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At home in the cloudberry marsh: on the making and remaking of Sámi home place landscapes

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Research Article

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Abstract

Historically, the picking of cloudberries (*Rubus chamaemorus*) for sale and subsistence has been of fundamental importance to Sámi livelihoods. Even today cloudberries are commonly described as the "gold" among berries. Based on anthropological fieldwork, participant observation and in-depth interviews with berry pickers in the Várjjat municipality of Unjárga-Nesseby, Northern Norway, this article investigates how relationships of humans, animals, plants and berries take part in the making and remaking of home place landscapes. I emphasise Sámi landscape research and theorizations to elevate their productive contributions to the ongoing, international landscape debates, by engaging with landscapes as homes.

Introduction

"I like many places. But, you see, it's something special being here. This is *home*. Here I *know* everything, like where to find cloudberries and where the good fishing sites are." Jon took a sip of coffee and gazed at the marsh, the heathered hills and the clusters of low birch trees in front of us. Our buckets were only half-full of orange, juicy berries, but I had learned from Jon that the breaks were half the experience, and the warm heather was an enticing place for a rest. While stretching my back, I listened to Jon's search for appropriate words to describe his affinity for this landscape, a landscape he considered to be of an unspectacular kind but full of other qualities. A cold summer was replaced by mild autumn days, and Jon had invited me along for a cloudberry trip as the berries had finally started to ripen. He was eager to make me understand the importance of cloudberries in the region and gain my own experience of this berry-picking activity. As we entered the marsh a few hours earlier, however, Jon told me he had a confession to make: This location was his second choice only. He explained that the marshlands he had really wanted to show me, in which he spent summer after summer picking berries with his family during childhood, were now destroyed by moth larvae outbreaks, hampering the growth not only of birch trees and shrubs but also of cloudberries. Enabling us to return with berries in our buckets, Jon had chosen a less familiar but larvae-free marsh as the destination of our trip.

Under favourable conditions and when time is right, the many Várjjat marshes in Sápmi, the settlement area of the Sámi indigenous people of Northern Europe, offer large amounts of the treasured *luopmánat:* cloudberries (*Rubus chamaemorus*) (see Fig. 1). Compared to the Sámi practices of reindeer herding and coastal fishing, producing what philosopher Jakob Meløe (1988) has called "the two landscapes of Northern Norway," Sámi gathering activities like berry picking have received little academic attention (but for exceptions, see Gurholt, 1999; Lien, 2001; Rybråten, 2013, Joks, 2022 and Rybråten et al., 2024). Still, cloudberries for sale and subsistence have been of fundamental importance to Sámi livelihoods. Even today cloudberries are commonly described as the "gold" among berries, by indigenous as well as non-indigenous berry pickers. The following will show how cloudberry landscapes further form part of what is *home,* providing a context for close and caring relationships and an active state of being in the world (Ingold, 2000; Jackson, 1995; Mallett, 2004).

Based on anthropological fieldwork, participant observation and in-depth interviews with berry pickers in the Várjjat municipality of Unjárga-Nesseby in 2008, 2019 and 2021, this article place emphasis on berry-picking practices and how relationships of humans, animals, plants and berries take part in the making and remaking of home place landscapes.

In Várjjat, like elsewhere in the world, climate change and global warming interfere with seasonal rhythms and multispecies interactions. Here, alterations in weather patterns and species distributions have caused moth outbreaks of unprecedented scale and severity (Vindstad et al., 2019). Natural scientists reveal how these outbreaks alter complex relationships in a landscape of abiotic and biotic components, affecting birch tree survival and understory vegetation with cascading impacts on reindeer, rodents, different bird species and even underground fungal communities (Vindstad et al., 2019; Saravesi et al., 2015; Jepsen et al., 2013; Karlsen et al., 2013). Simultaneously, these insects enter and form part of relationships inclusive also of the people who actively engage in and care for this transitional landscape.

In what follows, I engage Sámi landscape research to dialogue with more recent anthropological landscape studies highlighting (ambivalent) entanglements of human and nonhuman living spaces as well as more-than-human rhythms (Tsing et al., 2017; Tsing et al., 2019). By emphasising Sámi landscape theorizations, I advocate for their productive contributions to the ongoing international landscape debates, by engaging with landscapes as homes.

My understanding and theorising on landscape and feelings of home spring out of indigenous Sámi ways of enacting realities, covered by the north Sámi landscape term *meahcci,* where human interactions with animals, features of the landscape, the weather and unseen beings, are all relational, specific and circumstantial (e.g. Andersen, 2002; Fredriksen, 2024; Jernsletten, 2010; Joks et al., 2020; Kramvig, 2006; Joks & Law, 2017; Rybråten, 2013; Sara, 2013; Schanche, 2002). Thus, in line with Blaser (2013), I understand the world as continuously generated through relational practices, where human beings, other organisms and the environment form a total field of mutual involvement through which landscapes are enacted or brought into being. This approach not only responds to anthropologists' longstanding critique of the nature-culture divide (Strathern, 1980; Cronon, 1995) but it also corresponds to living in and with *meahcci*.

Meahcci – Home place landscape

Since the 1990s, anthropologists and other social scientists have challenged modern intellectual traditions that work from the dualist premise that society and nature are non-distinct domains of reality (e.g. Basso, 1996; Descola and Pálsson, 1996; Haraway, 1991; Ingold, 2000; 2011; Latour, 1993; Macnaghten and Urry, 1998; Milton, 1996). These studies have highlighted the importance of looking at the engagements between people and their environment as flexible, ongoing and mutually constitutive relations. In this context, Tim Ingold (1993; 2000; 2011: 4) has been a central theorist in developing the concept of landscape, evolving his *dwelling* perspective "to overcome the entrenched division between the 'two worlds' of nature and society, and to re-embed human being and becoming within the continuum of the lifeworld." More recently, the landscape concept has been linked to the global environmental challenges of our time by Anna Tsing et al. (2019: 186), calling for an anthropology "that takes landscapes as its starting point and that attunes itself to the structural synchronicities between ecology, capital, and the human and more-than-human histories through which uneven landscapes are made and remade." Considering landscapes as the living spaces of both humans and nonhumans, inseparable from past lifeways (Gan et al., 2017), resonates closely with how landscapes are experienced and communicated by Várjjat berry pickers. Furthermore, this understanding parallels theorizations made within previous and current Sámi landscape research. Focusing on the mutually constitutive engagement between people and their environments, cultural landscape debates and the north Sámi term *meahcci* has been central in this work (e.g. Andersen, 2002; Buljo, 2002; Schanche, 2002; Joks et al., 2020).

Archaeologist Audhild Schanche (2002) refers to *meahcci* (in plural *meahcit*) to illustrate the absence of definite and permanent borders between nature and the human place in the world in Sámi landscape relations. Denoting landscapes of movement and use, *meahcci* has commonly been (mis-)translated as "wilderness" or "outfields," in Norwegian *villmark* and *utmark*, respectively (ibid., see also Joks et al., 2020). These translations, however, do not cover the active involvement and relationality *meahcci* refers to, eventually forming a part of what is "home," whether in mountains, forests or marshlands. *Meahcci* is further task-related and may be specified thereafter; *luomemeahcci* is where cloudberries are picked, *guollemeahcci* is for fishing and wood is chopped in *muorrameahcci* (Schanche, 2002: 163). As such, *meahcit* resembles Ingold's *taskscapes*; arrays of related activities (Ingold, 2000: 195, Joks et al., 2020). For these task-related landscapes to be constituted, human engagement with the surroundings is necessary. Yet, these non-dualist Sámi landscapes however fail to be recognised, Schanche argues, when the Norwegian natural management regime focuses on protecting "valuable natural landscapes" on the one hand, and "valuable cultural landscapes" on the other hand. Where the first category attributes value to a lack of human activity, the other attributes value to human-made structures and interventions. Areas in which human practices, like reindeer herding or berry picking, have been carried out for centuries without leaving distinct marks behind, are thus excluded from both classifications. This type of historical land use, Schanche argues, has not left strong enough traces to count as a cultural landscape according to the conservation authorities. Defining such areas as natural landscapes, or wilderness, however, conceals how people have been actively engaged in these areas, for generations (ibid.). Here, Karen Marie Eira Buljo (2002) provides examples of how traditional traces, marks and remnants in reindeer herding landscapes are commonly overlooked or, if recognised at all, are misinterpreted by untrained eyes. To better acknowledge the historical activity carried out in these areas by national management authorities, Buljo advocates the need for approving these lands to be cultural landscapes, inclusive of physical traces of activity as well as placenames, stories and knowledge.

Anthropologist Solveig Joks et al. (2020: 310) elaborate on the colonial aspects of the "imposed but performative mistranslations" of *meahcci* into Norwegian. None of the suggested Norwegian translations, such as *villmark* (wilderness) or *utmark* (outfields), can account for the intertwined nature-cultures, the overlapping task-related areas involved and the assemblages of various beings that *meahcci* refers to. With the words of Joks et al. (ibid.: 310), a Norwegian translation "enacts landscape, space, time, human, non-human, and extra-human relations very differently. It implies quite different understandings of rights and wrongs or normativities. And it also enacts different versions of what it is to know." As stated by Østmo and Law (2018), to know *meahcci* is not an accumulation of abstract knowledge about the landscape in general: "Located in the practices of living in and with the land, it is rather to know how particular physical forces, lakes, rivers, terrains, nonhuman beings, plants and vegetation, animals and fish may act together in particular locations, at particular times, and in particular circumstances" (ibid.: 358). How best to insist on environmentally relevant differences in contexts of coloniality, the authors ask, calling for greater willingness and ability to recognise difference, among academics as well as environmental managers.

In the article *Landscape as home*, anthropologist Britt Kramvig (2020) suggests using landscape as an analytical and methodological concept for attending to the multiple contradictions the same landscape may engender. Here, Kramvig relates to place not only as an area for ethnographic investigation of different relations but also as created through memories and stories, by what is forgotten, and by the current presence of the past. To get to hidden Sami landscapes, in what is often described as Norwegianized areas, it is not enough to make visible and criticise political and

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epistemological systems and hierarchies. Kramvig argues further that (decolonial) attempts to disconnect from these systems and receptivity towards other ways of thinking and to other relations is needed (ibid.).

In this article, I am guided by these theoretical landscape perspectives in providing a contribution to the landscape literature by showing how berry-gathering practices, and the relations and emotions they entail, take part in bringing landscapes as homes into being in this particular part of the North.

Várjjat

Várjjat, in Norwegian called Varanger, lies in the north-western part of Sápmi and the north-eastern part of Norway, close to the borders of Finland and Russia (see Fig. 2). The history of Várjjat describes how the first humans to settle in the inner part of Várjavuonna, the Varanger Fjord, arrived shortly after the end of the last ice age, living off the various resources in the fjord and the abundance of wild reindeer on land (Kleppe, 2014). At the Ceavccageađgi-Mortensnes cultural heritage site, visitors can explore more than 10 000 years of human co-habitation with the land and learn about the area's central position in the emergence of a Sámi ethnicity (Ween, 2012). Várjjat history is also one of trade relations, ethnic multiplicity, colonisation, Norwegian assimilation policies towards the Indigenous Sámi population and Sámi revitalisation. Today, the inner parts of Várnjárga, the Várjjat peninsula, are included in the Sámi administrative area through the municipalities of Unjárga-Nesseby and Deatnu-Tana. Both Sámi and Norwegian are official languages, reflected in the municipalities' bilingual names. While acknowledging the complex and entwined ethnic situation in all Várjjat communities, some are still characterised more Sámi, some more Norwegian, and some more Kven (Finnish immigrants to Northern Norway from the 1600s up until the 1900s, and their descendants).

In Unjárga-Nesseby, a majority of the approximately 900 inhabitants consider themselves to be Sámi, and more than 60% understand and speak both Sámi and Norwegian (Unjárgga gielda, 2017). Combining reindeer herding, agriculture, coastal fisheries, hunting and gathering has been of fundamental importance to the population of this coastal Sámi community for centuries. Today, most employment positions are connected to the service and public sector, the primary industries, tourism and trade. Still, gathering activities throughout the year remain of great significance for many Sámi and non-Sámi residents, for economic contributions, subsistence, wellbeing, recreation and people's sense of belonging (Rybråten, 2013).

Várnjárga is characterised by rounded ridges, marshlands and birch-covered slopes, with barren cliffs, plains and occasional beaches that reach towards the adjacent fjords and the Barents Sea. Climatologically located within the Sub-Arctic zone (Karlsen, 1997), seasonal variation constitutes a central aspect of Várjjat living. The seasonally entwined landscape practices are reflected in how people refer to two, four or eight seasons of a year, or how seasons are defined according to practice, like the berry season, the cod season or the hunting season (commonly moose). For some inhabitants, particular seasons may serve as unfavourable transitions to the next, while for others, each season includes distinct opportunities (Rybråten, 2013).

In seasons of snow, while occasionally hindering movement, a snowfall first and foremost holds the promise of an open landscape. To make use of skis and snowmobiles for ice-fishing trips, ptarmigan snaring, wood gathering, excursions or for exercising on the ski trails, a certain amount of snow is needed. As *skábma*, the polar night is gradually replaced by increasing daylight, activities in the landscape extend further into the evenings and nights until the sun no longer sets under the horizon. With spring thaw leading to bare grounds, other kinds of movements and practices are enabled, and the weather is "read" in other ways than during seasons of snow. The wind, for example, tells different stories. Instead of providing signs of where to expect snowdrifts along a ski- or snowmobile trip or indicating the prudence in leaving harbour to take the fishing vessel out on the fjord, the strength and direction of the wind may now indicate where cloudberries are most likely to be found in summer and early autumn. The degree of cloudiness may serve as a guide for which bait to use for angling. And when moving in the landscape, rain or drought may cause one route to be more favourable than another. When day lengths shorten, the wind direction may influence decisions about where to search for sheep and reindeer to be gathered from their pastures for earmarking and eventual slaughtering. The return of skábma may represent a calm period of the year, where pace slows and indoor activities are prioritised before the *meahcit* activities rise anew (for detailed descriptions of various seasonal activities, see Rybråten, 2013).

Historically, cloudberry sales to travelling traders provided the Várjjat coastal Sámi with a valuable source of monetary income up until the 1950s (Nilsen, 2003). Berries may still be sold today, primarily through long-term private agreements, at local markets or through social media. However, sales only take place if the harvest goes beyond what is needed for the berry pickers' own winter supply together with the berries set aside as gifts to close relatives and friends. Due to the significance attributed to these berries and the narrow time frame through which they can be gathered, preparations for the coming berry season start early, and some berry pickers postpone a portion of their summer vacation until the cloudberries ripen.

Luomemeahcit – at home in the cloudberry marshes

In spring, the most eager cloudberry pickers start to pay attention to the weather with optimal conditions for the cloudberry plants in mind. In early summer, cloudberry flowers on the marshes are sought, in the hope of estimating the following harvest. But as Anna taught me, even if a surfeit of flowers is found, this does not necessarily mean there will be an abundance of berries in the autumn. Cold weather and a limited number of insects during flowering may result in reduced pollination, just as strong winds or heavy rainfalls can destroy the flowers and impede the berry production. And even if the flowering conditions are good, early frost nights before the cloudberries are fully ripe can spoil the quality of the berries. Too much rain may cause aqueous, tasteless berries, while a dry summer may hamper the berries from forming at all. Those known for meticulously following the cloudberry development are commonly asked by neighbours, friends and relatives to share their assessments of whether a rich berry harvest is to be expected.

The high value of cloudberries is legally reflected in the Finnmark Act, applying to the Várjjat region, which regulates the harvest of cloudberries but no other berries. The Finnmark Act was passed by the Norwegian parliament in 2005, recognising the continued Sámi settlement and use of the area represented by the county of Finnmark. The purpose of the Act is to "ensure that the land and natural resources in Finnmark are managed in a balanced and sustainable way, in the best interest of the residents of the

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Figure 1. Cloudberries from Várjjat, Northern Norway. Photo: Dagmar Trane.

county, and especially as a foundation for Sámi culture, reindeer herding, use of the outfield, industrial operations and social life" (Finnmark Act, 2005, author's translation). While emphasising Sámi ethnicity and indigeneity as a justification for the legal redefinition of the region, acknowledging Norway's obligations in accordance with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention no. 169 on the Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, the legislation nevertheless applies to all residents of the county, regardless of ethnic identity (see also Broderstad, 2015; Ween and Lien, 2012). Section 23 of the Finnmark Act emphasises how all residents of Finnmark have the right to pick cloudberries on the land of the Finnmark Estate, now administering the formerly state-appropriated commons amounting to 95% of Finnmark's total area (Broderstad, 2015). Section 25 adds that "all persons" (regardless of residency) have access to picking cloudberries "for their own domestic use" (Finnmark Act, 2005). Gathering cloudberries for sale is slated for local inhabitants only.

Traditionally, different Várjjat families had particular areas in which their cloudberries were picked (Nilsen, 2003). As in the rest of Finnmark, only a small part of the Várjjat area is privately owned. Still, user rights have been regulated by unwritten but locally recognised rules (Nilsen, 2003; 2009). Traditionally, while some areas were considered common land, each family also had their own distinct areas for cloudberry picking. This was well known and approved of. Inga, who is now in her seventies, recalls learning to respect others' allotments as a child: "We were not allowed to cross the stream of Aunt Anna. That was their *siida*, where those children would pick [berries]. And we all understood that." By using the term siida, Inga refers to the Sámi traditional, social organisation and associated areas for common use. Formalising these regulations was unnecessary, as prescriptive user rights were more respected than formal designations (Nilsen, 2009). If a family's area were no longer used, it could be inherited by other relatives or turned into common use. Today, the division of allotments is less prominent, but when approaching a cloudberry march where people are already present, local custom insists on keeping a distance: "you do not pick under the nose of others" (see also Joks, 2022). Correspondingly, conflicts are few, except for occasional disapprovals of ignorant foreigners.

When referring to their preferred *luomemeahcit*, people commonly talk about "my areas" or "our cloudberry areas." Olaf's cloudberry areas are still his, even though they lie more than 2000 kilometres away from where he currently lives. Ever since he moved away to study in his youth and then settled in another part of the country, Olaf has longed for and returned to his Várjjat marshlands close to every cloudberry season for more than 50 years. He and his sister Eva are now in their mid and early seventies and grew up with cloudberry picking as an important family activity. Cloudberry sales provided income, making it possible to buy necessary equipment and other goods. Olaf recalls how his first wristwatch was bought using cloudberry money as a reward for his great berry-picking efforts that year.

While childhood memories from the berry marshes include examples of exhausting heat and intrusive insects as well as early snowfalls turning berry-picking fingers into icicles, both Olaf and Eva feel this recurring urge to go picking when the berries ripen:

> Olaf: We are not *dependent* upon picking anything. No. [But] you must do the picking when the berries are there. Otherwise . . .
>
> Eva: We so much want to. We *have* to. Want to and have to. So, it's a need.
>
> Olaf: A primal force.

Other berry pickers describe this urge to pick cloudberries as "something in the blood," "an embodied sensation" or "a tradition that sits in the body." For many, the winter can hardly be met without cloudberries available in the freezer. Still, there is more to the gathering practice than gaining access to the berries. Inga's *luomemeahcit* are not as far away as those of Olaf, but they are closer to the village where she grew up than where she and her husband currently live. Some years ago, new areas were included in her *luomemeahcit* when her uncle passed away: "Now we have inherited my uncles' mashes. We never went there while he was alive. That was his marshes." Just as much as Inga respected these areas for belonging to her uncle in the past, she now pays respect to the same locations by maintaining a family connection through berry picking. This is not only about the number of berries to gather, though. Inga elaborates:

> It's great when there are berries. When you find berries. Then you are euphoric! But if we don't find any berries, we can just say: "well, it was still a great trip." We commonly bring fish poles along because there are many fishing waters on that side. But the berries are priority one, right. It belongs to the season here; berry picking, fishing . . . And lighting a fire (see Fig. 3).

Inga rarely goes cloudberry picking in other areas than her own. While some Várjjat berry pickers make exceptions during bad years and search for berries in less familiar locations, Inga and others make sure to pick a surplus in good years, as a safety precaution for more meagre times:

> Last year was bad, really. I don't want to travel far to pick berries, though. If there are no berries where I am used to go . . . Well, then there are no

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Figure 2. Map of the Várjjat area, with Várnjárga. Source: Eva Setsaas, NINA.

berries. But usually . . . You never know if there will be berries next year, so we always keep berries in our freezer.

Inga's cloudberry areas are landscapes she learned to know as a child, moving in these *luomemeahcit*, year after year, with her parents and other family members. Walking these old paths decades later, she recalls how her little sister stumbled over roots along the trail on her first trip to the berry marsh. She revisits the rock her father used for supporting his sack to get some relief when carrying the heavy load of berries from the marsh to the village; the only place he could rest and get back on his feet without the need for assistance. She still fetches water from the small stream referred to above, which she was told not to cross as a child, to respect the boundary it formed towards another family's cloudberry area. She recalls the feeling of freedom, running with her fish pole after the day's berry tasks were completed, occasionally catching a fish or two for the evening meal. And when she lights a fire and the smoke stays low, she can still hear her uncle's voice saying "well, now we'll get some moisty weather." Knowing the multiple meanings woven in and through Inga's cloudberry areas, it may not be surprising that Inga omits cloudberry picking altogether during the occasional years where her own *luomemeahcit* have no berries to provide. Other areas cannot give her the same feeling of belonging, through emotional attachment, feeling safe and "at home" (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 197).

In a Western context, the concept of home is commonly associated with the house, in which we feel comfortable, secure and cared for (Broch, 2020; Jackson, 1995). As stressed by Jackson (1995, p. 15), however, "to be housed [is] not necessarily to be at home," and the concept of home can also cover "places, spaces, feelings, practices, and active states of being in the world" (Broch 2020, p.5, Mallet 2004). Due to the concept's multiplicity, but also ambiguity, Broch (2020) considers studies of home to hold an extensive potential for interpretation. Still, the notion of home-as-house forms a consistent symbol of core values in the Norwegian society (ibid.), influencing how boundaries are drawn between, for example, private and public, inside and outside, nature and culture and freedom and control. As exemplified by the Sámi cloudberry pickers referred to above, however, to be at home may first and foremost be associated with home-as-landscape.

Jackson (1995), Ingold (2000) and Mazzullo and Ingold (2016) espouse a focus on practice to reveal the diverse ways people "do" and feel at home. Based on Jackson's experience among the Warlpiri of the Tanami Desert in Central Australia, he came to explore the notion of home "not as something given but as something made, not as a bounded entity but as a mode of activity" (Jackson, 1995, p. 149). Emphasising the multiplex character of lived experience, Jackson further acknowledges how "[e]ach place and each telling yields a different view, because we who travel are always changing and the weather, seasons, and landscapes through which we pass are changing too" (ibid., p. 157).

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Figure 3. Coffee break by the cloudberry marsh. Photo by author.

Figure 4. Dead birch trees due to longstanding moth outbreaks. Photo by author.

Being at home in the Várjjat landscape is clearly a mode of activity, connected to using and knowing the areas. "I think it's so nice," Sara says, explaining her frequent cloudberry trips when the berries have ripened. "Others pull up on the couch and relax after dinner. I take the bucket and go out on the marsh." (See also Rybråten, 2022). To know where cloudberries are to be found is about knowing the weather and the interrelations between weather conditions, landscape characteristics, insects and berries. A prevailing wind direction in early summer, for example, may indicate where cloudberry flowers have been left sheltered and berries are most likely to be found in early autumn. Furthermore, the ability to interact flexibly with both expected and unexpected shifts in the surroundings is a central part of feeling at home in these areas. A shared expression among Várjjat inhabitants is the phrase "we know where we live," used to explain, for example, why rough eastern winds may come as no surprise or why complaining about a cold summer would be to no avail (Rybråten, 2013). Still, some changes are experienced and emphasised as more pervasive than others, like the tendency of shortened winter seasons with diminishing snow depth, alterations in wind directions and wind strength, the melting of palsas, peat mounds with a frozen core, and the prolonged moth outbreaks in the region.

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The making and remaking of relational home-place landscapes

Longstanding moth outbreaks starting in 2002, with large infestations of larvae in trees and shrubs as well as on the ground during outbreak years, have caused major changes to the Várjjat landscape and led to widespread birch forest death (see Fig. 4). Natural scientists tracking these moth outbreaks closely describe them as "important indicators of climate change and forceful inducers of climate-related ecosystem state shifts" (Jepsen et al. 2011: 2071). For Várjjat inhabitants, the larvae and the moths were first and foremost sensuously present in people's everyday lives through the outbreak period. "First there was this one kind of larva, bright green in colour. And it was here, all over the place, all summer for three years. But the fourth summer we got this other larva as well, a bit smaller and with a dark line along the body. I inspected them closely, you see," Anna told me back in 2008 (Rybråten, 2013). Oral descriptions of experience-near and sensational aspects of moth larvae masses are many and still commonly shared. During outbreak years, direct encounters with copious larvae – a slippery feeling of larvae under foot or the continuous sticky sensation of larvae threads on one's face – would occasionally terminate activities, like going for a walk or checking the ripening of berries (Rybråten, 2013, p. 220):

> Never in my life have I seen such an amount of moth larvae, as during these last years with the major attacks. When the leaves started to fall, we could see that the ground was all green from larvae. Sometimes, at its worst, there was a 2 cm thick layer of larvae covering the road in the autumn when we wanted to go for a walk. Never have I seen that many larvae! (Juhan)

Some even recall a sensation of hearing the larvae feed on the leaves, as they were so numerous. While people consider a certain extent of moth larvae to have "always" appeared from time to time, their outbreak numbers were experienced as overwhelming. As such, the moth larvae resemble the monsters or bullies Swanson et al. (2017) refer to as no longer playing well with other species, due to modern human activities causing, amongst others, global warming. Heidi recalls the long period of finding no cloudberries in her home marshes:

> It ate everything, that larvae. The cloudberry flowers and everything. We couldn't find a single berry for many years. And my goodness, all the trees that are destroyed! In some places, the trees are lying on top of each other, crosswise. Our cabin used to . . . It used to be in the forest. But now there is hardly any forest left. It is all gone.

In addition to the sensuousness incorporated in peoples' direct moth larvae experiences, the outbreaks also caused sensuous landscape transitions, leaving behind extensive areas of black birch forests occasionally scattered with a few surviving leaf-bearing trees. Feelings of sorrow are expressed in peoples' descriptions of how known, viable areas are now dominated by dead birch trees "standing like ghosts." Here, "the dead trees don't bend in the wind. They shake in a kind of disconnected way," (Rybråten, 2013, p. 224) until they are finally overturned by strong wind gusts. Jon puts it this way: "It makes me sad. But what can you do?"

While grieving the degradation of landscapes caused by the moth larvae outbreaks, avoiding the forests as much as possible during the worst outbreak summers, and mourning the huge areas of dead forest that the outbreaks left behind, people still must deal with these transitions in their home place. Concerns are expressed, related to the outbreaks' potential long-term effects and the possibility of these outbreaks to represent the beginning of escalating transitions. Simultaneously, peoples' recent experiences with a gradual recovery in affected areas provide hope for improvement and recurrent abundant berry seasons also in years to come. Experiences of past "black years" in the berry marshes and acknowledgements of recurrent fluctuations in years with either surplus or deficit of berries further seem to have served as a source of hope in peoples' ways of handling the moth larvae outbreaks. Anna is now in her eighties and recalls a moth larvae outbreak in the 1960s. While clearly not as extensive as the recent outbreaks, she possesses an experience of severe damage caused to trees and plants in the area, followed by subsequent recovery (Rybråten, 2013).

Despite challenges, unwanted changes and future uncertainties, the harm caused by the moth larvae to local livelihoods is mainly viewed as the kind of change that may eventually occur in a landscape of relational engagement, always in the making. "In the end," Jackson (1995, p. 155) states "home is not a place that is given, but an experience born of what one makes of what is given." In Várjjat, the moth larvae outbreaks, histories and memories have found their way into current cloudberry practices. For Maria, this means taking advantage of a good cloudberry season to stock up for a year or two to come:

> We kind of gather what we need for the winter, and then... You might be thinking, what if next years' berry season will be a bad one, then we need to have enough for that year as well. Now we have been bothered by that larva, right, so we've had really bad years. There was in fact one season, probably two years ago, where we didn't go picking. Everything was just crush dry and destroyed. Last year we found a little, and this year is actually a rather good year.

For Sara, her eagerness to pick cloudberries has made her familiar with various marshlands in the area. Knowing when cloudberries mature relative to each other at different marshes, she can prolong the cloudberry season to the fullest. Furthermore, good conditions in one location can compensate for bad conditions in another, also when caused by moth larvae. Bad years and few cloudberries, however, tend to increase the demand and the value placed upon the berries to be received, either directly from the marsh, from a relative or friend or through other contacts.

While Sara takes pleasure in all her cloudberry trips and most of her berries end up as gifts, the berries she keeps for herself and gives to her parents are those picked from her childhood marshes, in what used to be her family's area. Even as an adult, Sara has returned, year after year, picking berries with her father, "sharing coffee by the fire, recalling events and retelling stories, basking in the sun, or shivering in sleet and cold weather" (Rybråten, 2022, p. nn). The practices, knowledge, histories and memories forming part of this shared cloudberry landscape are also represented by the berries these marshes provide. It is through lived experiences and emotional connections to these *luomemeahcit* that their most valuable berries can be fully appreciated. Like Jon's second choice cloudberry marsh referred to in the introduction, Sara's organisation in berries-for-gifts and berries-to-keep further illustrates that while various cloudberry areas can offer wellbeing and ripe cloudberries, not all of them are considered *home*.

Conclusion

Broadening our understanding of what the notion of home may cover, and what other concepts it may be linked to, provides opportunities for establishing new insights and new relations. In this article, I have sought to combine Sámi landscape theorizations and Várjjat ethnography to expand the notion of home to be

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inclusive also of landscapes. Engaging landscapes as homes, as delineated above, reveals the biosocial relations, materiality, time, memories and emotions involved in bringing these landscapes into being, as opposed to how these interconnections are hidden from view when the same areas are engaged as landscapes of abiotic and biotic components, or landscapes to be categorised as either 'natural' or 'cultural' for the purpose of valuation or management (cf. Schanche, 2002). For people who actively engage in, care for and emotionally connect with these areas, boundaries between nature and culture, private and public and inside and outside may be less firmly drawn, or drawn in other ways. Previous sections have shown how relationships of humans, animals, plants and berries take part in the making and remaking of *luomemeahcit*; home as active states of being in the world (cf. Mallet, 2004).

The terms we use to describe the world matter. I have wished to keep us remindful of the non-dualistic relationality *meahcci/meahcit* and *luomemeahcci/luomemeahcit* implies, using these northern Sámi landscape terms throughout the text rather than (mis-)translating them into English. Paying attention to this "difference" is not only an attempt to answer the call from Sámi scholars requesting openness towards other relations and ways of thinking but also to pay justice to different ways of being at home in the world. Acknowledging landscapes as homes, as exemplified by the Várjjat *luomemeahcit*, increases our awareness of the multiple relations, meanings and emotions an apparently "untouched" landscape (as interpreted by untrained eyes) can hold. It makes us better grasp the multispecies socialites involved in living with the land, with an awareness and care for its past, present and future to come. Eventually, such recognition may further inspire an expansion of who and what to relate to and care for in our lives, favourably influencing our inevitably intertwined future. Importantly, however, an acknowledgement of landscapes as homes necessitates initial and fundamental respect. More humble and cautious ways of approaching landscapes are indeed an urgent matter in our time of expansive land use, climate change and biodiversity loss.

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