestyles and material culture (Linnaeus 1811). These kinds of accounts offer a comparison to how field notes and reports are written today: musings, vignettes, thick descriptions, sketches and, now, the ubiquitous digital photograph. Yet, like Linnaeus's two different *Lapponica* texts, they are all too often kept separately: one published for the furtherance of 'science' or 'knowledge', the other a personal record that may or may not see a broader readership, despite often telling us much more about 'the field'. The danger of this separation between scientific (or scientized) data and personal reflection became evident in the controversy surrounding the 1967 publication of Malinowski's private field diaries, in which he revealed sexual desires of and prejudices against his field participants (Malinowski 1967). But it also raised compelling questions not just regarding how much of the fieldworker's private life should be included in scientific writing, but also how integral the fieldworker's emotional experiences are to the creation and consumption of scientific knowledge.

The European Arctic is thus no rookie protagonist in the cultural imagination, no understudy on the planetary stage. In addition to historical and contemporary imaginaries of what the Far North 'is', the region has long figured at the centre of international trade, migration and colonial power movements, woven into a nexus of global networks, tensions, disjunctures, and connections. Still, the importance of the Arctic to the world today cannot be overstated. The region is said to hold more than 10% of the world's undiscovered oil and as much as 30% of the world's undiscovered gas reserves. At the same time, the melting of Arctic ice, which is consistently reaching new peaks, is commonly

taken to be both a geophysical indicator and an emblematic bellweather of the global climate emergency. The region is of key economic and geopolitical significance, evidenced in ongoing processes such as the opening of the Northern Passage to facilitate shipping materials from Asia, Russian flag-planting on the bottom of the Arctic Ocean floor, and intense social and environmental debates over 'local' and indigenous territorial rights linked to oil and gas extraction, mineral mining and coastal fishing. It has also become particularly important to pan-European concerns and to Europe's position in a global world, speaking to increasing ecological and political concerns, and to anxieties over both Europe's centres and its peripheries. On the cultural-historical front, the Arctic has been the site of a number of recent archaeologies and anthropologies of the Anthropocene, throwing into sharp relief uncomfortable material legacies that complicate demarcations of past, present and future, and query the ecological and ethical foundations of heritage-making (Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2016; see also Harrison et al. 2020).

All this activity and interest has led to a surge in the number of scholars, publications, courses, programmes, degrees and even entire institutions which explicitly make the Arctic their core focus. But the Arctic buzz also means that the region is in need of some serious epistemological 'unscrambling' from the regionalist, colonial roots that once characterised knowledge about this globally critical part of the world (Huggan and Jensen 2016). Taking a ground-up look at how empirical fieldwork in the Arctic is constructed and carried out may make it easier for us to at once scramble and 'undiscipline' (Armiero et al. 2019) our own disciplined fields, approaches and worldviews, and at times parochial conceptualisations of time and place that these can impose upon us. While different powers may be re- (or ex-)appropriating the Arctic, co-opting or capitalising on planetary environmental and political overheating, scholars and the local people they work among and with must enter into this tug of reterritorialization that do what the social sciences and humanities do best: allow unheard or marginalized voices to enter the symphony – or cacophony – of voices, often audible all around us.

You are here

This land was alive with giants

Long ago, the glum giant Saana fell in love with beautiful Malla. Saana and Malla were to be married by wise Paras, but jealous Pältsä, himself in love with Malla, wanted to put a stop to the wedding.

Pältsä called upon the witches of Lapland, who summoned fierce glacial winds to stop the ceremony.

The winds swirled round and masses of ice formed.

Saana was the first to freeze. Malla, seeing this, flung herself into her mother's arms and began to weep. The tears she cried formed Kilpisjärvi.

The icy storms continued, freezing Malla and the rest of the party.

The ice has receded, but Saana, Malla and Kilpisjärvi remain, and can be seen to this day.¹

Kilpisjärvi (Northern Sámi: Gilbbesjávri) is a lake that has given its name to the small village beside it, a settlement of some 150 permanent inhabitants (Figure 1). The village proper developed only after the Second World War, and particularly over the last few decades, although it has its roots in the early twentieth century, when the nearby nature reserve was founded in 1916 and tourism to Lapland began to develop around the same time. A road to the village was finished only during the war. This became one of the retreat routes of the German troops in Finland in 1944–45, following the Finnish-German cooperation that ultimately ended in the so-called Lapland War between the former brothers-in-arms.

In the mindscapes of Finns, Kilpisjärvi occupies a special place: a remote north-western corner of the country known for the fjells Saana (Sáná) and Halti (Háldičohkka), and the Malla fjells (Gihcibákti and Gilbbesmalla) and nature reserve (Figure 2). Saana is included in the list of 'nationally valuable cultural landscapes' defined by the Finnish Ministry of the Environment. In December 2017, to mark 100 years of Finland's independence, blue light was projected onto snow-covered Saana to recreate the colours of the Finnish flag, in what was considered to be the world's largest artistic light installation.



Figure 1. The location of Kilpisjärvi (Map: Oula Seitsonen).



Figure 2. A view over the village, Saana (on the right), Lake Kilpisjärvi and Malla behind it (Photo: Vesa-Pekka Herva).

However, some Sámi felt this to be a colonial act, or, at the very least, insensitive to the indigenous community (Valtonen 2019). Saana has often been labelled an ancient sacred fjell or place of worship for the Sámi, but this has never been properly attested, and instead points to a twentieth century invention (Valtonen 2019, 214). Similarly, the origin tale of Kilpisjärvi retold above features motifs not typical of Sámi folk narratives, again indicating a twentieth century development, although now some local Finns consider such folklore a cultural marker supporting local identity (Valtonen 2019, 215). Despite their recent conceptions, these sacred and legendary attributions do show that we are engaging here with a world that is not merely a Finnish village, but a mythical land imbued with historical consciousness (see Siikala 2008).

Though the place is perhaps not well known outside of Finland and Northern Norway, once people have visited the region, they are likely to recognize the distinctive shape of Saana and locate Kilpisjärvi on the map where the border between Finland, Sweden and Norway meets. This ‘three states border’ is indeed one of the loci that hikers in the Malla nature reserve commonly visit.

Kilpisjärvi has in many ways been a ‘frontier village’. The inhabitants are mainly ethnic Finns but the region is part of the traditional homelands of the indigenous Sámi people who have been present and inhabited this territory centuries before Finnish settlement developed in the region. The three state borders imposed on the landscape in the late nineteenth century had major impacts on reindeer herding in the area. The Kilpisjärvi region is visited by tens of thousands of tourists annually, which is also readily obvious in the village-cape dominated by hotels and camping ground with cabins-for-hire, a general store, petrol station, and information and hiking centres. Today, Kilpisjärvi also

very much continues to resemble a frontier village, one that has only recently emerged: a wild and haphazard array of buildings and services by the road in a narrow stretch of land between Saana and the lake itself. There is a border guard station, but the village lacks other institutional facilities. With the exception of a substantial biological research station of the University of Helsinki, these are located 172km southwest, in the municipal centre of Hetta. Reindeer hang out in the village, as one of the few herders based in the village keeps some of his reindeer there (Figure 3). Local herders themselves generally live outside Kilpisjärvi.

Kilpisjärvi is distinctively a borderland region in several different senses; it is a meeting zone between people of different national, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, between different ways of life and different worldviews. In many ways, Kilpisjärvi bears similarity to the representation of Cicely, Alaska, in the classic 1990s TV drama-comedy *Northern Exposure*. Today, this is most conspicuous in the form of tourism, with Norwegian camper vans prominently present; indeed, the general store developed to serve the needs and desires of the Norwegian clientele border hopping for cheaper provisions in the EU. There is also a specialized section, a kind of a camper village, within one of the camping grounds (Figure 4). But this region has been a travellerscape and an arena for mobilities and encounters well before that. Tens of thousands of German troops were based or passed through here during the Second World War and the area has a rather spectacular record of wartime sites and remains related to the German struggle in a deeply alien Arctic world dominated, in this part of Lapland, by fjells and tundra (Figure 5).

The presence of a great number of German troops in the Kilpisjärvi region during WWI is a singular event in terms of scale, but many mobilities have long



Figure 3. A reindeer herd at the Finnish border station (Photo: Vesa-Pekka Herva).



Figure 4. A camper village that has recently emerged in Kilpisjärvi (Photo: Vesa-Pekka Herva).



Figure 5. Remains of German wartime activities are present in abundance in the Kilpisjärvi area (Photo: Vesa-Pekka Herva).

been integral to the histories and lifeways of this part of the world. The reindeer-herding Sámi have inhabited the environments here for centuries, moving around over large areas between lowlands and highlands and the coast and interior. Likewise, a traditional route between the Baltic Sea coast and the Arctic Ocean coast, the so-called 'Ruija Route' (Ruija is an old Finnish name for northernmost regions of Norway), and a pathway used for moving between the coast and the interior of Fennoscandia passed through Kilpisjärvi long before the construction of the road. Mobility has shaped the ways people conceptualize

and relate to the landscape, itself imbued with histories, memories, stories, cosmological concepts and cultural meanings of myriad kinds. This richness we also encountered while there and we sought to engage it in our fieldwork, as the essays of this Special Issue reflect.

Along with encounters, particularly between different lifeways and ideas of the world, also come conflicts. The single most obvious example of this in present-day Kilpisjärvi is the conflict between nature preservation and reindeer herding. The founding of the Malla nature reserve stripped off some traditional pasture lands of the reindeer (Malla is, in principle anyway, off-limits to reindeer). This is a subject of continued controversy in the village and the region, and exemplifies the troubled relationship between southern (Finnish) newcomers and the locals (both Finnish and Sámi) with their different ideas about the environment and different ways of engaging with it. Rather than an isolated conflict, however, this is ultimately an expression of the more general colonial relationship between the north and the south of Finland. Reindeer herding is constantly under pressure, and has been changing and adapting to the more general changes in land use (as related to, for example, mining and tourism), and its relationship to the local (regional) landscape has changed over time. This conflict and its ubiquity in much of life in and around Kilpisjärvi is indeed a main reason we wanted to undertake fieldwork there in the first place, exploring it in relation to other pressing issues, in particular tourism and the protection (or lack thereof) of natural and cultural heritage.

Conclusion: Fielding the Arctic

This article has presented a number of questions pertaining to the nature of 'being in the field', how this has an effect on 'doing' archaeology and anthropology (among other field-based disciplines), as well as what it means to be in a specifically *Arctic* field, with all its cultural, ideological, political and environmental connotations. Some of these have been intentionally unanswered here, but they are questions which we posed to the essays' authors a year ago when we embarked on our fieldwork.

Our aim in this introduction, and in the Special Issue more broadly, has been to highlight some of the theoretical and methodological approaches to the field as a way of interrogating the researcher's cognitive and physical engagements with it. And, rather than using these reflexive encounters to consider how the archaeological or anthropological 'other' engages with a specific place – as one might see in most phenomenologies of landscape – we remain focused on the researcher and their discipline. In this way, we want to foster more inclusive dialogue and more inclusive relationships between people and place, connections that

are as significant as the past and present people we study have. When we take ourselves to the field, we take our experiences, preconceptions and knowledge with us. When working in the European Arctic, we are compelled to remain conscious of the broader environmental, political and economic issues the region is facing, mindful of indigenous lifeways and the historic oppression of the Sámi, or simply aware of the need to take mosquito repellent with us in the summer. All this contributes to the direct experience of place, and inform how researchers write about it, and what they write from it.

In addition to presenting the range of encounters fieldworkers have with place, the kinds of autoethnographic, reflexive approaches outlined above can enable researchers to explore different ways of talking about place. As Matt Edgeworth (2006b) has noted, ethnographies of field practice can break traditional forms of academic writing. This is not always easy within the confines of a conventional (in format and layout) academic journal, which has a standard typeset, form and conventions, but the present journal and its interpretive approach, with a focus on consciousness and temporality, make it an ideal forum for the above issues and approaches. For this reason, we have pushed for the content and writing styles of the papers in this volume to demonstrate the creative, free-form and visually evocative nature which reflexive and autoethnographic approaches can have in interrogating place, time and consciousness. These shifts in presentation, in the visual display of qualitative reflection (cf Tufte 1983), compel us to ask how we might adapt our approaches to writing in order to redress imbalances in observation, recording and interpretation – or whether in fact we need to un-balance at all. The field, after all, is a place we go to, it is a place that takes us away. But it may take us on a journey through reflection and reconsideration only to remind us, after all that, that field only exists as ‘the field’ because we are being in it. By putting the fieldworker back into their field – by encouraging a group of scholars to reflect upon and write about the affective and the experiential moments that are part and parcel of being in the field – we’d hope to encourage others to make their field work and field writings local, personal and perhaps even fun again.

Note

1. Retold by Tina Paphitis, after Kaikusalo and Metsälä (1974).

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