Shelters

Ethnographic
Collection

Essays for a Time of Crisis

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edited by

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Gdańsk 2023

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shelter

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Shelters. Essays for a Time of Crisis

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Everyone who has lived in Iceland, for a long term or a short term, is aware of the importance of climate, migration and heritage to our identity and development. As the new Ambassador to Poland – the Embassy of Iceland in Warsaw opened in December 2022 – I am constantly recognizing the similarities and important connections between the two countries and how we have influenced one another within the last few decades.

Therefore, it is with great pleasure to take patronage over the international project **“Shelter – Climate, Migrations, Heritage”**, conducted by the National Museum in Gdańsk. This publication and future exhibition are the result of Polish-Icelandic-Norwegian cooperation in various areas. The topics undertaken in the project can identify the key objectives of how we want our societies to evolve. I am sure that this experience will enrich both Polish and Icelandic culture with mutual inspirations and exchange of ideas.

Hannes Heimisson
Ambassador of Iceland to Poland
28.04.2023, Warsaw

Anna Ratajczak-Krajka

Introduction: Climate and Multicultural Storytelling

The idea for the project titled “The Shelter. Climate, Migrations, Heritage” was born in a granary. Back in the day it sheltered grain, after the war it sheltered the remains of old Gdańsk, while today it shelters ethnographic exhibits from Pomerania, housing a library, an archive, and a team of museum professionals. Nestled in the lush greenery of the museum garden and the former Cistercian park, the granary is part of the natural landscape of this place. It is obvious that this is where the story of protecting our well-being, of our cultural and natural heritage, and of climate change and methods of responding to it, based on the indigenous knowledge of past generations, modern science and cooperation with experts and artists from Poland and abroad, had to be written.

Change is part and parcel of our lives, the only element to be taken for granted. Some changes evolve and roll on unhurriedly over centuries, while others shake up the reality we know surprisingly quickly, necessitating our immediate reaction. Museum professionals know a great deal about change; after all, their main task is to record and preserve for posterity a world that no longer looks like it did when the objects on display and in storage served their purpose. Working among objects that tell the story of social and economic change, migrations, the persistence as well as the disappearance of ethnic and national groups, changes in customs and the intermingling of cultures, as well as coping with natural factors, does not permit an indifferent observation of reality. What is it, then, that today, in a world of unprecedented dynamism and volatility, constitutes a topic worth addressing in order to join the global discussion and find our own ethnographic and anthropological mode of operation? The answer seems obvious; today international experts point out that climate change is the greatest humanitarian, economic and ecological threat to the world. Another extremely important phenomenon that helps shape our reality is the migration of populations, both forced, as a result of natural and political crises, and by choice, in search of better development opportunities, and the multicultural challenges that this entails.

Data on the climate crisis is increasingly alarming. According to the 6th Report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a UN body for scientific analysis related to climate change, it is almost inevitable that the average global temperature will warm by up to 1.5°C by 2050. This will entail an escalation of extreme weather events, loss of biodiversity and mass migrations. The only way to save ourselves is to radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but also to ensure climate and social justice, inclusivity, sustainability, and the implementation of measures to help humanity adapt to the inevitable changes in almost all spheres of life. Significantly, a growing number of experts underline the prominent role of culture in working towards resilience and shaping new attitudes towards the climate and migration crisis. Moreover, scholars indicate that museums are a major factor in promoting and implementing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by all UN member states in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the ICOM International Council of Museums conference in Kyoto in 2019, a resolution was drafted promoting sustainability as one of the main goals and challenges for contemporary museums. Cultural institutions have started to come together to form a support network, e.g. Climate Heritage Network (CHN), to work hand in hand for the benefit of climate.

What tangible measures can cultural institutions such as museums employ to support activities that seem to have baffled the world's politicians? This seems a tall order, especially as culture itself appears to have spawned the problems we

currently face; colonialism, globalism, and consumerism are all elements of cultural development that have largely led to a new era, called the Anthropocene, the "fossil fuel age" or the "carbon age". Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has further demonstrated that our ways of living will not work in the face of the changes ahead of us. It is therefore imperative to step out of our filter bubbles in search of innovative solutions. In the museum microcosm, this means rethinking all spheres of the institution's activities, from gathering collections, revising the existing holdings, conservation methods, the process of creating exhibitions, electricity management, and creating committed educational and cultural programmes that promote sustainability and inclusivity towards minorities.

What tangible measures can cultural institutions such as museums employ to support activities that seem to have baffled the world's politicians? This seems a tall order, especially as culture itself appears to have spawned the problems we currently face; colonialism, globalism, and consumerism are all elements of cultural development that have largely led to a new era called the Anthropocene, the "fossil fuel age" or the "carbon age".

The new way of thinking resembles futurology. In order to critically assess the situation and the role of museums, it is necessary to look into the future: what will the world be like several decades from now? What will the social structure look like? Will climate hazards such as floods or heat waves destroy the cultural heritage looked after by institutions? Who will put a premium on museums in a multicultural society? What will be the object of collecting in an era of exuberant consumerism? Do we have to consider a vision that museums will soon cease to exist? These topics are constantly being discussed at scientific conferences and webinars, and are also the basis for research and exhibition projects, as well as for new collectives and platforms for cooperation between museums and representatives of other professions, such as scientists, academics, and artists.

"The Shelter. Climate, Migrations, Heritage" project attempts to create a safe and open space which will integrate the greatest possible number of elements of a new approach to the museum and its role in today's rapidly changing reality. The concept is rooted in the spirit of the *Museums Are Not Neutral* campaign and entails the involvement of this institution in the most pressing issues of today, such as climate change, migrations, and threats to cultural and natural heritage. It is significant that the official launch of the

The notion that a sense of well-being and balance in times of stress can be achieved through culture – practising and interacting with art and art education – plays an important role in the concept of "The Shelter".

project and the international online conference scheduled for 24 March 2022 coincided with the tragic event of the outbreak of war in Ukraine. The grant provided the institution with the opportunity to respond quickly and to implement actions for war refugees, but also became a chance to test what role culture and heritage can have in a world of real and extremely difficult challenges.

At the core of "The Shelter" is a holistic, extended thinking about heritage, linking cultural heritage with natural heritage; the world of humans with the world of nature and non-human beings. The idea of an "ecomuseum", as defined by the ICOM International Committee, according to which a museum is understood as an institution "that explores, exploits – through scientific, educational and cultural methods – the entire heritage of a community and manages it by taking into account the natural environment and cultural surroundings", proved to be another valuable inspiration. This means opening up the institution to the surrounding urban and natural environment and inviting people to personally contemplate the reality and witness for themselves the increasingly acute climate change in the form of rising temperatures, violent weather events, droughts, floods, and a reduction in biodiversity. Through actions that encourage attentive and sensitive communion with nature, we can hope to become more involved in its protection. After all, we protect most what we love and know, i.e. our nearest ecosystem of a garden, a meadow, a city square, a nearby forest, a lake, a river, as well as tangible and intangible cultural heritage. "The Shelter" is aimed at inspiring climate activism and acquiring factual knowledge and skills to act for the environment.

The notion that a sense of well-being and balance in times of stress can be achieved through culture – practising and interacting with art and art education – plays an important role in the concept of "The Shelter". Dozens of artists from Poland and abroad have been invited to participate in the project. Through their skills and sensitivity, these musicians, audiovisual artists, photographers, dancers, choreographers, and actors inspire viewers to search for new, often surprising ways of seeing and feeling. In addition, active artistic practice offers the opportunity to experience one's own agency, integrates, and provides a respite from everyday anxieties. Particularly important were art therapy activities involving people with disabilities, collected in the series "Ethnosensual" or "emiGRACJE",

While it is true that climate change is identified as the most real threat to the world's natural and cultural heritage, it is also pointed out that legally protected ecological areas or heritage sites can be an excellent field for observing and analysing the phenomena occurring under the influence of the climate crisis, and the struggle for their preservation can be an opportunity to develop new adaptation strategies and methods to counter the effects of these changes.

i.e. physical movement workshops with elements of dance designed for Polish women and female emigrants, and a picturesque open-air sculpture workshop with the participation of folk artists from Kashubia, Żuławy, and Powiśle. Contemporary art also provides an answer to the question of what the idea of shelter means today. This task was entrusted to artists from TBK Norway, whose works, selected by an international jury in an open competition, became part of the project exhibition.

The intercultural character of the project was built through the involvement of the multinational and multi-ethnic community that developed around the Ethnography Department. Many educational activities were placed in the hands of immigrants, mainly of Ukrainian origin. Of particular importance were the cooking workshops led by immigrants coming from ten different places in the world. The communal nature of preparing food, the gradual opening up of participants to one another and then sharing a meal in the picnic-like summer ambience of the museum garden showed how much we need a diverse cultural heritage to create bonds. Each workshop was an individual story of the flavours of the family home, the smells of traditional dishes, but also a story about the hardships of emigration, the attempts to find oneself in a new place, and the need to share one's own culture, also through cooking. It turns out, then, that the idea of the museum as a major player on the field of integration of new multicultural communities is perfect provided the institution opens to the needs of the local communities and lets them act.

While it is true that climate change is identified as the most real threat to the world's natural and cultural heritage, it is also pointed out that legally protected ecological areas or heritage sites can be an excellent field for observing and analysing the phenomena occurring under the influence of the climate crisis, and the struggle for their preservation can be an opportunity to develop new adaptation strategies and methods to counter the effects of these changes.

Indigenous and local knowledge, which relates to traditional ways of rational, communal, and sustainable management, has a special role to play. With this in mind, the crowning exhibition of "The Shelter" project uses selected objects from the holdings of the Department of Ethnography and ethnographic knowledge about the relationship of the region's past inhabitants to the natural environment, to combine with contemporary science and to inspire viewers to change habits that address the effects of climate change. Recognising the value of traditional knowledge of farming, fishing, or animal husbandry, based on circularity, rational use of natural resources, communality, and a close relationship with the environment, is now one of the main imperatives of UNESCO. It is also essential to realise that by making healthier and more sustainable choices for our mental and physical health, we become part of a positive shift towards sustainability.

The book, the outcome of "The Shelter" project, was intended to reflect its complexity and explore the sometimes obvious and occasionally surprising linkages between climate change, migration, environmental thinking, and the formation of a new cultural heritage in Europe. Experts from Poland and the partner countries (mainly Norway and Iceland), representing a variety of professions and with a diverse range of experience, were invited to participate. As a result, the book brings together texts that popularise science, research reports, essays, reportages, as well as personal reflections of the artists involved in the project.

It was the intention of the editors of this volume to create a polyphonic narrative. It demonstrates that faced with new challenges, primarily related to climate change and population migrations, theoreticians and practitioners, people of science and culture, researchers and popularisers of knowledge can find a common language and a common space for debate. Since the complexity of a world on the threshold of radical change is incompatible with narrow specialisation, only multicultural and interdisciplinary storytelling offers the keys to an enhanced grasp of reality.

Anna Ratajczak-Krajka

Art historian and ethnologist, curator of the Ethnography Department of the National Museum in Gdańsk; a coordinator of "The Shelter. Climate, Migrations, Heritage" project

Translated by Marcin Turski

Part One: The Art of the Educa of Underst

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Ilona Wiśniewska

A Circle beyond the Circle

Despite the harsh living conditions,
the far North is the only possible refuge
for many. It is here that the constant
cold brings cultures and languages
together. How do the newcomers find
their way in a community where almost
all are from somewhere else? How do they
form safe circles that make them feel
at home here? Do they ever feel that way?
We sit down at a table with them and listen.
There is perhaps something about us
in this story, too.

M. comes every week and sits at the corner of the table. Possibly, where she comes from there are no superstitions about the corner being a bad place at the table as women may become old spinsters. I do not know and do not ask because M. already has a husband. When she mentions him, there is a unique soft gleam in her black eyes. They have travelled here together as they knew it would be safe. M. always picks tea and tries to keep the corners of her mouth turned up.

In Tromsø, the largest city in the Norwegian North, the long winter is coming to an end. This year's snowfall has been the heaviest since measurements began and trucks can't keep up with hauling it out of the centre. The city is situated on an island and so the cars parking on the edge of the road toss grey lumps straight into the dark blue sea. The asphalt emerges from beneath the ice, the sea's scent returns, and the buildings are once again populated by flocks of seagulls. It is good to hear them after months of silence. Every year they come to the same places, to the same nests on the windowsills of buildings, including the one on Sjøgat (Sea Street), where I have been running a language café for the past few months.

The idea behind the café (Norwegian: *språkkafé*) is simple: apart from language courses, many foreigners learning Norwegian have no one to talk to in the language, so the municipalities fund meetings where they can have a warm drink and swap ideas. Anyone, with any level of language mastery, can come to the University of the Third Age, where I work. For many, this is their only contact with the Norwegian language, as they communicate at home in their mother tongue and usually do not do any demanding work (also in terms of language). We meet on Monday evenings for two hours in a classroom with the lights dimmed; the tables are arranged in a circle to make it easier to look one another in the eye. Winter is silence. In spring, people are more eager to speak, both to other people and to birds.

Discussing neutral topics is one of the ground rules of the *språkkafé* (the university director was emphatic from the beginning: no politics, no religion, no abrasive issues). We therefore explain the intricacies of the local dialect (the further north you go, the harsher the language), play board games (between the start and finish, the players answer simple questions on anything from pronouns to their favourite colour), or run a finger along a map of northern Norway to find inhabited islands and uninhabited fjords in this jagged landscape. None of the attendees has a car; a bus won't get them there, either. Therefore this map is a semblance of movement. Each week I come up with discussion topics on the fly, based on who turns up, the mood, the weather, the news of the day, and the first thought.

Ten people come on average, mostly war refugees from Ukraine, for whom the Norwegian state provides free language lessons. There are also people from Syria, France, Germany, Thailand, Poland, Turkey, and Italy. A Uyghur drops by every now

↑ **Solitude in Tromsø.** Photo by Ilona Wiśniewska

and then. They have all been living beyond the Arctic Circle for years or for a few months and, apart from the language, are just learning about the cold. You know some of them by sight, from behind shop counters or from bus stops. Every person is a story.

One hundred and thirty-nine nationalities are registered in the population of seventy-five thousand people in Tromsø (the Uyghur will make it one hundred and forty, because even though he has to enter Chinese in the "citizenship" box, he has nothing to do with China). The city is growing at such a rapid pace that the island has to be enlarged by adding more stones for new building plots. Up north we flee from the following:

- heat
- conflict
- drought
- enter your own

It's not that there is no home in Tromsø. It's just different; for some it's temporary, for others it's the only one possible because of the war, the earthquake, the persecution. Here, beyond the Arctic Circle, it is safe. It is still safe and reasonably predictable.

Language cafés demonstrate how the Far North is changing and will continue to change. These inconspicuous Monday meetings attract a new group of residents who will never quite be able to express their own thoughts and feelings in the language they study as adults. I myself have been continuously exploring Norwegian for the past fourteen years and still collide with an inability to grasp words, registers, and tone. On the one hand, the new language makes one richer with new associations, and on the other hand it restrains opinions and emotions to avoid misunderstandings. Many topics are left open, like wounds.

I alert the café patrons to this; M. hears it several times because she is the only one who comes every week. Even in blinding snowstorms and the time of thaw, when all traction is lost. She always has meticulous make-up on and freshly varnished nails. She has passed her B1 course, speaks reasonably fluently and helps those who are struggling to pronounce *ø*, *æ* and *å*. Each time someone new drops by and all the others introduce themselves. M. repeats with a smile: from Iran, 33 years old, in Tromsø for three years, IT specialist, looking for a job, no one wants to hire her, not even to help in the kindergarten. The lack of work bothers her the most because her husband is employed by an international school; he disappears every day for long hours and her time drags on and on. How long can you admire the beautiful landscape outside your window? This island and the surrounding snow-capped mountains create a barrier in your head too; you may believe sometimes that there is nothing beyond them. It's not M. talking; it's my own thoughts.

She is not too much of a talker, in fact, but another of the café's rules is not to force anyone to speak. Instead, she always has a notebook with her, in which she jots down the most important phrases translated into Persian. During the classes when we talk about what is typically Norwegian, she writes down the words: *Ut på tur aldri sur* – the classic Norwegian phrase about how trips boost your mood. *Dugnad* – community work, a very popular way of neighbourly cooperation in this country. *Uavhengihet* – independence. *Likestilling* – equality. The letters are small and thus two words fit into a single space between the lines.

The list closes with a point about compulsive black coffee drinking, so the following week we move smoothly to food, as it expresses our identity, and it is good to share it. Participants are therefore eager to swap stories about the flavours

that constitute home. Although there are four shops with international food in this cultural melting pot, hardly anything tastes as it should; it is hard to fool the memory and the senses. The saffron is less intense, the tea is not black enough, and the aubergine is wrapped in plastic. A. from the Ukraine has yet to find vegetables fit for borscht but has come to like the fish soup. M. from Turkey loves spicy food, but is already waiting for Ramadan, because then he will cleanse his body, become a better person, and feed his soul.

It's not that there is no home in Tromsø. It's just different; for some it's temporary, for others it's the only one possible because of the war, the earthquake, the persecution. Here, beyond the Arctic Circle, it is safe. It is still safe and reasonably predictable. There are also good people here, they stress. They are not bothered by the locals' not being able to season the food and not being too hospitable. The city is hospitable, that's what matters. "You can dance freely", adds M. unexpectedly. I often go dancing, but I never meet her in town. "I dance at home", she replies.

Music. What can be more neutral? – I think in the context of our next class, especially that Tromsø is home to many world-renowned artists, such as Røyksopp, playing electronic music, or Biosphere, specialising in ambient. So next Monday we start with them, and afterwards we watch a fragment of a concert by Mari Boine, the best-known Sámi singer (representing the indigenous inhabitants of the North), who has shown to the world what *joik* is, the traditional singing deemed anathema by Christianity. It contains everything about the existence of humans in nature. It also expresses disagreement with others deciding for those who speak too softly. The class participants had not heard of the Norwegianization of the indigenous North before; they seemed to think that the violence did not reach that far. What would it be like to have nowhere else to run? When the land ends. Or when you have no more strength. Mari Boine grew up in an orthodox religious household, where playing instruments and singing were forbidden because they were the work of Satan. It was only as an adult that she learned to speak her mind. She now lives in Tromsø, a few blocks from a building on which birds have perched. Her music reaches deep, well beneath the goosebumps; the café is listening intently, and no one moves for several minutes. We exchange only glances, knowing glances with strangers. Now it is their turn.

S. from Germany turns on the classics because he doesn't know any good contemporary music from his country, especially one that conveys any deeper meaning. So we listen to Bach, playing to the accompaniment of seagulls. The melody floats across the table, seeping into the walls, the safe, familiar sounds.

Ukraine has many representatives at the table, so after a brief discussion they agree to present the song that won last year's Eurovision. Seventeen-year-old G. from Bakhmut (in Norway for a few months, first in a refugee centre in the south, now

↑ **Tromsø at the beginning of the polar night.** Photo by Ilona Wiśniewska

here; the parents and the cat have been left behind in the besieged city; she dreams of studying maritime law) wants to turn on the big screen of a competition performance by the Kalush Orchestra so that the group can see the traditional instruments and costumes of the band members, but YouTube automatically (and uniquely without adverts) suggests a video shot among the bombed ruins of Ukrainian cities. G. doesn't switch this off and we watch with our heads down; involuntarily, I start picking the skin of my thumb. The teenager girl stares at the floor and only at the end of the song can she no longer contain the trembling of her chin. The silence after the sound of the last note is doubly agonising, and I pick my finger till it bleeds as the hands of the clock mark M's turn. She calmly gets up, walks over to the computer and soon an Iranian song called Baraye is displayed on the screen. M. explains that it was created from tweets by Iranians protesting after the assassination of Mahsa Amini in 2022. They wrote what they were fighting for or against, and Shervin Hajipour fashioned a song out of it, a list: For being able to dance in the streets. For smiling faces. For homeless murdered dogs. For my sister. For your sister. For our sisters. For women, life and freedom. "Iran is a hell for women", M. writes on the blackboard a phrase translated into Norwegian by her translating device.

I don't know what is more poignant: the tears streaming down the cheeks of P. from Odessa, of A. – his sister, of D. from Kharkiv, of R. from Dnipro, of S. from Würzburg, of P. from Tczew, and of S. from Aleppo. Or the fact that M. is not crying. "I have cried enough", she says with a smile.

"I was supposed to take your mind off difficult topics", I apologize, rubbing my eyes against a sleeve.

"Now everything is a difficult topic. We appreciate being able to share this", they reply. "Here we can talk about this safely".

After everybody leaves, I take a few deep breaths, clean up the cups, arrange the tables in rows so they resemble a classroom again and know only one thing: "Neutral topics be damned". What does a neutral topic even mean? Is it like the colour beige, which no one is comfortable in? After all, we're all made of wounds, including others' wounds.

I kill the light and go out to catch the bus to my non-home. M. is standing at the bus stop. She must have been waiting there for a good half hour, even though the buses run regularly. She is shivering from the cold among the snowball-like seagulls and among the other waiting people who crowd behind the bus stop screen. This is the last gasp of winter; the cold must be blown off completely.

"Thank you for this evening", she says with a smile.

"I'm the one who is thankful for your coming every week".

"It's the only way to get out of the house, to meet people. Otherwise I'd go nuts".

“I hope you have a group of friends here”.

“If you can think of the loneliest person in this city, it’s standing in front of you”.

“You, the one who keeps smiling all the time?”

“Did you know that the people who are least likely to show suffering are the most likely to commit suicide?”

Bus 33 pulls up; it is not my direction, but I get on.

And that’s how we’ve been riding for a while. Lately M. has been talking more.

I found out, for example, that during a class on food, she thought about how she had been arrested for drinking water on the street during Ramadan, after which she spent three days in a crowded cell with a small window under the ceiling.

As we ran our fingers over the map, it had been three years since she had last seen her mother.

And as we talked about the white landscapes of the North, she thought of the colourful Aladaglar mountains in Iran, which she had never seen with her own eyes and probably won’t see any time soon.

As we were talking about what we do outside of work and the German woman was showing outfits of her own designs, M. was reminded of how she had been arrested for wearing a skirt that was too short (she was arrested five times in total).

As we were studying typical Norwegian behaviour, among which was trusting the authorities, images from the first months after arriving in Tromsø came back to her, when she panicked at the sight of a police car.

Or when we agreed that it was not easy to make friends with Norwegians, she thought of how she could not even contact her own countrymen here, because everyone suspected everyone else of being a spy.

“We couldn’t stand it any longer. Years of protests, attempts to oppose the regime, fear, humiliation. We have one life, we didn’t want to sacrifice it, we know that nothing will change. And here we have a chance to just live. Do you think we’ve done the wrong thing?”, she asks, squinting her black eyes.

Translated by Marcin Turski

Ilona Wiśniewska

Reporter and photographer, author of articles and reportage books from the far North (*Białe, Hen, Lud, Migot*). She lives and works in Tromsø, northern Norway

Monika Kucia

In Pursuit of the Villain: Green Criminology and Food Crime in the Face of Climate Change

Food crime is an area of interest of so-called green criminology, which examines its negative impact on the ecosystem and the individuals living within it. Hazel Croall, professor emeritus of forensic science from the Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland, UK, defines food crime as an offence at all stages of food production, its distribution, preparation, and sale, which can result, ultimately, in the burdening of consumers, misleading them, affecting their health status, or even in their deaths. The article shows the consumer perspective of the phenomenon, as well as its interpretations in the visions of 21st-century artists.

↑ **1. *Mæt* by Per Johansen, part of the installation.**
Courtesy of the copyright owner

Meat crammed into a transparent plastic container. A fish protruding from the neck of a bottle. Raw sausages arranged in a pattern resembling bowels in the belly of a transparent vessel. In his *Mæt* (*Full, Filled*) series, Danish artist Per Johansen created sculptures from foodstuffs enclosed in plastic bottles and photographed them using soft light evocative of the still-lifes of Dutch masters → Figure 1. On the surface, the compositions are beautiful. However, the harmonious balance is disrupted when the viewer realises that they are confronted with a world in which recycled plastic bottles replace the human stomach and appetite, a symbol of today's rampant consumption. Through his work, Johansen poses questions about ethics in the food industry and our Western attitude towards food.

Ever since the concept of commerce has existed, and perhaps even before, food has been adulterated, diluted, or concentrated, "enhanced" to appear fresh, attractive, and more palatable. Various additives have been added to prolong its shelf life or speed up the production process, stabilise its quality, and deceive the eyes and the other senses. Some of these measures are merely intended to make the product look more attractive, while others are deliberate deceptions designed to maximise one's profit on a commodity of mediocre quality. This has been going on for millennia. In the Middle Ages, bakers who were caught cheating on their scales or making

inferior quality dough with cheaper ingredients were severely punished. This led to the emergence of the so-called baker's dozen as bakers would provide thirteen loaves of bread for the price of 12 so as not to be accused of cheating. Small communities struggled to find effective ways to control quality and regulate standards. The global market is a gigantic breeding ground for criminal practice, because it is more difficult to control the condition and composition of products in a long supply chain, and to unequivocally ascribe responsibility to specific actors for certain criminal activities. Despite numerous regulations and restrictions, the end consumer is often defenceless, as abuses are only detected at the stage of dealing with the resulting damage.

Food crime is an area of interest of so-called green criminology, which examines its negative impact on the ecosystem and the individuals living within it. Unfortunately, food production in the 21st century plays a major role in the destruction of rainforests, greenhouse gas emissions and contributes to the deterioration of fertile lands that have no chance of regenerating. Industrial animal husbandry is a massive environmental and ethical disaster. At the same time, organised crime groups are continually looking for ways to maximise their gain by exploiting consumer interest in cheaper products and offering food of radically poor quality in a market which already applies extremely low standards.

Crime in the food sector, known as food crime, is any illegal act or practice that is intended to deceive or mislead consumers, or that threatens public health and safety.

Examples of such crimes include:

- substitution of ingredients, i.e. the addition of cheaper substitutes,
- document fraud – forging certificates or labelling information, such as information on ingredients or their origin,
- trading in expired products,
- breaking safety standards – ignoring the requisite procedures and regulations to ensure the safety of food products.

Hazel Croall, professor emeritus of forensic science from the Glasgow Caledonian University in Scotland defines food crime as an offence at all stages of food production, its distribution, preparation, and sale, which can result, ultimately, in the burdening of consumers, misleading them, affecting their health status, or even in their deaths. For the most part, food fraud is a threat to animal health, the welfare of flora and the environment and ignores moral and ethical principles. Another risk, as Professor Louise Manning from the Lincoln Institute for Agri-Food Technology

observes, lies in the fact that law-abiding producers are forced to compete against those that cut corners, which means that they are subject to unfair competition with respect to their unscrupled competitors.

In her article "Links between green criminology and traditional criminology", Edyta Drzazga indicates: "The term 'green criminology' coined in the 1990s meant studies on crimes against the natural environment being part of critical criminology. Although the study of environmental crime was of interest to some traditional criminologists, green criminology as a distinct branch of knowledge within criminology has provided a different research perspective. The naming of the new area of research 'green criminology' served to build a network of scholars, consolidate those interested in the field, legitimise its status within criminology, and map out distinctive developmental pathways, new conceptualisations and – to some extent – methodologies".

The challenges posed by the formation of this distinct field include the question of determining the injured party. The answer to the question of who or what is harmed by illegal practices is not clear-cut, as the victims of crime can be both consumers and shopkeepers buying the goods, and often also animals and nature. There is no legal definition of a crime against the environment. In the relevant literature, such a crime is defined as a "socially harmful act" that is unlawful and punishable with a penalty imposed by the court. On the one hand, a polluted river or a hive of dead bees will not go to court, on the other hand, cheap food containing cancer-causing substances, whose production pollutes rivers, is still legal.

In her article "Food, crime, harm and regulation", Hazel Croall observes: "The celebrity chef, Jamie Oliver, alleged this year that the government's approach to obesity was 'killing' Britons. Dramatic language perhaps, but the production, processing and sale of food exact a high toll of death and illness and have enormous economic and environmental costs. Despite this, 'food crime' is not regarded as a pressing criminal justice issue and has received relatively little attention in criminology in general and in 'green' criminology. It also provides a stark example of the limits of criminal and other forms of regulation in the face of global corporate power".

A prominent example of this is water pollution, which affects the entire ecosystem, not just people, and it is difficult to clearly identify both the offender and the victims. The problem is highlighted in the series *Polluted Water Popsicles* by three students of the National Taiwan University of Arts: Hung I-chen, Guo Yi-hui, and Cheng Yu-ti. To show the extent of water pollution in Taiwan, they made lollipops using water from natural sources. Then they fixed the extracted substance in resin. Almost a hundred lollipops were produced using water from different parts of the country. The analysis of the samples was shocking; rubbish was found in almost every lollipop, and heavy metals, nitrates, mercury, and lead were also detected in the water.

Permitted practices include, for example, adding wooden chips to wine to simulate a "barrel" effect, and "smoking" sausage not with smoke but with smoking liquid.

However, saturating tuna meat with nitrites in order to obtain the desired red colour of the meat, converting rapeseed oil into "olive oil" with beta-carotene, selling slaughterhouse waste as beef are all serious offences against the laws and standards of EU countries.

Large-scale food crime

- **2021—2022:** Ethylene oxide – withdrawal of additive from the market (public health concerns and huge economic losses)
- **2019:** Polish meat scandal (economic losses)
- **2017:** Fipronil in eggs (huge economic losses)
- **2013:** Horsemeat in beef products (huge economic losses)
- **2012:** Czech Republic: methanol in spirits (59 victims)
- **2008:** Melamine in Chinese dairy products (54,000 hospitalised children, 6 deaths)
- **1999:** Belgium: presence of dioxins in feed/food (huge economic losses)
- **1981:** Spain: fraud involving "rapeseed oil" for industrial use (20,000 people affected – 370 to 835 deaths)

(The EU Agri-Food Fraud Network, Webinar on Food Fraud – GFoRSS – May 2022, Directorate General For Health and Food Safety, Unit SANTE G4: Food Hygiene and Fraud)

In the face of such scandals, special units have been set up to track such crimes. The Food Fraud Network has no investigative or enforcement powers, but can report to governments on any irregularities identified, as was the case when bone tissue, connective tissue, glands, i.e. parts of animals not fit for human consumption, and meat from the slaughter of diseased animals were found in large quantities of meat

Food crime is a transgression against life, not only in terms of ecology, food, agriculture, but it is also a transgression against ourselves, our well-being, and the memory of our ancestors. Giving up processed food, verifying where our food comes from, sourcing food from small producers, limiting the consumption of meat and zoonotic products is the only real chance to protect ourselves from the effects of criminal actions occurring on a massive global scale.

from Poland in 2019. The products were exported, as revealed by the TVN report *Chore bydło kupię* [Sick cattle sought]. Slaughtering sick animals is a very profitable business as one kilogram of sick cow yields twenty times more than one kilogram of meat from a healthy cow legally slaughtered in a slaughterhouse. According to the authors of the footage, a medium-sized plant makes as much as approx. 2.5 million zlotys.

Meat is the subject of many contemporary artworks. The *Absent References* series by Manuel Franquelo-Giner, a young Spanish artist, presents several photographs of various meat chopping tables and their packaging used for sale, including polystyrene trays with tissue remnants. This work explores the "object, subject and consumption" triad, offering a good example of how language has helped to perpetuate the oppression of the dominant culture towards animals. This is evident in the detachment of the word *meat* from its original and most descriptive origin: the dead animal. The boards, the trays, the blood are the remnants of life that we treat in a utilitarian, mindless way, explicitly as serving us as food. Another work by Manuel Franquelo-Giner is a "meat" ball shaped like a convict's foot clamp with chain and iron ball or a model of the planet Earth, except that it is made of a substance that imitates meat tissue. The artist mediates between the expanding and changing meanings of nature and culture, which are heavily influenced by biotechnology.

Raw animal products are perhaps the largest area of abuse and fraud. In the Nordic countries, it is primarily, if not exclusively, food crime related to fish and seafood. Products from other parts of the world are expected to pass off as Norwegian food, i.e. reputable and safe.

Scandinavian governments are trying to counter this. 2022, the Nordic Council of Ministers published a food fraud assessment covering four sectors in several countries. In 2018, a project was funded to investigate the risks of criminal activity in the Nordic food production chain. The participating countries were Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Sweden. Key topics were animal raw animal materials, fish and seafood, Nordic origin declaration and organic production. In 2019, Denmark, Norway and Sweden carried out national risk assessments. In Denmark, a special unit has existed for years to deal with suspected fraud in the food industry. In Sweden, the National Food Agency (Livsmedelsverket) is working on an assessment at central government level. Iceland, as a relatively small market, has few government resources. Norway has inspectors partly specialised in food fraud case management as several types of meat fraud have been detected there, including illegal importation, theft, re-labelling of products, camouflaging poor quality, black-market sales, and illegal production. The risk of meat fraud in terms of food safety was assessed as moderate to high.

The 2020 exhibition *Young Danish Art: Forecasting the Future* gathered in the ARKEN Museum of Modern Art near Copenhagen over 25 works by ten Danish artists who were born in the 1980s. These were installations, sculptures, films, and multimedia. One of the invited artists was Silas Inoue (b. 1981), whose *Future Friture* series presented sculptures made of sugar melted into a pulp and sunken into cooking oil → Figure 2–3. Inoue's sculptures depict a hydra-organism, a jellyfish *Turritopsis dohrnii*, a creature whose unique lifecycle involves incessant regeneration. If this jellyfish is not devoured by a predator, it can in fact live forever. The artist's work refers to the human incessant longing for immortality and, on the other hand, points to the duality of oil and sugar, which preserve food but also have a fatal effect on the human body. Sugar, one of nature's most basic building blocks, as a material used here brings in particular its diverse, often shameful cultural history. *The Immortal Jellyfish* was on show during Inoue's solo exhibition *eat & becõme*, which dealt with the relationships between humans and the goods nature provides us with, and about evolution and expansion between species. Through his provocative art, Inoue shows that the way we produce, distribute, and consume food determines the kind of world we create.

Food crime is a transgression against life, not only in terms of ecology, food, agriculture, but it is also a transgression against ourselves, our well-being, and the memory of our ancestors. Giving up processed food, verifying where our food comes from, sourcing food from small producers, limiting the consumption of meat and zoonotic products is the only real chance to protect ourselves from the effects of criminal actions occurring on a massive global scale.

Consumer choices must be conscious. In human civilisation, food is culture. Communication. Tradition. Language. Symbol. Bond. Value vehicle. Power.

← ↑ **2–3. View of the *eat & becÕme* exhibition. The visible object is Silas Inoue's *Turritopsis Dohrnii* from the *Future Friture* series, 2020.**
Courtesy of the copyright owner

“Food is more than just a means of providing fuel for our bodies, especially in the consumer culture in which we are increasingly entangled. While it is of course crucial to survival, food cannot be considered solely as an expression of biological needs and a natural and trivial aspect of our daily routine. Even the most cursory exploration of our habits and preferences shows that food is complicated. It is deeply entangled in the economic dynamics, social structures and power negotiations that determine where our products come from, how they reach us, why we access these and not others, and where they end up if we don’t buy them or throw them away. Undoubtedly, food has an immediate and irreducible impact on who we are and how we live. We regard food as constitutive of our cultural and social identity as individuals and members of communities wherever we live and whatever access we have to food”, indicates Prof. Fabio Parasecoli in his book *Food*. In our latitude, having access not only to indigenous products but also those from all over the world, it is up to us to decide whether we buy ready-to-eat chops wrapped in plastic or avocados or, in May, asparagus grown 50 km from where we live. While it is probably impossible to have total control over the suppliers of our food, it is within our power to decide to take greater care in knowing the source of our food and, above all, to choose plant-based over meat-based foods.

The *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report* was released on 20 March 2023. The document sums up over 10,000 pages of current climate research. One of the biggest individual contributions to reducing emissions was found to be adopting a balanced, healthy diet, which includes reducing meat and dairy consumption by eating a more plant-based diet. We are acting too slowly, according to a summary of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report. With current levels of emissions still the highest in human history, opportunities to limit global warming to 1.5°C are shrinking fast. However, solutions are still within our grasp. The UN General Assembly clearly emphasises that “food is a prerequisite for human survival and successful development and is a fundamental human need”. Along with food production, agriculture is one of the economic sectors most threatened by climate change. The increase in global average temperature, compared to the pre-industrial era, causes a number of consequences such as extreme weather events, increased air temperature, and flooding. While in some regions we can expect an extended growing season, in others, as a result of the progression of desertification processes, there is a loss of ecosystems and biodiversity, and consequently plant cultivation and livestock husbandry are becoming impossible. What we have done to the world in the last 200 years is unprecedented in terms of the entire existence of the planet. “Since the industrial revolution we have been burning fossil fuels (oil, coal, natural gas) deposited hundreds of millions of years ago, releasing the carbon back into the

atmosphere, increasing the 'greenhouse effect' and elevating the temperature of the Earth. Essentially we are releasing ancient stored sunlight back into the climate system", writes Mark Maslin in his book *Climate Change*.

It could be said that eating stored sunlight is a metaphor for the last meal of a death row prisoner which humanity has become, having passed sentence on itself. There is no telling whether we will still manage to save ourselves from imminent doom.

Translated by Marcin Turski

Monika Kucia

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Emiliana Konopka

Ultima Thule: the Centre of the World. Expressions of National Identity in Early Icelandic Art

One of the sculptures in The Einar Jónsson Museum in Reykjavík depicts a globe with an outlined world map, with a tiny island in the middle of the Atlantic at the centre of the composition → **Figure 1.** In another composition, the word THULE is engraved within the shape of Iceland → **Figure 2.** It is unclear whether the island of Thule described by Pytheas of Massalia in the 4th century BC was in fact Iceland, nor whether the term Ultima Thule coined by Virgil, meaning the northernmost tip of the known world, applies to this island. It was obvious, however, for the Icelandic sculptor Einar Jónsson (1874–1954) that Iceland is the land of legends. However, it is not a mythical island, but an existing state located at the very centre of the world rather than on its periphery.

↑ **1. Einar Jónsson, fragment of a sculpture from the collection of The Einar Jónsson Museum in Reykjavík.** Photo by Emiliana Konopka

Einar Jónsson was the first Icelandic sculptor to achieve an artistic career outside Iceland. In the mid-19th century, Icelandic art was not yet fully developed, which was mainly due to the approximately five hundred years of Danish domination of the island and the concentration of cultural life in the then capital, Copenhagen. Due to the absence of adequate institutions in Iceland, the local intelligentsia travelled to Denmark to study in Copenhagen. Jónsson studied sculpture at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, and in 1902 received a scholarship from Alþing, the Icelandic Parliament, to continue his studies in Rome. The artist returned to his homeland for good in 1909, after a 20-year emigration, making arrangements with the country's authorities to donate his entire sculptural output (today's museum named after him) to Iceland in exchange for a house-studio in Reykjavík[1]. Would Einar Jónsson not have returned to Iceland for good without the promise of a studio foundation? His sculptural works, i.e. compositions based on Icelandic history, Icelandic sagas, and Nordic mythology, prove that his homeland was closest to his heart, and the work depicting Iceland at the centre of the world shows how significant it was for Icelanders leaving a geographically small and politically insignificant country to nevertheless emphasise its greatness.

1 Ólafur Kvaran, *Sculptor Einar Jónsson. The quest for originality* (Reykjavík, 2003), p. 3.

↑ **2. Einar Jónsson, fragment of a sculpture from the collection of The Einar Jónsson Museum in Reykjavík.** Photo by Emiliana Konopka

Jónsson's biography shows that the development of culture, especially art, was linked with migration until the 20th century: educated Icelanders and cultural people lived between Iceland and Denmark, and many returned to their homeland to pave the way for new generations of male and female artists. Painters returning from Copenhagen, Þórarinn B. Þorláksson (1867–1924) and Ásgrímur Jónsson (1876–1958), contributed to the formation of Icelandic national art, giving rise to a tradition of depicting the Icelandic landscape in art and illustrating themes from folk tales[2]. And while their work gives rise to modern Icelandic art, local artists who were creating art before 1900 also focused on landscape depictions, recording the hallmarks of Icelandic nature and climatic conditions. Both amateur and professional early art in Iceland emphasises its geographical and cultural uniqueness, its isolation from the rest of Europe and the simultaneous attachment to this "island at the end of the world", a refuge for its inhabitants for 2,000 years.

2 Emiliana Konopka, "Pejzaż – narodowy gatunek malarski Islandii", in: *Islandia. Język, Naród, Natura*, Roman Chymkowski, Emiliana Konopka, eds. (Warszawa, 2017).

Illustrated manuscripts — Iceland's first amateur artists

Although Icelanders expressed their national identity throughout the 19th century mainly in words[3], this was tied primarily with the extensive tradition of writing and illustrating manuscripts. Although the greatest monuments of Icelandic material culture, namely medieval manuscripts, were gradually exported to Denmark from the 16th century onwards, many later manuscripts illustrated by amateur artists have survived. Many of these artists were simply farmers, just as Jakob Sigurðsson, the author of the illuminations for the *Edda Melsteða* (SÁM 66), dated to 1765/1766. The manuscript contains excerpts of the Poetic Edda and Snorri's Edda, but most importantly, also 16 full-page illustrations of Norse mythology, depicting selected scenes and representations of the gods. Many of these images are the oldest painted depictions of Scandinavian gods in Icelandic art[4], and the extended compositions and attention to detail demonstrate the great creativity of the illustrator and his vivid imagination (especially when depicting the Fenrir wolf which, for lack of such animals in Iceland, is replaced with a hybrid that resembles an exotic elephant, rather → **Figure 3**).

Drawings of animals form a distinctive category in Icelandic amateur illustration art. The collection of the National Library of Iceland (Landsbókasafn Íslands) contains examples of 16th–19th century quasi-scientific manuscripts which attempt to illustrate Icelandic fauna as well as creatures known from folk tales, as the line between science and imagination was heavily blurred in the local consciousness. Hence, works such as *On the Diversity of Icelandic Nature* by Jón Guðmundsson, "the wise man" (1574–1658), dated to 1640–1644, feature both whales and unicorns[5]. Later illustrated manuscripts by Einar Magnússon and Snorri Björnsson are a testament to the inquisitiveness about the world and the skill of depicting creatures never seen before and known only by hearsay. Worthy of note is also a 19th-century manuscript by the farmer Jón Bjarnason (1791–1861). His illustrated nine-volume

← **3. Jakob Sigurðsson, *Edda Melsteða* (SÁM 66), 1765/1766, The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies.** Source: https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/SAM-0066/161?iabr=on#page/78v/mode/2up

3 Kirsten Hastrup, "Icelandic Topography and the Sense of Identity", in: *Nordic Landscapes. Region and Belonging on the Northern Edge of Europe*, Michael Jones, Kenneth R. Olwig, eds. (Minnesota, 2008), p. 55.

4 Markús Þór Andrésson (ed.), *Points of view. A journey through the visual world of Iceland* (Reykjavík, 2015), p. 26.

5 Ibid., p. 79.

↑→ **4. Benedikt Sveinbjarnarson Gröndal, *Dýraríki Íslands* (*The Fauna of Iceland*), 1875–1905, National and University Library of Iceland — Handrit.is (Lbs 865 fol.).**
Source: https://handrit.is/manuscript/view/is/Lbs02-0865/0#mode/2up

encyclopaedia, dated 1845–1852, deals with fauna and flora, foreign cultures, astronomy, and technical inventions. He collected knowledge about the outside world known in Iceland and read from books and illustrated it with his own colourful hand-made, colourful drawings. It is assumed that only some of these illustrations were made by Bjarnason himself, as he also cut out some of them from other publications[6]. Nevertheless, the manuscripts such as his prove the existence of visual culture in Iceland, even if it was far from flourishing.

6 *Jón Bjarnason's natural science manuscript*, National and University Library of Iceland, https://landsbokasafn.is/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=702&cntnt01origid=1&cntnt01detailtemplate=LBS_KjorgripurDetail&cntnt01returnid=1, access: April 10, 2023.

Nokkur tildrög til um

DÝRARÍKI

ÍSLANDS

teiknað af

Benedikt Gröndal

A separate category of art created in Iceland before 1900 consists of amateur paintings and drawings made by Copenhagen-educated representatives of the Icelandic intelligentsia, for example sketches by the poet Jónas Hallgrímsson (1807–1845) or the naturalist and expert on Old Norse literature Benedikt Sveinbjarnarson Gröndal (1826–1907). The latter did not treat drawing solely as a hobby and as a self-taught artist made a number of illustrations for his own scholarly texts, such as *Dýraríki Íslands* (*The Fauna of Iceland*), made between 1875 and 1905. The 107 charts featuring illustrations of Icelandic animals: birds, marine mammals, fish, and snails, with detailed captions, were supplemented with a list of all the illustrated species → Figure 4. Benedikt Gröndal was the chairperson of the Icelandic Society of Natural History and contributed to the opening of the Natural History Museum in Iceland; his research on Icelandic birds contributed to the first illustrated treatise *Íslenskir fuglar* (*The Birds of Iceland*, 1900), containing all the information he gathered about all the species of birds known on the island by 1900[7]. Although the works were not intended as art, the skilful line and the colours used had an impact on the popularity of the illustrations, confirmed by the number of reissues.

From Copenhagen to Reykjavík. The first educated painters of Iceland

The first Icelander educated at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen was Sæmundur Magnússon Hólm (1749–1821)[8]. Hólm was admitted to the Academy thanks to his portfolio, made up of drawings of Icelandic volcanoes and a few maps. His portfolio being accepted, he studied for four years and won two medals: a silver one in 1783 and a gold one in 1784[9]. As a student, he made illustrations for a travel book by Ólafur Olavius *Oeconomisk Reise igiennem de nordvestlige, nordlige, og nordostlige Kanter af Island* (*An inexpensive journey through the northwest, north and northeast corners of Iceland*, 1780) published in Copenhagen. To make a living abroad, he accepted other commissions, too, e.g. Count Otto Thott's one for Icelandic landscapes. In Denmark he published a treatise *Om Jordbranden paa Island i Aaret 1783* (*On an eruption in Iceland in 1783*), illustrated with maps of Skaftafell prior to and after the eruption of Laki volcano in 1783.

7 Markús Þór Andrésson (ed.), *Points of view*, p. 68.

8 *Sæmundur Hólm*, Eldsveitir.is, https://eldsveitir.is/2019/10/18/saemundur-holm/, access: April 14, 2023.

9 Björn Björnsson, "Nordisk Målarkonst. Specialupplaga av Radions Konstatlas", *Folkrörelsernas Konstfrämjande*, no. 5 Island, p. 41. Már Jónsson observes that he received the silver medal for the manufacture of a new kind of paint paper (Fernis-Papir). See Már Jónsson, "An Icelandic Noctuary of 1794", *Scripta Islandica* 71 (2020), p. 127.

↑ **5. Þóra Pjetursdóttir Thoroddsen, *Þingvellir*, 1883, National Museum of Iceland, Reykjavík.**
Source: Þjóðminjasafn Íslands / National Museum of Iceland in Reykjavík

Since his return to Iceland in 1789, he was primarily concerned with his duties as a pastor, as he took over the Helgafell parish in Helgafellssveit soon after his arrival. He is renowned for his portraits of well-known personalities in Iceland, drawn in sanguine on paper, such as the portrait of Rannveig Filippusdóttir (1798, Þjóðminjasafn Íslands). Hólm also made a colour prospectus with a current panorama of Reykjavík, dating from 1783 to 1786. This can be considered the oldest representation of the city in Icelandic art, although it had a primarily utilitarian function, as did the maps made by Hólm. Despite the sparing means, the panorama of the city follows the tenets of perspective, and the hatching of the waves and the shadow cast on the grass from under the wooden houses indicate an attempt to model the forms, which, together with the peaks of the mountains on the horizon, gives an impression of depth.

Icelandic painters active in Iceland before the end of the 19th century include also: Sigurður Guðmundsson (1833–1874), Arngrímur Gíslason (1829–1887) and Þóra Pjetursdóttir Thoroddsen (1847–1917). The first of them, most often referred to as "Sigurður málari" ("Sigurður the painter") was actively involved in the enlivening the cultural and artistic life in Iceland in the mid-19th century. After studying in Copenhagen, he earned his living mainly by painting portraits and altar paintings. However, in his art he primarily focused on national themes, creating *tableaux vivants* depicting events from the sagas and designing scenery with motifs of the Icelandic landscape, which sparked Indriði Einarsson's (1851–1939) efforts to establish the National Theatre of Iceland[10]. In 1861, he joined the Kvöldfélagið (Evening Society), which would gather until 1874 to debate Icelandic folklore and traditional poetry, which would become the cornerstone of modern national art. Another member of the Society was Jón Árnason (1819–1888), a collector of Icelandic folk stories. Both contributed to the establishment in 1863 of the Forngripasafnið (Museum of Antiquities), later transformed into the Þjóðminjasafnið, the National Museum of Iceland.

Having no formal artistic education, Arngrímur Gíslason was a craftsman, musician, and painter. As of 1860, he primarily painted portraits, landscapes, and altar paintings, e.g. the *Resurrection* for the interior of the Þverárkirkja (1879) and *Jesus Appearing to Mary of Magdalene* for the church in Stykkishólm (1881). The building in 1885 of a separate studio near a homestead in Svarfaðardalur, northern Iceland, is proof of the popularity of his art and the large number of commissions accepted. Especially significant in the context of nascent Icelandic national art are numerous portraits of women, with meticulous renditions of their garments, which adds to their historical value. For instance, a portrait of Þorbjörg Þórarinsdóttir (1880–1882) depicts a woman in the Skautbúningur, a new national dress designed by Sigurður Guðmundsson.

Þóra Pjetursdóttir Thoroddsen came from an affluent family of Bishop Pétur Pétursson and was educated at home. Thanks to the foreign stock of her father's shop, she also had access to albums and magazines whose illustrations she copied. Her early sketches demonstrate her familiarity with the basics of perspective, composition building, and drawing techniques (*Reykjavík from the Perspective of Lake Tjörnin,* 1873, National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavík). In the autumn of 1873, she moved to Copenhagen and began studying in a private school of drawing by the Danish landscape painter Vilhelm Kyhn. On her return to Iceland, she primarily created landscapes, using the ambience and colours typical of this representative of the Danish Golden Age. She was probably the first Icelandic painter to discover the charm of the native

10 *Frumherji og fjöllistamaður*, Leikminjasafns Íslands, https://leikminjasafn.is/index.php?mact=News,cntnt01,detail,0&cntnt01articleid=116&cntnt01returnid=20, access: April 11, 2023.

landscape and to portray it without unnecessary embellishment or human staffage. She also travelled across the country in search of suitable motifs, depicting the Assembly Valley (*Þingvellir*, 1883, National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavík → Figure 5) and other characteristic Icelandic locations (*Bessastaðir i Keilir*, 1881). Although she was unable to provide for herself fully as a painter, she exhibited her work in Reykjavík, and used the knowledge she had gained in Copenhagen to establish her own drawing school in Reykjavík in 1883. She taught, among other things, work in the open air, and while her pupils included mainly women[11], many sources claim that one of her students was Þórarinn Benedikt Þorláksson, recognised as the first fully educated national painter of Iceland[12].

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While the oeuvre of artists such as Einar Jónsson, Þórarinn Benedikt Þorláksson, and Ásgrímur Jónsson is seen as mature representations of Icelandic national identity and an expression of contributing to national art via the use of specific motifs and themes[13], the predecessors of early 20th-century artists were equally mindful of their relations with the native island. Whether only as a result of aristocratic emigration or through foreign works, artists educated outside Iceland or entirely amateur painters creating before 1900 primarily took up Icelandic themes: depicting the landscape or motifs from Icelandic folk beliefs. Devoting their work almost exclusively to native themes was particularly important for artists educated abroad or based in Copenhagen. Their interest in folklore, history, folk costumes, or characteristic natural phenomena indicates a desire to emphasise their own Icelandic identity, especially at a time of intense debate over independence from Denmark. The work of Iceland's earliest artists thus demonstrates not only a self-awareness of belonging to a particular national community, but also an attempt to highlight Iceland's distinctiveness from other European countries and to bring the mythical Thule back onto the map of the entire world.

Translated by Marcin Turski

11 Hrafnhildur Schram, *Huldukonur í íslenskri myndlist* (Reykjavík, 2005), p. 58.
12 Kirk Varnedoe, *Northern Light. Nordic Art at the Turn of the Century* (New Haven & London, 1988), p. 244.
13 Agnieszka Bagińska, Wojciech Głowacki (eds.), *Przesilenie. Malarstwo Północy 1880–1910* (Warszawa, 2022), p. 220–223.

Agnieszka Foltyn

Wayfinding: Tracing Home through Art

Hiraeth[1] is a Welsh term with no direct English translation. It is a feeling of homesickness, tinged with grief and regret over the lost or departed, of a homeland of the past that perhaps never existed. This yearning or longing is a wistful, almost melancholic desire for something or somewhere that is present within us but that may never have really been and yet somehow always has. It can be shared by many and is nestled within the most resilient and vulnerable places in our hearts.

1 Related to Hireth, defined in Robert Williams' *Lexicon Cornu-britannicum: A Dictionary of the Ancient Celtic Language of Cornwall...*, published in 1865 and found in the collection of Oxford University, London, England on page 217. It also encompasses regret, wistfulness, nostalgia, and grief tied to the past.

With rising interest in and understanding of indigeneity, we learn how to work with knowledge and methodologies of respect for ways of living cultivated over centuries or millennia together with the land. To be the steward of a space is to hold it in your heart.

But what land is home? And, in essence, what is home?

Steep cliffsides, mountain ranges, valleys, and bodies of water have formed natural boundaries that serve to delimit areas of human use and habitation. These boundaries have evolved in their own ways, over time, sculpted by the living wills of human populations attracted to and displaced by culture, language, ethnicity and other factors. Their curving, snaking lines read as narratives of long time: continental drifts, climate changes, as well as human mediations. But borders are human inventions. Specifically, they can be construed as political interventions created to control and mould spaces according to specific sets of values and intentions. They are inherently imperialist mechanisms that seek to restructure existing narratives of the relationship between people and place. To raze and burn, to clean the slate, to begin afresh – these expressions are singed with the brutality of outright dismissal of what has been. But structures are meant to support and not to erase. With rising interest in and the understanding of indigeneity, we learn how to work with knowledge and methodologies of respect for ways of living cultivated over centuries or millennia together with the land. To be the steward of a space is to hold it in your heart. The longing and yearning of the eternal, from before to after us, is an act of care for a future you may never get to see. Relationships with land produce stories of transition, constantly restructuring networks of belonging.

Imagining these stories, straight line borders feel like violent superimpositions on landscapes that have made their ways deep into the human psyche through traditions of song, of craft, and of identity. Natural topographical boundaries have historically served as enclosures of culture. In these, specific traditions have emerged from the making of meaning through rituals, artworks, and language. Traditions shared between peoples emerged, that somehow, perhaps obliquely or in straightforward ways became rituals of shared understanding. The poetry of relationships is expressed through who we are, tied to the fauna and flora of our traditions, engraved through generations into our lifestyles, our culture and our art, as well as our culinary traditions. It is said that our first meeting with another culture is often through food. These experiences open metaphysical and corporeal entrances into the ecologies of other lands and the cultures that have emerged within them. We are transported to the rich sceneries and bounty of lands and peoples we have never known and perhaps never will.

↑ 1. *Tempest*, Agnieszka Foltyn, an approximately 39 sqm drawing-installation exhibited in Trondheim, Norway in 2021. Photo: Per Stian Monsås

Forces that produce mass migrations are often violent and oppressive territorial annexations. These colonial attitudes lay claim to how people should be, act, move, think and learn. But people move for different reasons also. Perhaps we have always been nomadic, from the core of our earliest memories, and have sought other spaces to support the different ways we live our lives. The term diaspora refers to a scattered population, having moved somehow from an indigenous land but often taking many different trajectories. It has come to symbolise the experience of people who identify with a cultural homeland, but who live outside of it. The diaspora provides a look into how the conditions of different spaces create possibilities for intersecting and corresponding forms of living and what shapes and formats these new agreements

↑ **2. *Plot/plot*, Agnieszka Foltyn & Per Stian Monsås, approximately 60 sqm installation exhibited at Babel visningsrom for kunst in Trondheim, Norway in 2022.**
Photo: Babel/Susann Jamtøy

take, specifically through culture. Our world continues to change. And people move in search of better living conditions, accompanied by trails of emotional connections across vast distances, times, histories, and threads of belonging.

Perhaps hiraeth belongs most to the traces of culture we bring with us, through our art and our rituals. These, too, constitute a deep longing at the core of who we are, for something, someone or somewhere. Culture fills the gullies of distance and time with a sense of connection, expressing through a myriad of forms the thoughts, experiences, and dreams we wish we could find the words to say.

It is important to have foundations so that we can build upon them. It is also important for these foundations to migrate, metamorphose, and to change. This

begets a responsive practice that addresses our needs at the core. Echoes resonate in shared practices that point to what is important to us as a network of connected peoples. Artistic works transport us through frozen moments of presence: us with the work, the world of the work, the work and us in the world.

"I have been an immigrant in every place I have ever known as home", is a sentence that has had to grow with me into articulation, and has only recently emerged consciously. Born in New Zealand with Polish backgound, growing up in Canada and living in Norway, the feeling alluded to in the word hiraeth has been most present for me in the resonance of familiar landscapes. But let us not imagine that global migrations have not been part of living since the earliest times. The stories of how we are, and how we are together or apart, have travelled across the globe, intersected with other methods and forms, have been absorbed through ritual and craft practices, have become stories. Storytelling is the foundation of the sharing and meaning-making of exchange. This is how we learn from one another, with an openness to exchange, not appropriation. To lay claim is a powerful act. To have claim bestowed upon you is another.

What we need in society is to make room. By making room I mean to create a sense of mystery, a place where curiosity can flourish, a breathing space to just be, leading you this way and that, reaching out, into something more, into the unknown. To carve room, to make space for agency is one of the most important elements of art.

Culture is a platform for individual and collective exchange so long as it comes from the people. It is a place of storytelling in search of home. Art provides entrances to and escape from the mundane and gives voice to nuance, richness, and depth of perspective beyond linguistic articulation. Through culture, the movements of the body inscribe themselves across planes of space, tracing feelings of loss, of longing, and of yearning while celebrating new rituals of inclusion and belonging. This hopeful melancholia or maybe melancholic hope is reflected in notions of utopia and dystopia. Is our dystopian future prefaced by utopian ideals? Or will our dystopian ways create the space necessary for a more utopian living? In a sense, each predicates the other and renders it static.

What we need in society is to make room. By making room I mean to create a sense of mystery, a place where curiosity can flourish, a breathing space to just be, leading you this way and that, reaching out, into something more, into the unknown.

↑ **3. Model for Hommage à Barragán, Agnieszka Foltyn & Per Stian Monsås, 2022.**
Photo: Per Stian Monsås

To carve room, to make space for agency is one of the most important elements of art. It is to lay a foundation for something to stand for itself, to speak in its own voice. Art raises awareness, connects the familiar to the unknown, and allows for new meanings to emerge. It builds platforms for dialogue and exchange, cultural meetings in which voices can be heard and shared. It produces alternative languages to express what we cannot speak, across the mountains and valleys of our ways of being, across time and rooted in space.

This essay is accompanied by a selection of artworks from the author's artistic practice as well as collective works made with artist Per Stian Monsås.

Agnieszka Foltyn

An artist, curator and writer based in Trondheim, Norway; her work is centred on the relations between site and public, exploring how art weaves through the everyday; she is the deputy leader of Trøndelag Bildende Kunstnere (Trøndelag Visual Artists); her artistic works have been made throughout Norway, Canada, Poland, Latvia and Finland

Katherine Butcher

Between Us-ing: Co-Creating Perceptions of the Shelter. Climate, Migrations and Heritage

What I am is an answer. I certainly have no answer. I only have your questions as a cradle for hoped-for answers that may dance in or never appear. It's all happening between us, it's a "between us-ing". This statement suggests that our perceptions are not static. They can be transformed by our interactions with others and by our perceptions of the changing environment around us. This is where the importance of artistic practices lies. These practices allow us to explore how we can participate in the very structures that shape how we understand the world, while allowing for the fluid and co-creative nature of these structures.

Cradled by the ground, foot to skull, my thoughts travelled in time with the falling snow. Each flake melted on my hot face, filling my eyes. Tilting my head sideways, I noticed a large, illuminated sign that read "SHELTER", and in my new supine state, I was immediately opposed. The letters now tuned their attention to me, like a cat sensing a friendly hand.

Walking home from Moskus this morning reminded me of the walk to the ocean pool at Dee Why. The quickest way is across the beach. If you are in a hurry, stay as close to the water as possible, the sand is hard and compact, and you can jump over waves for fun. Often, the pressure of watching beach runners on the soft sand gets to me and I move closer to the dunes. It's tiring and the repeated walking on an incline with no firm ground underneath makes my feet tingle and one side of my body ache. This morning my feet agitated on the soft snow. My boots were rubbish. I kept my head down for balance.

It wasn't that cold, and I had taken my usual route across the river. So, I started to look up now and again to see the snowfall. The bus stop on the other side of the bridge was busy with people. Head up, I stomped my feet hard to cut through the growing thickness to get to the cement. Cruising now, I forgot about the small ramp connecting the street to the curb, continuing, the heavy drive of my heel sent me gliding in a quick slide from feet to being flat on my back.

Cradled by the ground, foot to skull, my thoughts travelled in time with the falling snow. Each flake melted on my hot face, filling my eyes. Tilting my head sideways, I noticed a large, illuminated sign that read "SHELTER", and in my new supine state, I was immediately opposed. The letters now tuned their attention to me, like a cat sensing a friendly hand.

In response I gently wrapped my thoughts around them, moving politely to feel the shapes and pass through the spaces. No response. I turned the word over, then each letter. Over and over again, faster and faster, now like an agitated coin toss. My legs ached

Art in the public space acts is political, performing judgements, and is there to be judged. Questions that can drive this concept include: What is future beauty? What is an artistically spent environment? To look at the impermanence within the permanence of art – why do this and how can we keep the possibility open, to free the work as a static object? Can newly built environments push beyond modernist ideals and avoid taking on the form of an artefact?

from the mental effort and my hands clenched. I began to throw out grappling hooks, knocking pieces off the sign, sending fragments of the letters in all directions. Exhausted, pinned, I tugged at the lines and waited.

It broke or was born. Held together by the taut crosshairs stretching out, the space ballooned and swelled with unexpected courage. Cutting a passage through the snowfall, a gap, a presence beside the place where I lay and what remained of the sign grew. As I started to imagine the smothering feeling. It stopped short, by an arm's length. Aware that my hands were braced tightly across my chest, I dropped my left arm to the side and turned into it. Outstretching my arm, I pointed an accusatory finger. Unsatisfied and eager, the rest of my body moved to it in a flat side shuffle. I leaned against the resistance it offered, spooning it with my body. I felt welcomed by it.

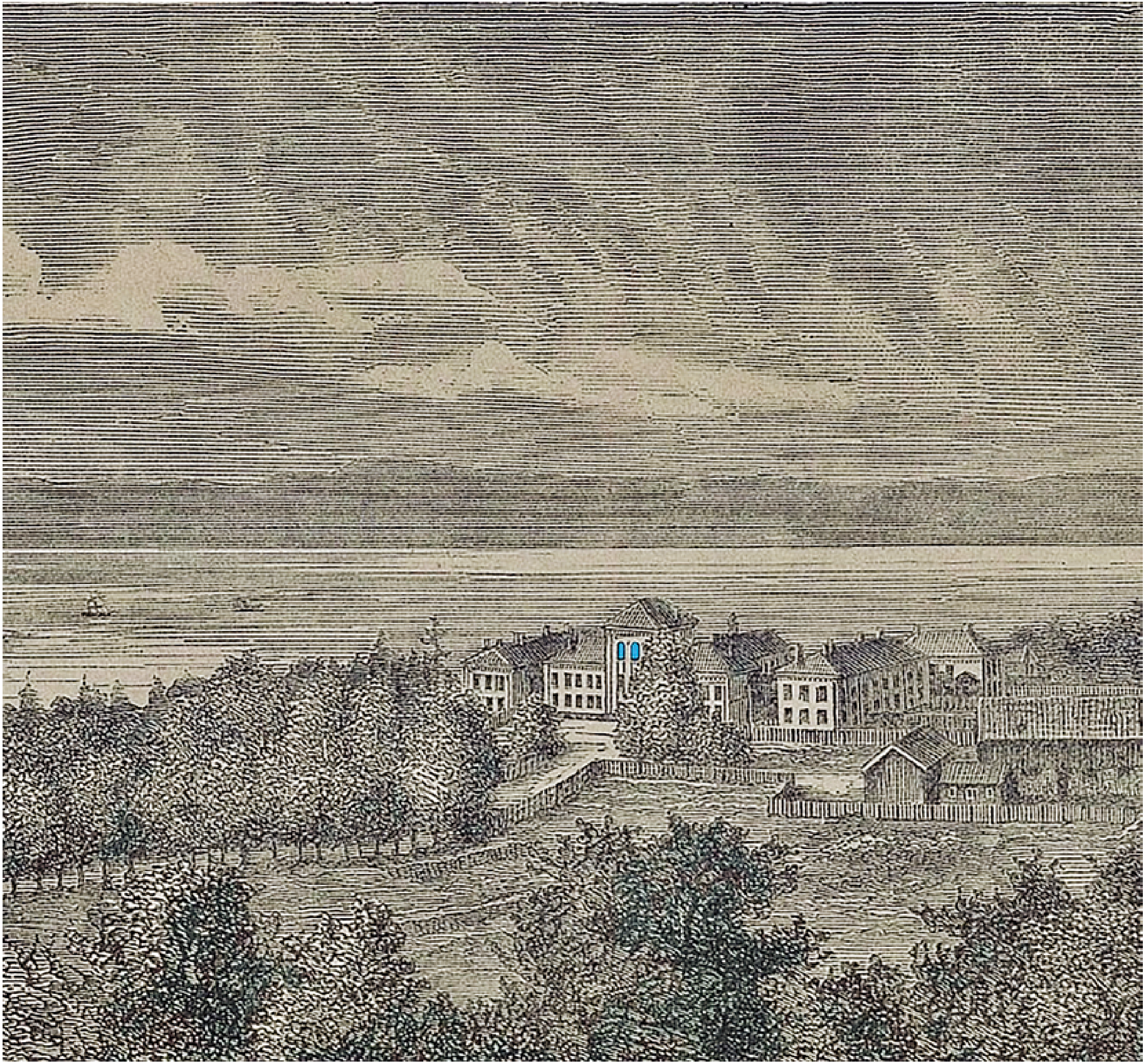
Peering through my new partner, I pressed my forehead to scan the inside. The shape of things moved, rippling with my touch. The snow around me dulled everything but the gap. It hummed warmly with the fluorescent lights. I wanted it to take me in, but it held its surface proudly. I kneaded it hard with my shoulder. At the same time, I clawed to grab a handful and squeeze it. I bit down on it and rubbed the sharpness of my nails across it. As I worked to pierce it, the abrasions on the skin eventually caused small slits to appear.

I paused, making my ear flush with the wounds. Turning to face the silence it pulled the words "what is it" from my lips. I held my breath, to hear an answer, the gap exhaling, the warm air softening my mouth. With each breath I pushed further in, feeling the tips of my nose and knees enter. I slid forward, dragging my heavy coat with me, looking up now and then to track pieces of drifting snow that joined me. Once inside I was passive and yet active in remaining, respiring together. Astray.

Unfolding.

I approached, asking two questions, Firstly, "What is it?" This question seeks to allow for a freedom of passage in between the past and the future. Unfolding is a call to act. To lend ears, many many ears, to hear what is already speaking and unfolding around us. I-we-you are asked to concentrate in order to receive messages.

Secondly, "With what ambition?" A shared understanding of the past, inherited? Without an agreement or clear testament in linking the past with the future. In the context of the idea of unfolding, the lack or abundance of testament can be seen as a barrier to understanding the past and its connection to the present and the future. Without a clear sense of history and the experiences that have shaped our present, we risk losing



↑ Documentation of *My Anteroom Has Eyes* (2021—2023) by Katherine Butcher.

sight of the unfolding of events and ideas. An emphasis on the importance of testimony can be seen as a call to action to ensure that we not only listen to the past, but actively participate in passing on our own experiences and knowledge to future generations.

On the other hand, there is a danger. To warn against the confinement and abstraction of international aspirations. The results that find exactly how many square meters people need, how much water they need, how much sunlight, playground space, laughter, art. Planning for an abstract human being, to live within an architecture to be executed anywhere in the world, placeless and universal.

Flourishing.

What I am – Is an answer. Flourishing as human participation. To examine the cradle of hoped-for answers with a special focus on a local micro-setting and the potential for artistic practice to judge the outcomes and ambition of actions. Art in the public space acts is political, performing judgements, and is there to be judged. Questions that can drive this concept include: What is future beauty? What is an artistically spent environment? To look at the impermanence within the permanence of art – why do this and how can we keep the possibility open, to free the work as a static object? Can newly built environments push beyond modernist ideals and avoid taking on the form of an artefact?

Substrates.

Collective and individual past experiences, behaviours, actions, and choices can liminally and subliminally influence us and our personal and collective imagination. This is a concept that is shared by others who aim to provoke reflection, change and the possibility of new action. Our experiences sink in to become our substance, the substrate on which we build. I suggest here in this concept that an urgent question is therefore, "What kind of artistic experiences and actions can we lay down with inclusiveness and sustainability in mind – to sink into the substrate?" This consideration must draw lines of sight from the "spectacular and diffuse", from the damaging substrates that human actions have laid down on the earth which has led to such efforts as the European man on the moon, and those potential risks and positive participation art can have in the unfolding of future solutions that put human and ecological relationships into a collaboration that lead to flourishing substrates.

How can we begin with no pre-suppositions. I only had your question as the cradle for a hoped-for answer, which may dance in or never appear. It happened between us, a "between us-ing". It is in fact an object, and a door, and space – a welcoming space. It is a space with the capacity for conflict, despair, and tragedy. And yet for hope, and for dreams: all things. So, for me, it is important that there are places… magic… places, where I give up part of what would gratify me. What I do… is swallowed, eaten up. It becomes, really, flesh and blood. It becomes a body, a movement, a breath. An inspiration. And that sends them acting, being active in a way that is passive because they're sent… by the performance in an innocent way to act. So, all of us, we offer up part of our – what should I say – properties, what we own. To act, to try and reach a horizon which is very far away, just ideal, and dream-like.

Noticing a small crack at the edge of my vision, the gap started to pull away, and soon the lines holding the space tore itself free. I stood up, sweeping my arms over myself in the same motion, clearing my coat of the snow.

Katherine Butcher

An Australian artist based in Norway who works with found materials, ideas, and structures to create cultural artifacts; her work involves storytelling and participating in structures through a "between us-ing" process; her art is intertwined with these materials and ideas to create a unique narrative

Part Two: Discourses Methodolo of Change

of Shelter,
gies

Margrét Steinarsdóttir

Human Rights – What Are They?

The human rights concept is not so old – it was first mentioned by Thomas Payne in the 18th Century. But even so it is rooted in ancient ideas, writings and thoughts of scholars and thinkers across the world; on the nature of man and society. They are also rooted in all major religions of the world as well as in political and ethical theories, from Plato and Cicero until present times.

Human rights are linked to the concept of obligation, crystalizing in Kains' words from the Bible: "Am I my brother's keeper?" By recognizing that men have obligations towards one another we recognize also the right to assistance from others. By using the quote: "My rights end where your rights begin", attributed to Oliver Wendell Holmes, we may say that we are obliged to respect the rights of others and make sure that they enjoy them just as we expect the same from them. We must keep in mind that the rights come with obligations.

One of the main theories of the origin of international human rights law was the so called theory of natural law, that human beings posses intrinsic values that govern our reasoning and behaviour, universal moral standards grounded by law superior to men. Men therefore have certain rights, moral values and responsibilities that are inherent in human nature.

Later, new theories emerged on human rights being no more than people's agreement on fundamental rules and laws which must apply in society so that all may live together in harmony. This so called positivism gathered momentum in the 19th century and many believed that there were no other human rights than those decreed by the state. All emphasis was put on the rules and laws established by the governmental power of a state and only those human rights, that could be tried in court according to that state's legislation, could be recognised.

Human rights protection has developed from those two theories into concepts of certain fundamental values common to all individuals everywhere and the needs that they are entitled to enjoy so that they can live in human dignity, such as the need for food, clothing and care, education, health etc.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

In the wake of the terrible atrocities which took place during WWII (World War 2), the countries of the world realised that something needed to be done to ensure the human rights of their people. In fact, the whole world was in shock over the massive human rights violations which had taken place, especially since most of what happened was not against any law. The terrible treatment of Fascists and Nazis on their own countrymen showed clearly that an individual state could not be trusted to respect the rights and freedoms of its inhabitants. There was a universal consensus that it would not do to allow every state to set their own laws, a framework that no state could cross needed to be established and ways and means found to protect the people from their governments. Representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world put their heads together and came up with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

“Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”[1]

This is the opening statement of the preamble to UDHR which was proclaimed at the United Nations general assembly in Paris on December 10th 1948. The Declaration is the foundation of the international human rights system and has become the guiding light for those who are working on the promotion and protection of human rights and also paved the way for subsequent human rights treaties. The Declaration is detailed and includes all human rights that the World sees as the most important ones and no distinction is made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs meaning that borders are no obstacle when it comes to helping others with upholding their rights.

Everyone must be familiar with the Declaration, take it to heart and act accordingly.

But what are human rights?

The idea of human rights originated from the necessity for society to protect their members from their governments. Human rights protection is therefore basically aimed at human rights violations by states against their subjects. However, states must also protect individuals and groups against human rights abuses within their territory. They must take measures to ensure the rights of all their inhabitants.

We are all human regardless of our age, skin colour, nationality, which gender we identify as et cetera. We are also very diverse, our talents and abilities as well as our culture, economic situation and otherwise status. Through education and opportunities to cultivate our interests and abilities we are able to reach our full potential. But so many of us are more privileged than others and the country or situation we are born into gives us ways and means to achieve our goals and enjoy our lives.

However, human rights are inherent to all human beings. We all have the right to life and liberty, education, housing, freedom from slavery and torture and

1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN, https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights, access to all documents: May 1, 2023.

All human rights are indivisible and interdependent, one set of rights cannot be enjoyed fully without the other. Making progress in civil and political rights facilitates the progress of economic, social and cultural rights. For example, it is hard to enjoy the right to vote if you are dying from hunger.

many more. Human dignity is the foundation of universal human rights. Usually, human rights are defined as rights that human beings enjoy simply because they are human.

Human rights can not be bought or sold, inherited or awarded to individuals. They are unalienable, they are the core of your very existence and can not be taken from us. Human rights are indivisible and interrelated, meaning that they are all equal and necessary to protect human dignity. They are also universal and they never expire, all human beings enjoy human rights, regardless of their race, skin colour, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, age, political or life stance opinions, nationality, social background or any other status.

Even if human rights are universal and unalienable they can be restricted if certain circumstances apply. For example, if a person commits a punishable offence they may be imprisoned but only following a due process and a fair trial. Also, one person's freedom of expression may be limited in order to protect another person's right to privacy. Human rights restrictions are only possible in exceptional circumstances and following very strict conditions such as being prescribed by law, serve a legitimate aim and proportional to that legitimate aim. In addition to this, the European Convention on Human Rights only allows for restrictions of the rights provided by the Convention if such restrictions are necessary in a democratic society.

All human rights are indivisible and interdependent, one set of rights cannot be

enjoyed fully without the other. Making progress in civil and political rights facilitates the progress of economic, social and cultural rights. For example, it is hard to enjoy the right to vote if you are dying from hunger. Human rights are interrelated, violation in one right leads to violation of other rights, one right can not be precluded over another.

Human rights have been established by international laws and conventions, and also in national legislation in most countries. There is no denying the existence of human rights even if there is dispute on their nature and role in our world. Some are individual rights, others collective rights. Some human rights may be upheld in court, others not. Some are meant to be enforced immediately others to be realized progressively depending on states' resources and capabilities. Those in most need must however always be assisted and limited resources must be used effectively and efficiently.

At the international level a distinction has sometimes been made between three generations of human rights, the first being civil and political rights, for example freedom of expression, freedom of association, the right to vote and the right to a fair trial. The second generation focuses on economic, social and cultural rights, for example the right to gainful employment, education, housing and health.

In recent years, more and more emphasis is being put on so called third generation human rights, that is collective or solidarity rights. These include the right to a healthy environment, natural resources, peace and humanitarian aid. A large part of the world is living in extreme poverty and facing conflict

Human rights and the environment are interdependent and a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is necessary for the full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights. The right to a healthy environment is generally understood to include substantive and procedural elements. The substantive rights include clean air, a safe and stable climate, access to safe water and adequate sanitation, healthy and sustainably produced food and many others.

and ecological and natural disasters which in turn has led to little progress in human rights. Therefore many thought it necessary to come up with a new group of rights that try to go beyond the framework of individual rights by stressing collective concepts, such as community or people in order to ensure the realisation of first and second generation human rights.

On July 28th 2022, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution recognizing the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right[2]. The resolution is based on a similar text adopted by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in October 2021, which represented the first formal recognition at the global level of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment[3]. At the same time UNHRC created a Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change.

Human rights and the environment are interdependent and a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is necessary for the full enjoyment of a wide range of human rights. The right to a healthy environment is generally understood to include substantive and procedural elements. The substantive rights include clean air, a safe and stable climate, access to safe water and adequate sanitation, healthy and sustainably produced food and many others. The procedural rights include access to information, the right to participate in decision-making, and access to justice and effective remedies all of which are vital for those seeking to protect the environment.

Recently, a fourth generation of human rights is emerging in the international society, which would include rights that cannot be included in the third generation or future development of first and second generation rights. These rights are linked to technological development, information and communication technologies and cyberspace. What these rights entail is not clear, some rights are for example taken from the third generation and included in the fourth, such as the right to a healthy environment. Fourth generation human rights are understood by many to be given in relation to new technologies while others prefer to talk about digital rights, such as the right to digital self-determination, the right to digital security, the right to access one‘s own digital data etc. Many say that the differentiating element would be that while the first three generations refer to the human being as a member of society, the rights of the fourth generation would refer to the human being as a species.

2 The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, UN, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3982508?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header.

3 https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G21/289/50/PDF/G2128950.pdf?OpenElement.

This division of human rights into generations has been critizised by many who have pointed out that there is by no means a clear cut distinction between human rights categories, that they are all interrelated and interlinked. No one human right is more important than another. We can be sure that we cannot enjoy our civil or political rights fully if our economical, social or cultural rights are denied us and vice versa.

Human Rights Conventions

Even if UDHR has inspired and paved the way for subsequent human rights conventions, covenants and treaties, it is not an international convention and therefore not legally binding to UN member states.

To ensure a legally binding codification of the rights listed in UDHR, UN member states came together and established two human rights treaties, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)[4] and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)[5].

In the composition process it soon became evident that there was dissent in member state‘s perception of the human rights concept. Western states prioritised civil and political rights, albeit that their welfare systems recognised economic and social rights, whereas the leaders of socialist states prioritised economic, social and cultural rights. The notion of the pressing need for legalising these rights to ensure human rights, resulted in two covenants instead of one, as was originally intended.

Subsequently, the UN has adopted conventions on the rights of various groups believed to be in need of special protection. One is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)[6]. Children all around the world are being abused and exploited, trafficking in children and child slavery is a huge, widespread problem. Children do not have the same ability to defend themselves as grown ups do and usually have no say in matters regarding their situation, well being and future. Therefore the UN found it necessary to establish a separate convention on the rights of the child to remind the international community that they are in need of special protection.

4 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, UN, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights.

5 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, UN, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights.

6 Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF, https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)[7] is based on a similar notion. Women all over the world have been and are being opressed and their human rights violated. The scale varies between countries, but nowhere in the world do women enjoy fully comparable and equal rights to men.

The most progressive UN Convention heretofar is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRDP)[8]. The Convention is the fastest negotiated human rights treaty in the history of the UN. It sets out what is required to implement existing human rights so that disabled people may enjoy them and take an equal part in society without discrimination. The Convention reflects a social model of disability stating disability as leading from the interaction between persons with impairments and external barriers that hinder their participation in society. The Convention does not provide a closed definition of who persons with disabilities are and includes those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

The UN has also adopted other conventions on specific rights such as the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)[9] and the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination[10].

For quite some time now the UN has been discussing the need to establish a separate human rights convention on the rights of older people who often experience discrimination on grounds of their age. For the last decade or so the discussion has escalated and many now believe that the next major UN human rights convention will be one on the rights of older people.

7 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, UN WOMEN, https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm.

8 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UN, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities.

9 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, UN, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-against-torture-and-other-cruel-inhuman-or-degrading.

10 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, UN, https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial.

UDHR has also inspired many regional conventions such as the European Convention on Human Rights[11], the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights[12] and the Arab Charter on Human Rights[13].

We must all keep vigil and ensure that the human rights of all of us are being respected. We have an obligation to defend the rights of others as well as our rights. If we do not act when we see the rights of others being violated, who will then be left to defend us when we become the target?

Margrét Steinarsdóttir

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11 European Convention on Human Rights, https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_eng.pdf.

12 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Organisation of African Unity, https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36390-treaty-0011_-_african_charter_on_human_and_peoples_rights_e.pdf.

13 Arab Charter on Human Rights, UN, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/551368?ln=en.

Holger Pötzsch

Sustainability: Critical Reflections on an Apparently Common-Sensical Term

In March 2023, the sixth synthesis report penned by the International Panel of Climate Change was released[1]. As earlier, the assessments are dire reading and yet again witness of trends going into the wrong direction on almost all important accounts; increase in CO_2 emissions, underperforming attempts at cutbacks, rising temperatures on a global scale, missed targets, unpaid compensations, and more. Key politicians and decision-makers from Biden and Xi to Lula and Lagarde publicly lament lack of progress and issue new promises to implement decisive steps to change course. The numbers are clear. Apparently, we have to do something. We have to act, and act now, before it is too late. There is no second Earth – or, as the likes of Bezos and Musk would put it, at least not for all of us. So, what are we waiting for?

1 *Synthesis Report pf the IPCC 6th Assessment Report (AR6)*, 2023, https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6syr/pdf/IPCC_AR6_SYR_LongerReport.pdf, access: May 1, 2023.

Etymologically, the terms sustainability is derived from the Old French term sustenir *that again goes back to the Latin verb* sustinere. *Both the Old French and Latin roots hold a variety of meanings including to maintain, support, nourish, keep up, bear, endure, and continue.*

At the next UN Climate Change Conference suitably held in Expo City in the carbon-based sheikdom of Dubai in late 2023, new promises will be made, new goals will be declared, and new unprecedently ambitious and binding targets will be set. Then, everyone climbs into their comfy jets and flies off to reach the upcoming World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2024 to repeat their unfaltering commitments. And like this the merry-go-around seems to continue with too little progress, too late. Meanwhile, I shrug my shoulders and rush off to catch an intercontinental flight bringing me to Australia to join a panel on the Anthropocene and, who knows, maybe glue myself to some important artwork. Because this is real. *We* have to do something.

In this short essay, I will offer some critical reflections on the term sustainability criticizing discourses of climate change and possible responses in politics and policies. I will trace the etymological roots of sustainability to uncover previously little discussed dimensions of meaning and connect these findings to a critique of the implied *we* in the sentences above. My argument is that, by pretending climate change just happens (the term does not imply agency of any kind) and by urging an implied *we* to act, responsibilities are blurred, and accountability is made impossible. Without naming a culprit, however, you can't assign blame, and without assigning blame you can't enforce an actual solution that will make a measurable difference – you can only continue to lament lack of progress while touring the globe in search for a magic wand *we* can use to simply make the problem go away.

A strategy for global change and adaptation? Sustainability and its discontents

In light of the increasingly dire state of the global climate, species, and life in general, sustainability has emerged as a concept promising to offer viable ways out of the current mess. Widely endorsed by various UN agencies, the World Bank, the OECD, and other regional and global institutions, the concept readily lends itself to policy makers, PR-agencies, and NGOs alike to focus activities and develop frames for international

agreements and treaties. In the following, I will critically discuss this term and attempt to flesh out both potentials and pitfalls in its application.

Etymologically, the terms sustainability is derived from the Old French term *sustenir* that again goes back to the Latin verb *sustinere*. Both the Old French and Latin roots hold a variety of meanings including to maintain, support, nourish, keep up, bear, endure, and continue. One little discussed class of meaning emerges from the early 14th century French use of the term that circumscribed among other things the ability to "endure pain, hardship, shock without failing or yielding". This notion seems to have influenced the German equivalent of sustainability – *Nachhaltigkeit* – that emerged during the 18th century as a term used in forestry to describe and quantify ways of exploiting timber without endangering long-term prospects for profit by depleting woodlands permanently[1].

Two issues seem to emerge as key to the concept of sustainability then: 1) the ability to endure hardships and 2) a tight connection to economic thinking based on the exploitation of natural resources. Given this background, does sustainability as a concept to guide policies in attempts to combat climate change simply ask us to endure the hardships to come, bear the inevitable burden, and try as best we can to continue as before? Or is it possible to hark back at other early meanings such as support or nourish that de-emphasize the dimension of supposedly inevitable endurances, hardships, and pain for the sake of enduring profits?

How has sustainability been used in discourses on climate change policies? As Purvis, Mao, and Robinson write, "sustainability remains an open concept with a myriad interpretations and context-specific understandings"[2]. This volatile nature of the concept, of course, makes its political implementation difficult as it can lend itself to a variety of politics and initiatives that not necessarily serve similar or even reconcilable interests. When demanding the sustainability of a certain policy, project, investment, or idea, key questions in need of asking are: sustainable for whom or what? And in which contexts? Sustainability is a contingent term. It lacks fixed coordinates. And this makes its operationalization for political initiatives aimed at combating climate change difficult.

One important starting point for the use of terms derived from the Latin *sustinere* in discourses about environmental threats on a global scale is the Club of Rome's by now seminal report *Limits to Growth*. Here, the authors outline the

1 Sarah Miriam Pritz, "Subjektivierung von Nachhaltigkeit", in *Die Gesellschaft der Nachhaltigkeit: Umrisse eines Forschungsprogramms*, Sighard Neckel et al., eds. (Bielefeld, 2018), p. 81.

2 Ben Purvis, Yong Mao, and Darren Robinson, "The three pillars of sustainability: in search of conceptual origins", *Sustainability Science* 14 (2019), p. 681.

inevitable aporias of a dominating economic paradigm that is built upon the assumption of unlimited never-ending growth. They then put a "state of global equilibrium" up as an alternative where "the basic material needs of each person on earth are satisfied and each person has an equal opportunity to realize his individual human potential"[3]. The report summarizes this preferred state of global affairs as a "condition of ecological and economic stability that is *sustainable* far into the future"[4], thus articulating an implicit meaning of the term that is reminiscent of the German *Nachhaltigkeit* and its origins in the organization of economically viable resource exploitation in forestry.

In the *Limits to Growth* report, the authors acknowledge that they do not have solutions to the presented problems and aporias created by the currently dominating economic system based on exploitation and supposedly unlimited growth. They limit themselves to describing the dire departure point for a further development of human societies and a planetary ecosystem given the prevailing economic and political inequalities and idiosyncrasies. The report merely hints at sustainable development as a potential alternative but leaves it open how such a system might look like, how it can be organized, and how a transition to such a new economic paradigm might be achieved. The authors insinuate a necessity to look and move beyond capitalism but say nothing about how we might be able to get there.

Now, more than 50 years later and well into the climate apocalypse, we are still in this same situation. We can describe the global repercussions of overconsumption and exploitation with ever-increasing accuracy but remain incapable of implementing measures that can address the core of the problem and tell us how to realize the elevated goals set on climate conferences. Apparently, the concept of sustainability doesn't really help us to address the very material and economic contradictions that form core of the problem. Can the reason for this be the implied *we* I criticized in the introduction? Our engrained incapability of naming the culprits and benefactors behind the current global mess? That we have forgotten that capitalism is not a god-given order but a willfully implemented political-economic system that implies the climate apocalypse in the name of sustaining profits and the wealth of a few powerful people and nations? And without this recognition, we cannot shape a solution effectuating real changes that matters.

3 Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers, and William W. Behrens, *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (Washington, 1972), p. 24.

4 Ibid. My emphasis.

Throughout the 1980s various green movements and parties that gradually formed in the aftermath of the Club of Rome report took up demands for post-growth societies. At this time, ever more accurate descriptions of the rapidly deteriorating state of the planet's climate and ecosystems are accompanied by increased focus on sustainability as an alleged quick-fix and a solution that apparently allows us to combine the contradictory demands for economic growth and environmental responsibility[5]. The concept seemingly enabled *us* to maintain the fantasy of being able to bring together economic growth, increasing returns of investments, and soaring profits with ecological well-being and stable societies. One might ask, if the concept of sustainability at that time, indeed, was much more than a neoliberal PR-brand designed to undermine the far more radical demands of a green protest movement bent on changing the core parameters of Western capitalist societies or on removing capitalism altogether. No matter what, we all know where we stand today and therefore who prevailed in this unequal struggle between global responsibility and profits.

One reason for the ease with which sustainability can be instrumentalized for a variety of widely different purposes is the notorious undertheoretization of the concept. According to Purvis, Mao, and Robinson, discourses and models of sustainability have been

While being a disadvantage in academic procedure, precisely this ambiguity and unclarity made it possible to lend the term to a huge variety of different interests and policies. Resting on a fuzzy conceptual basis that allowed for various interpretations and uses, it was easy to insert the term into global consultancy, PR, and marketing without a proper problematization that could have drawn attention to inherent contradictions and underlying problems.

5 See e.g. *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*, UN, 1987, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf, access: May 1, 2023. See also Edward B. Barbier, “The Concept of Sustainable Economic Development”, *Environmental Conversation* 14,2 (1987), pp. 101–110.

characterized by a "lack of semantic clarity and confusion of competing terms"[6]. While being a disadvantage in academic procedure, precisely this ambiguity and unclarity made it possible to lend the term to a huge variety of different interests and policies. Resting on a fuzzy conceptual basis that allowed for various interpretations and uses, it was easy to insert the term into global consultancy, PR, and marketing without a proper problematization that could have drawn attention to inherent contradictions and underlying problems. The so-called pillar conception of sustainability – an accessible, easy-to-understand-and-use model digestible to global policy makers and mass audiences alike is indicative of this.

One description of the pillar-model of sustainability can be traced back to a keynote speech held by M. Adil Khan at an international sustainable development conference in Manchester, UK, in 1995. Here, Khan distinguishes between three dimensions or pillars of sustainability that, according to him, form the core of sustainable development – economic, environmental and social sustainability[7] (see → Figure 1). Khan then subdivides each category into further variables that intersect in the center where sustainable development within the frames of the given socio-economic system becomes possible. The model seems to suggest a core of conflict-free common interests between widely opposing, if not outright contradictory, social and other forces that could enable tension-free global change to save the planet without imposing unbearable economic costs on anyone and without necessitating fundamental changes to the currently dominating economic system and its received power relations.

When looking more closely at Kahn's proposal, it quickly becomes apparent that there, indeed, are severe tensions if not outright contradictions between the various subcategories brought together in his model. In essence, it runs the danger of reproducing a pure imaginary of neat inclusiveness and common interests between different constituencies be they classes, societies, nations or else. The model suggests that contradictions between interests of capital owners, stockholders and workers can be overcome without greater problems, that colonial legacies can be disregarded or overcome at little costs, and that contradictions between the environment and global economic growth can be reconciled. There it raises its ugly and politically debilitating head again – the big global *we* – and glosses over the fact that, to reach sustainability

6 Ben Purvis, Yong Mao, and Darren Robinson, "The three pillars of sustainability", p. 682.

7 M. Adil Khan, "Concepts, definitions, and key issues in sustainable development: the outlook for the future", *Proceedings of the 1995 International Sustainable Development Research Conference*, Manchester (March 27–28, 1995), pp. 2–13. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/sd.3460030203, access: 1.05.2023. For visualizations of Khan's model and various spin-offs in Ben Purvis, Yong Mao, and Darren Robinson, "The three pillars of sustainability", p. 682.

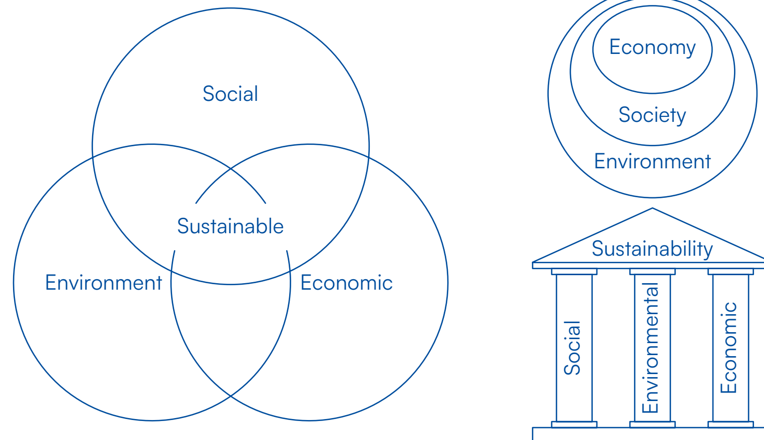
in one category one often has to undermine sustainability in another. To enable economic growth, the environment has to yield and to secure sustainable profits the working class will have to bleed. Who exactly is we? And who determines the interests that really count for this *we*?

To give just one example, Khan presupposes economic growth as one indicator of economic sustainability and treats it as a condition for trickle-down effects ensuring societal sustainability and development. However, he fails to interrogate how exactly economic growth and global development (presumably along the lines of 'Western' models) can be pursued without depleting the environment, how productivity can be increased without squeezing the workforce, or how relying upon technological innovation is possible without further pressuring global ecosystems. In his model, sustainability remains a postulate supposedly offering something to everyone by means of methods that resemble a magic wand rather than a critical assessment. However, irreconcilable material contradictions between different constituencies – or in current new speak *stakeholders* – exist and we need to identify and tackle them if want to retain the capability to act politically in accordance with all the widely stated goals and commitments. The culprits profiting from the current situation need to be named and held accountable. Only then, the non-negotiable measures needed to save the planet can be enforced. The looming question, then, becomes: If there is no magic *we*, who is up to this task of enforcing lasting viable change at the costs of the main culprits?

Over the years, the pillar concept was taken up and further disseminated in research, policy, and consultancy[8]. This process was based on the largely implied idea that the inherent contradictions between economic, ecological, and societal pillars, dimensions, or components of sustainability could somehow be reconciled in a mid-circle where key elements of each overlap and enable commonalities and a joint way forward. Given the massively diverging power and material interests of key global stakeholders, such common interests, of course, were merely illusory. Instead, what became possible was the use of sustainability to fake action, disperse responsibilities, and continue as before. The faulty logic driving such discourses and practices seems to be the opposite of a demand for accountability. It seems to suggest that without a culprit, no crime, and without a crime, no problem.

The work of the UN to develop concrete sustainability goals in a process from 2012 onwards distilled the logics enshrined in the model into a series of 17 explicit goals for global sustainable development laid out in the UN document *Transforming Our*

8 See e.g. A. D. Basiago, "Economic, social, and environmental sustainability in development theory and urban planning practice", *Environmentalist* 19 (1999), pp. 145–161.



↑ **1. The circle/pillar model of sustainability**
(in Purvis, Mao, and Robinson "The three pillars of sustainability", 2019, p. 682)

World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)[9]. Besides yet again attempting to reconcile essentially contradictory and often irreconcilable goals such as no poverty, clean energy, economic growth, industry and infrastructure, consumption and production, as well as climate action just to mention a few, the document also undermines accountability. Already in the title, the report replicates the infamous *we* that I already criticized above and thus makes invisible the differentiated degrees of responsibility and, more importantly, the concrete material interests behind the ongoing active destruction of the ecosphere. In reality, there is no we. Climate change does not simply happen. The destruction of the ecosphere is the result of cold business calculations and unequal global power relations. And, as everyone knows, declaring goals is cheap – yet great for PR.

In the end, key questions remain unanswered despite tons of glossy brochures imagining commonalities where, in essence, there are few and declaring cheap and toothless ways to save *our* planet. All these words. Yes, *we* can! Das schaffen *wir*! Who is this *we*? Who speaks for it? What does *our* generation mean? Is there anything resembling a global *community*? What about the destructive, growth-dependent, and predatory logics of global capitalism? Or about the greed-based egotism of multinational corporation or the global North? What about the widely diverging degrees of

9 *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, UN, 2015, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf, access: May 1, 2023.

responsibility for the catastrophe? What about colonial legacies of exploitation and oppression, and about current conditions of gross inequalities and massive exploitation? Again, we need to ask: Sustainable for whom? And for what? At whose costs?

Alternatives? Resilience and accountability

If sustainability appears problematic given the severe contradictions and diverging interests glossed over by the concept, the term resilience appears like a proper declaration of bankruptcy for global efforts to combat climate change by means of concerted political action. Derived from the Latin *resilere* to rebound, recoil, resilience initially referred to the capacity of a system to return to its original state after disturbances. When used in present-day discourses on climate change, however, this idea of returning to an original state seems to have moved somewhat in the background. Otherwise, the concept would imply to not simply accept a 1 or 1.5-degree global warming target but would mean to actively reduce CO_2 levels in the atmosphere and return to a pre-industrial original state of affairs – and making the profiteers pay for the necessary adjustments.

Contrary to this, resilience today often implies the acceptance of human induced global warming as an inevitable fact and merely aims at preparing nations, societies, ecosystems, and individuals as much as possible to these apparently inevitable new conditions, so they won't break – or at least not entirely and not everywhere. Resilience appears like a neo-liberal buzzword – a properly post-political pseudo-response opted for by a merely imagined global *us* that has lost the capability to concerted action in the name of global responsibilities. Adaptation to seemingly unalterable new conditions seems to trump a (costly and conflict-heavy) rebuilding of societies along entirely new lines, a holding accountable of the forces profiting from the current relentless destruction, and a comprehensive addressing of global inequalities leading to redistribution. In other words, resilience undermines attempts to tackle capitalism and the interests behind its continuous global dominance and simply asks everyone to adapt or die[10].

Even though the 6th IPCC assessment report published between 2021 and 2023 attempts to give the term resilience a more proactive stance highlighting core meanings such as returning to an original state, it remains unclear how this is to be achieved and how resilience in economic or societal terms should be weighed against resilience in environmental, cultural, psychological, or political contexts. As Chandler expresses

10 For a concise overview of the concept of resilience, see David Chandler, *Resilience: The Governance of Complexity* (London, 2014).

Climate change does not simply happen. *Climate change is the calculated effect of attempts to sustain a way of life in certain parts of the world that is characterized by massive overconsumption, relentless exploitation, greed, and discourses of green-washing*

it, "if resilience is the answer suggested by policy interventions in every area [...] what does this tell us about the questions we are asking of the world?"[11] Adapt those who can without endangering profits, and forget about the rest?

Again, questions such as resilience for whom or for what and at whose costs remain unanswered. So, given the present situation of the planet, maybe yet another term can help drive policy into the right direction? Maybe accountability can help? This term might empower *someone* to determine who has profited from the relentless destruction of the ecosphere and how. And based on this knowledge, this *someone* could hold the profiteers to account – both financially and juridically, both individually and collectively – and can create systems that prevent such profiteering in the future. Given the gross and increasing inequalities in global distributions of power and capital, of course, the problem of how this can be achieved remains to be answered.

In the language of business, accountability is often used as a term subservient to sustainability. As a possible solution to climate change, we need a more radical conceptualization of the term as a way to fundamentally change the discourse on climate change from an imposed and imposturous *we* to an us-and-them that acknowledges different interests and different degrees of responsibility and also aims at bringing to light the very profit-driven practices that continue the present destruction. The elephant in the room is capitalism and the very structures it creates and thrives on. *We* need to tackle this elephant. The alternative are glossy brochures and a way out of the mess for the affluent few.

Conclusion

Climate change does not simply *happen*. Climate change is the calculated effect of attempts to sustain a way of life in certain parts of the world that is characterized by massive overconsumption, relentless exploitation, greed, and discourses of greenwashing instigating the belief more consumption can help save the planet if *we*

11 Ibid., p. 2.

only consume the right products such as so-called zero-emission cars (a nonsensical marketing tool brainlessly parroted by buyers, salesmen, and politicians alike).

The destruction of our planet's ecosphere is part and parcel of successful business models and profitable return-of-investment plans. The ensuing catastrophe is not the responsibility of a merely imagined global *we* and actual solutions will only be possible if the culprits are pointed out and held to account. Really addressing climate change will be very costly to the rich and powerful and their willing minions who have profited from exploitation and overconsumption for centuries and continue to do so. Not addressing climate change and doing nothing but talk, travel, and declare ever-new targets will cost others. There is no, and has never been any, common global *we*. Pretending there is, simply diffuses accountability and prevents us from seeing the culprit behind the planned and organized destruction of our planet for profit. It stands for hope that more critical approaches to terms such as sustainability, resilience, and accountability might help to move climate policies into a more radical direction. There really is no alternative.

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Gunnar Iversen

Nature Strikes Back! Disaster, Crisis, and the Representation of Nature in Contemporary Norwegian Cinema

Nature plays a central role in Norwegian national and individual identity. Recently, a new conception of nature as something more than a happy refuge from the complex problems of modern urban life has emerged in Norwegian cinema, linked to ecological consciousness and fear of climate change. In this article, the changing role of nature in Norway will be discussed through the emergence of new cinematic genres like the horror film and disaster movie.

In the recent action-adventure *Troll* (Roar Uthaug, 2022), a Netflix-produced Norwegian disaster and monster movie, trouble starts when the Norwegian government decides to make a railway tunnel through the mountain range at Dovre. Activists demonstrate outside the entrance of the railway tunnel when an enormous troll suddenly emerges and wreaks havoc amongst the tunnel workers, journalists, and demonstrators → Figure 1.

Troll is an interesting example of recent trends in Norwegian cinema. As a Netflix-produced film, it is an example of a new more internationally oriented film production, and the film immediately became the most-seen non-US film streamed on Netflix in North America. The central idea of nature striking back is also transnational and central to both disaster films and monster movies from many different countries. At the same time, *Troll* discusses specific Norwegian themes and topics in the form of popular cinema genre.

It is not accidental that the action in *Troll* begins and mainly takes place at the Dovre plateau and Dovre mountains. Dovre is not only a beautiful part of the mountains in Norway and a natural habitat with many rare animals and plants, but an area with two big national parks. However, Dovre is more than untouched nature. Dovre has a special place in Norwegian history and the national consciousness. It is the very heart of modern Norway, a specific cultural place that connotes nationality and nation-building.

In 1814, when Norway entered a union with Sweden, gained semi-autonomy, and started on a process towards independence, Norwegian politicians created a new constitution. On May 20, 1814, the new constitution was signed by representatives from all Norwegian political parties, and the assembly ended when the politicians joined hands and proclaimed: "United and loyal until the mountains of Dovre crumble!"

In *Troll* that is exactly what happens. The mountains of Dovre crumble when sleeping monsters awake and nature strikes back. Combining discourses of nation building and nature preservation with spectacular action, *Troll* discusses what happens when old mythological beasts and natural forces attack the modern nation state. Creating a popular cultural mirror for the new climate and energy crises, *Troll* is a film that addresses core themes in the nation of Norway.

In the Norwegian fairy tale tradition, Dovre represents the ancient and magical home of the trolls. Even though modern writers have used Dovre as a more negative representation of the complacency and smugness of Norwegians, like Henrik Ibsen in his famous dramatic poem *Peer Gynt* (1867), Dovre most of all represents the safe and eternal, and the immutable and grounded. Dovre is the bedrock of Norway, which crumbles in a modernity where all that is solid crumbles into crisis and chaos.

↑ **1. *Troll*, dir. Roar Uthaug, 2022.** Film still

Troll is one of many recent Norwegian films to depict new anxieties and attitudes to nature through apocalyptic imagery and stories about nature threatening the country and people of Norway. These new Norwegian films rethink traditional Norwegian attitudes to nature and landscape.

Nature and national identity

Many have pointed out the centrality of nature in the Scandinavian countries, as a repository of mythic and national meanings but also as a key part in politics and leisure. Although appreciation and closeness to nature is not limited to Scandinavian countries and the various interconnections between nature and nation are important in many countries all over the world, the role of nature in Norwegian culture and imaginaries is often seen as special.

These and many other recent Norwegian horror films look at nature, landscapes, and rural areas in a very different way than what has traditionally been the case in Norway. Nature is a threatening, violent, and negative place, no longer a regenerative space but a real wilderness. No sanctuary or tool of clarity in times of obscureness, nature is seen as an amoral space full of violence and dangers.

In Norway, the appreciation of nature, outdoor life, and wilderness has been seen as something more than an individual goal but rather a national cultural program. Having a cabin in the woods or by the sea, or going on hikes on Sundays, is not only an individual activity but is part of being a "good Norwegian". In Norway, wrote the German philosopher and author Hans Magnus Enzensberger, happiness is not an abstract idea. Happiness is simple and concrete. Happiness is made of trees, grass, rocks, and salt water and can be precisely localized. Norwegian happiness lies by the fjord, at least three hours away from the nearest town. Its temple is a summer cabin, as old as possible, with a view of the skerries[1].

The Polish-Norwegian philosopher Nina Witoszek points out that to understand Norway and Norwegianness, one must see that affinity with nature is a central feature of the Norwegian national identity. Although the affinity with nature and love of wilderness and outdoor life can be found in many countries, Witoszek has characterized the Norwegian version as extreme. Witoszek has summed it up in what she calls a Norwegian credo: "Wisdom is not gained by social interaction, but by meeting nature at its most extreme on one's own"[2].

This is important in the pioneering eco-philosophy of Arne Næss, but also in the many positive representations of nature in Norwegian art and cinema. In documentaries, the many polar expedition films made in Norway since the early 1920s are examples of both polar imperialism and Norwegians meeting nature at its most extreme on one's own. Roar Uthaug's monster movie *Troll* demonstrates how nature is still seen as a building block of a national consciousness and national ideology.

When Norway was struggling for independence, an important task was to find the "real Norway". A special Norwegian landscape was found in the wild nature, especially in the mountains and valleys, like the Dovre plateau – a nature that did not

1 Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *Norsk utakt* (Oslo, 1984), p. 55.
2 Nina Witoszek, *Norske naturmytologier — fra Edda til økofilosofi* (Oslo, 1998), p. 107.

resemble the landscapes of Denmark or Sweden. The "real Norway" was found in wild and untouched landscapes and in the past and old history. In *Troll*, modern Norway has lost its reverence for nature and also lost touch with old stories and myths. The result is that nature is striking back. The newly awakened monstrous troll heads for the capital to wreak havoc on the political and economic center of the nation.

Anticipated crises and apocalyptic imaginary

Two new genres that have emerged in Norwegian cinema since the early 2000s illustrate new attitudes to nature and imaginaries about a vengeful or indifferent and uncaring nature. Before 2003, only one horror film had been produced in Norway. However, after the success of the two slasher films *Dark Woods* (*Villmark*, Pål Øie, 2003) and *Cold Prey* (*Fritt vilt*, Roar Uthaug, 2006), more than 30 horror films have been produced in Norway. Additionally, after the enormous success of *The Wave* (*Bølgen*, Roar Uthaug, 2015), a disaster movie about a gigantic rockslide that creates a tsunami in a small fjord on the Norwegian west coast, a number of disaster movies have also been produced in Norway. These two new genres demonstrate a new and angst-laden attitude to nature in Norwegian culture.

Due to strict censorship regulations and a state support system oriented toward art films, horror films were nearly unthinkable in Norway until the early 2000s. Central in the boom of horror film production in Norway in the last 20 years is a rethinking of nature and landscape. With just a few exceptions, all Norwegian horror films take place outside of urban areas. Successful films like *Dark Woods*, *Cold Prey*, and *Manhunt* (*Rovdyr*, Patrik Syversen, 2008) transform nature and the Norwegian landscape from an idyllic and harmonious place for regeneration to a place of violence and terror.

In *Dark Woods*, an older television producer takes a small group of young people into the woods for a weekend of training before filming a reality television series. The old producer has chosen nature for the training because nature is a tool for clarity in times of obscureness, as he says. However, in the seemingly idyllic nature, a serial killer waits for the young television professionals. In *Cold Prey*, a group of youngsters out snowboarding in the mythic Norwegian landscape of Jotunheimen – the "home of the ancient giants" – is forced to stay at an abandoned tourist hotel when one of the group suffers an injury. At the hotel, a demented serial killer proceeds to kill off the youngsters. And in *Manhunt*, four youngsters embark on a recreational trip to the woods but end up as targets for a group of violent rural men that hunt down the urban youngsters one by one.

These and many other recent Norwegian horror films look at nature, landscapes, and rural areas in a very different way than what has traditionally been the case

in Norway. Nature is a threatening, violent, and negative place, no longer a regenerative space but a real wilderness. No sanctuary or tool of clarity in times of obscureness, nature is seen as an amoral space full of violence and dangers. These horror films reinvent the Norwegian landscape and nature, and thereby also represent a critique of Norwegian society and the Norwegian conception of nature. It is not by accident that the horror that awaits the youngsters in *Cold Prey* occurs in an abandoned tourist hotel. Created as a place for recreation and a way to be regenerated through exposure to a breathtakingly beautiful mountain landscape, the hotel is now an abandoned ruin. And in the hotel lives a man who is taking his revenge on everyone after being left for dead in the snow and ice as a young boy. At the heart of the national myth of Norway as a home for the god-like *jotuns*, Uthaug and other new Norwegian film directors have reimagined the relationship to nature and the past. A vengeful and threatening nature is even more accentuated in a recent cycle of disaster films.

In a scene in *The Wave*, the first of several spectacular disaster movies produced in Norway in recent years, the son of a geologist who is warning everyone and saying that an enormous rockslide will come and transform a picturesque fjord into a hellish disaster zone, answers his father with incredulity. "It is safe. It is *home*," the young man says, and he continues: "The whole damn country is solid bedrock". But just like in *Troll*, even solid mountains can crumble and threaten everyone living along the fjord.

Together with films like *The Quake* (*Skjelvet*, John Andreas Andersen, 2018), *The Tunnel* (*Tunnelen*, Pål Øie, 2019), and *The Burning Sea* (*Nordsjøen*, John Andreas Andersen, 2021), *The Wave* questions the safety of Norway and all modern systems of expertise that are supposed to warn if a disaster is about to happen. In all of these films, modern technological systems created to monitor nature and warn citizens fail. This makes the natural disasters depicted even more deadly and sheds doubt on how safe modern society is. Modern Norway is depicted as a "risk society" where modernity and technology are unable to predict natural disasters. And in the type of stress-test that people go through in all disaster movies, most Norwegians fail.

More interesting than the spectacular *The Wave* and its sequel *The Quake*, is *The Tunnel* and *The Burning Sea*. In these films, just like the popular Norwegian TV series *Occupied*, Norway's reliance on oil is questioned in different ways. This is most obvious in *The Burning Sea*, a film that depicts the events that happen when a big oil platform in the North Sea topples and falls, creating an enormous environmental disaster.

In *The Tunnel*, questions of modern reliance on technology to monitor people's lives are important. Unlike the other and more spectacular Norwegian disaster films, a very small thing triggers the disaster in *The Tunnel*. A plastic bag in a tunnel flies into the air because of the wind and lands on the front winscreen of a truck

Nature strikes back in the form of dark woods, earthquakes, tsunamis, and rockslides. The home is no longer safe, and nature can no longer promise happiness and safety. Utopia has been transformed into a dark dystopia.

carrying a flammable liquid. The truck crashes into the walls of the tunnel and catches fire. After the explosion, a number of people are trapped inside the tunnel, unable to get out. The fire fills the tunnel with toxic fumes, and a large group of people in cars and buses are in danger. As in all these films, it is some small detail of modern life that creates disaster and catastrophe. In *The Tunnel* it is just a small plastic carrier bag for groceries; in *The Burning Sea* it is a big unstable oil platform.

The new Norwegian horror films and disaster movies question modern safety in a number of different ways. Everything that was imagined to be as solid as rock crumbles as a result of modern lifestyles or expert systems and technology that fail to create safety and security. Nature strikes back in the form of dark woods, earthquakes, tsunamis, and rockslides. The home is no longer safe, and nature can no longer promise happiness and safety. Utopia has been transformed into a dark dystopia.

This new attitude to nature, as a place of horror and disaster rather than a place of recreation and happiness, is not only played out in genres like the horror and disaster film. The threatening power of nature is a theme in many different films in different genres in contemporary Norwegian cinema. For example, in the coming-of-age story *The Last Spring* (*Den siste våren*, Franciska Eliassen, 2023), a young woman becomes mentally unbalanced due to the pressure she feels about the climate crisis → Figure 2. Even though she lives in Lofoten, a strikingly beautiful place that draws many tourists to Norway every year, the pressure of the impending climate crisis and apocalyptic doom is too much for the young woman, who loses her grip on life.

Even in recent children's films, one can find examples of the trope of a small and vulnerable society threatened by nature. One example is the animated film *Just super* (*Helt super*, Rasmus A. Sivertsen, 2022). This 3D animated story about an 11-year-old gaming enthusiast Hedvig, whose father is a superhero, is in many ways a parody of superhero films. The narrative takes place in a small community surrounded by mountains and at the end, the mountain cracks open and threatens to cover the little village in a catastrophic rockslide.

These examples are not the only ones – in film after film, crises and disasters are anticipated. A new apocalyptic imaginary characterizes Norwegian cinema. Nature strikes back again and again. Even the most solid bedrock of Norway cracks and threatens the small nation with extinction.

The Norwegian dream

Two small scenes in the recent Norwegian-Polish feature film *Norwegian Dream* (Leiv Igor Devold, 2023) point to the centrality of nature in Norway, but also to how a majestic natural environment can be seen differently by people coming from outside Norway

↑ **2. *The Last Spring*, dir. Franciska Eliassen, 2023.** Film still

→ Figure 3. The main character in Devold's film is Robert, a young Polish migrant worker coming to the Norwegian west coast to work at a fish processing factory. When he looks out of the window from his new room, his co-worker Marek comments on the nature: "Beautiful, isn't it?" However, Marek continues: "But you get bored with it after half an hour." Later in the film, Robert's mother also arrives in the small Norwegian community in order to work. She looks out at the natural scenery and comments caustically: "It looks like on the moon!"

What Norwegians would characterize as a dream landscape, a place to seek comfort and peace, the immigrant workers see as desolate and boring. They are not affluent enough to have the luxury of enjoying the beautiful nature. *Norwegian Dream* is a film that sees modern Norway from the outside, from the perspective of a young

↑ **3. *Norwegian Dream*, dir. Leiv Igor Devold, 2023.** Film still

Polish migrant worker, and the film illustrates how the same landscape and nature can be seen in different ways according to who you are and what circumstances you are in. In the case of Robert, the dream turns quickly into something of a nightmare.

Nature has had and still has a special meaning in all the Scandinavian countries. In Norway, nature has been regarded as a utopian place, a special place outside of urban modernity and a place for happiness and emotional and erotic regeneration. Ecological consciousness is increasing in Norway, but with it also guilt around a nation and an economy built on oil extraction.

The new ecological consciousness and the many fears of natural disasters have turned into a form of disaster consciousness in Norwegian cinema. Many contemporary films could be characterized as part of a "concern culture," seeing the future as

a catastrophe, and imagining different scenarios where the small country of Norway is attacked by the same nature that created its affluence and that has been revered for hundreds of years.

A disaster movie like *Troll* seems on the surface to be just another genre exercise, an example of a film from a small nation with its cinema productions imitating and emulating Hollywood blockbuster cinema. But the film is also an example of the new anxiety at the heart of the modern nation of Norway, and it is a cautionary tale about a nation that has lost its connection to "mother" nature. In many contemporary Norwegian films, nature is no longer a nurturing utopian place, but a new uncaring and even hostile natural force that is ready to strike back at any moment.

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Lara Hoffmann
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Community Co-Creation: Developing Participatory Research Methods

What is the potential of cultural spaces for facilitating encounters between immigrants and other inhabitants of a community? This article discusses the development of participatory methods in the project “Community Co-Creation“ which reflects on the role of libraries and other cultural institutions in the context of migration and mobility to the rural areas of Iceland. The project further aims to explore the potential of creative practice for enabling meaningful encounters and so supporting immigrants’ inclusion in receiving communities.

Introduction

In recent years, Iceland has experienced very rapid and intense immigration. Just within the last 30 years, the foreign population grew from 2% in the beginning of the 1990s to more than 16% in January 2022[1]. The total number of inhabitants of Iceland in 2022 was 376,248 of which 61,148 were immigrants. Migration to Iceland has been predominantly labour-driven with immigrants typically getting jobs in construction, manufacturing and low-skilled service sectors. In the rural areas of Iceland, fish processing was traditionally the main industry hiring foreign workers, while currently immigration has been mostly related to the fast expanding tourism sector. The majority of immigrants are living in the capital region, but foreign-born residents can be found in almost every town in the country. However, when all regions outside the capital region are considered together, the percentage of immigrants of the total population is higher than in the capital area[2]. Yet, the distribution of immigrants across the country is quite uneven. In the capital, almost one fifth (18%) of the population is of foreign background[3], which is just a little above the national average. The Northern part of the country has the lowest share, for instance in Akureyri, the main micropolis of the region, immigrants make up for only about 6% of the total population. In contrast, in some municipalities in the South of Iceland the number of immigrants far exceeds the national average, for instance in Skaptárhreppur immigrants account for 33% of the total population and in the adjacent municipality Mýrdalshreppur, they are more than half of the local residents[4]. While Poles constitute the largest immigrant group (34% of all immigrants and 6% of the total Icelandic population)[5] people moving to Iceland are a very diverse group in terms of country of birth, age, ethnicity, educational background, class, religion, and other factors. Many immigrants arrive to do seasonal jobs, without intending to settle, however, some tend to prolong their stay. Furthermore, people come to Iceland as volunteers or artists in residence to stay for shorter periods of time.

1 Statistics Iceland, *Immigrants 16.3% of the Population of Iceland*, https://statice.is/publications/news-archive/inhabitants/immigrants-and-persons-with-foreign-background-2022/, access: May 3, 2023.

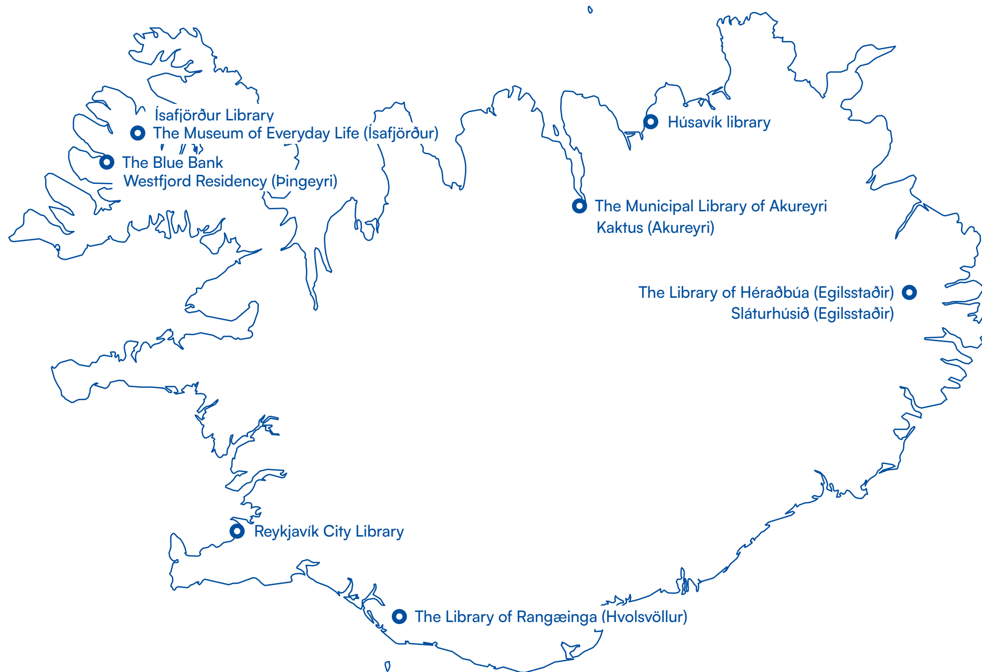
2 Þóroddur Bjarnason & Ólöf Garðarsdóttir, "Mannfjöldaþróun á Íslandi", in *Byggðafesta og Búferlaflutningar*, Þóroddur Bjarnason, ed. (Reykjavík, 2022).

3 Byggðastofnun, *Ríkisfang* Íbúa, https://www.byggdastofnun.is/is/utgefid-efni/maelabord/rikisfang, access: May 3, 2023.

4 Ibid.

5 Statistics Iceland, Immigrants 16.3% of the Population of Iceland, https://statice.is/publications/news-archive/inhabitants/immigrants-and-persons-with-foreign-background-2022/, access: May 3, 2023.

International migration to Iceland and internal migration processes change the social landscape of these places. Growing diversity and ongoing mobility pose a question about the social cohesion of smaller communities. We take this question further, asking what is the role of cultural spaces, for example libraries, museums, or artists' residencies, in responding to these challenges and if they have the potential to become places to meet for Icelanders and newcomers, both those who are planning to stay and those who are just passing through. In addition to reflecting on the potential of cultural spaces for bringing different people together, we want to examine the utility of arts and creative practices as a means of communication beyond national languages. To explore these questions, we have invited libraries, museums, cultural centres, and artist residencies in several towns in Iceland to organise events engaging members of the community. The institutions and communities involved in this project are: Reykjavík City Library, The Municipal Library of Akureyri, Kaktus (Akureyri), The Library of Héraðbúa (Egilsstaðir), Húsavík library, Ísafjörður Library, The Library of Rangæinga (Hvolsvöllur), The Museum of Everyday Life (Ísafjörður), Westfjord Residency (Þingeyri), The Blue Bank (Þingeyri), and Sláturhúsið (Egilsstaðir).



↑ Map of Iceland showing the locations of the institutions participating in this project

Community Co-Creation

Community is typically defined by a sense of shared (common) interests, locality or social structure and values[6]. It often represents a normative idea, signifying sites of physical grounding and social belonging. In contrast to urban areas, small communities, such as the places in the focus of this project, are usually characterised by "interconnectedness, interdependency, and intimacy"[7]. Rural communities tend to be imagined as relatively homogeneous groups with high levels of familiarity presumably conceived through daily face to face interactions and rooted in a shared history. This image has been increasingly challenged by mobile populations and growing diversity in rural areas, posing questions about the social inclusion of newcomers. In the ethnographic research "What Integration Looks Like in Rural Iceland", both local residents and immigrants frequently emphasised participation – along with language acquisition – as instrumental for the integration process of immigrants[8]. Participation – broadly understood as engagement in the local social life and affairs – Is mentioned as a sign but also as a means for inclusion.

In her seminal work on citizen participation from 1969, Sherry Phyllis Arnstein writes that "the idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you"[9]. Even though Arnstein reflects primarily on citizens' involvement in political decision-making, her statement can easily be applied to immigrants' civil engagement and feeling of shared responsibility for the community they are living in. The responsibility that typically comes along with social belonging beyond mere place attachment which can be produced through daily encounters. In other words, through participation and interacting with local residents immigrants can gradually develop a sense of affinity and so become part of the community.

However, in the above-mentioned research in rural towns in Iceland, immigrants' often mentioned a lack of opportunities to socialise with the local population. An ethnically segmented labour market often entails segregation of the social spaces and limited communication between locals and newcomers. Simultaneously, the economic restructuring in the rural towns resulted in declining local infrastructure;

6 Julian Rappaport, "Community", in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, Alan Barnard & Jonathan Spencer, eds. (London, 2010).

7 Erika Hayfield, "Ethics in Small Island Research: Reflexively navigating multiple relations", *Shima: The International Journal of Research into Island Cultures* 16 (2022), p. 233.

8 Unnur Dís Skaptadóttir, Anna Wojtyńska, and Pamela Innes, "Erlent starfsfólk ferðaþjónustu í minni bæjum — upplifun, félagsleg tengsl og inngilding", Íslenska þjóðfélagið in progress.

9 Sherry P. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation", *Journal of the American Planning Association* 35 (1969), p. 24.

such as local shops and businesses. Many of the services are increasingly diverted towards the tourism market or intercepted by tourists, as for example coffee houses or restaurants. Furthermore, technological advancement tends to contribute to apparent social fragmentation[10], a trend that was reinforced by the recent pandemic requiring social distancing and suspension of social gathering.

These recent changes made us wonder where the potential places for encounters could be in rural communities.

Spaces for culture encounters

Instead of trying to set up or to create places where encounters of different people can happen, we wanted to explore the already existing infrastructure of open public spaces in rural communities in Iceland. By open public spaces we mean those that can be accessed by anyone, free of charge, such as public libraries, which are still present in many towns outside of the capital area of Iceland. The general premise of the public library is to be accessible to everyone and serve the local community by connecting people and sharing knowledge. Libraries might be the last remaining indoor public space where there are no prerequisites for accessing or participating as a user[11]. Simultaneously, there is the ongoing process of extending the role of libraries beyond the sheer handling of books. Sociologist Eric Klinenberg describes libraries as social infrastructure, observing that "people forge bonds in places that have healthy social infrastructure – not because they set out to build community, but because when people engage in a sustained, recurrent interaction, particularly while doing things they enjoy, relationships inevitably grow"[12]. In addition to libraries, a considerable number of cultural institutions such as museums, co-working spaces, and artist's residencies can be found in rural areas. The underlying premise of the project is that along with libraries, they possess the capacity to become spaces of intercultural encounters, a meeting platform, that could further facilitate immigrants' participation in the local community.

A sustainable inclusive social space relies on co-created programming that hands over part of the authority to community members, including those of foreign origin. Library and information scientist Jamie Johnston argues that conversation-based

10 Dennis Snower and Steven Bosworth, "Technological Advance, Social Fragmentation and Welfare", *CESifo Working Paper* No. 8842 (2021).

11 Dögg Sigmarsdóttir, "The Exploration Process", in *Inclusive Public Spaces*, Dögg Sigmarsdóttir, Hubert Gromny & Angela Rawlings, eds. (Reykjavík, 2020), p. 11.

12 Eric Klinenberg, Palaces for the People. *How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life* (London, 2018), p. 5.

programming has the potential to "expand participants' social networks across intercultural lines and facilitate integration"[13]. For instance the Reykjavík City Library aims to open space for all and to include more citizens in the cultural programming, inviting them to explore ideas of inclusivity, belonging, safe spaces, comfort, and intercultural communication. One attempt towards co-programming is the project Stofan | A public living room at the Reykjavík Library where a group of users create individual temporary versions of social spaces at the library. These projects aim to develop new relationships between the library spaces and the future users of the library as social infrastructures that build communities. Similar efforts to involve members of the local community to participate in the programming were undertaken by the library in Húsavík, a town in the North of Iceland as well as in Hvolsvöllur. The libraries encourage members of the community to come up with ideas for events (presentations, workshops etc.) that could take place at the library.

Art-based creative methods

Since language is frequently mentioned as one of the key obstacles for participation, we aimed to explore other methods that could enable active interaction between immigrants and locals. In our analysis of an exhibition and performance evening taking place at the Reykjavík City Library on the day of the Icelandic language 2019 we discuss how creative engagement with language can empower immigrants to establish a position as non-native speakers of the language and express their emotional connection to the language which is often not considered in formal language education and migration and integration policies[14].

There is a growing body of literature indicating that creative projects applying art-based methods have the potential to facilitate cultural encounters between people of different backgrounds and thus support peoples' integration in local communities. The arts are a suitable way of encouraging immigrants' participation for several reasons. Artistic practice can enable immigrants to claim different forms of belonging[15]. A distinct advantage of artistic practice is their potential to create events

13 Jamie Johnston, "The Use of Conversation-based Programming in Public Libraries to Support Integration in Increasingly Multiethnic Societies", *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 50 (2018), p. 131.

14 Anna Wojtyńska, Lara Hoffmann, Dögg Sigmarsdóttir & Ewa Marcinek, "Intimate Engagements with Language: Creative Practices for Inclusive Public Spaces in Iceland", *Language and Intercultural Communication* 22 (2022).

15 Shannon Damery & Elsa Mescoli, "Harnessing Visibility and Invisibility through Arts Practices: Ethnographic Case Studies with Migrant Performers in Belgium", *Arts* 49 (2019).

based on nonverbal forms of expression, e.g. visual art, music, or dance, where participation is not contingent on specific language skills. Furthermore, creative practices as a means of communication potentially encourage people to express their emotions and get to know each other. According to contact theory, interactions between different people can reduce prejudice between different groups, broaden immigrants' networks and support their integration in receiving societies[16]. Participation in events facilitated at libraries can thus potentially also affect immigrants' integration in other areas of society.

There is a growing body of literature indicating that creative projects applying art-based methods have the potential to facilitate cultural encounters between people of different backgrounds and thus support peoples' integration in local communities. The arts are a suitable way of encouraging immigrants' participation for several reasons.

A few examples of creative projects already carried out in Iceland, demonstrated the opportunities provided by the arts for engaging different communities, particularly approaches that go beyond national languages or even beyond verbal language entirely. For instance, Ós Pressan, an association of writers of all origins which is publishing an annual multilingual magazine, exactly developed from a creative writing workshop organised at the Reykjavik City Library in 2015. This community of foreign-born writers, particularly Anna Valdís Kro, a founding member of Ós Pressan, has been successfully working with the library on creating space for sign language literature and community building around visual vernacular storytelling, VV Sögur. Adam Świtała, a researcher and musician who adapted the music workshop/program Tónagull into Polish which is addressed to Polish families with small children living in Iceland found that participation in the Polish meetings equipped migrants with confidence to move to Icelandic groups, ultimately leading to more interaction of the participations with the local community; both the children participating in the courses and their parents. To learn from their precious experiences, we invited Anna Valdís Kro and Adam Świtała as well as Patrycja Bączek, who is engaging the community through her dance practice, to the opening event of our Community Co-Creation project.

16 Jamie Johnston, "The Use of Conversation-based Programming…", p. 132.

Developing the Community Co-Creation Project

In our journey around Iceland that includes stops in libraries, museums, cultural centres, and artist residencies in rural regions, we intend to explore the potential of creative and art-based methods in immigrants' inclusion. During the project, each partner institution develops their own events. The decision-making regarding the type of workshop taking place at each institution and who will be facilitating it is in the hands of the partner institutions, as we consider their local knowledge essential for deciding which events would benefit and be sustainable for the communities in question. Yet, the active engagement and actual participation of citizens requires a redistribution of power. There is, as Sherry P. Arnstein observed, a "critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process"[17]. Thus, our aim is to encourage immigrants and artist with foreign backgrounds to take an active role in designing and implementing the events. Including immigrants as organizers can be both empowering as well as contributing to mutual recognition beside the stereotypical roles (given that migrants are often performing jobs that do not reflect their education or interests). Another reason is – we assume – it might lower the threshold for other immigrants to participate. Having persons of foreign origin involved in the organisation and facilitation of the event may also enable shifting between different languages, making workshops more accessible for larger groups. As Jamie Johnston argues, "These aspects of integration cannot be taught in a classroom, but must be accomplished through face-to-face interaction between members of the respective groups, which requires a bottom-up approach"[18].

A central aspect of community-based approaches in research and practice is further reciprocity: giving back to the community studied and reflecting on how inclusion can be achieved[19]. Therefore, beside academic reflection about recent changes in Icelandic society, we intend to close the project with a final meeting where participants representing different institutions can come together and exchange their experiences involving different local communities. From a practical perspective, this project is a way for libraries and cultural institutions to stretch their institutional boundaries by actively involving immigrants and other people living in Iceland in their programming and decision-making processes and thinking outside the box. For this

17 Sherry P. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation", p. 24.

18 Jamie Johnston, "The Use of Conversation-based Programming…", p. 132.

19 Heidi Eriksen, Arja Rautio, Rhonda Johnson, Catherine Koepke, Elizabeth Rink, "Ethical Considerations for Community-based Participatory Research with Sami Communities in North Finland", *Ambio* 50 (2021).

initiative to work, it is essential to create participatory projects based on bottom-up approaches which, according to Letiecq and Schmalzbauer, have a greater potential than top-down approaches to be sustainable and "lead to positive social change"[20]. By applying this co-creation method, the institutions also have the possibility to develop their program according to societal changes and thus keep their relevance in the communities. The partner institutions also get the chance to compare their different approaches in order to achieve the goal of co-creating workshops for a more inclusive society. Through the comparative element of the project, an outsider perspective on participative research methods is also a dimension that connects the partners in the cooperative phase. This is only the beginning of an exploration journey that connects research and practice on a public platform where experiences are shared. The stories told will then hopefully continue in the libraries around Iceland.

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20 Bethany Letiecq & Leah Schmalzbauer, "Community-based Participatory Research with Mexican Migrants in a New Rural Destination: A Good Fit?", *Action Research* 10 (2012), p. 247.

Zofia Boni
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Climate Crisis – an Anthropological Perspective

Climate change is a somewhat abstract subject; it is difficult to feel, touch or smell it. The study of climate change is dominated by the sciences, which examine it by modelling atmospheric, chemical, and geological data. However, the climate crisis has enormous socio-cultural significance and greatly affects our daily lives. We experience the climate crisis not only through scientific discoveries, but above all as a consequence of the changes taking place. This is why anthropological research and interdisciplinary collaboration are so crucial for a better understanding of how people are affected by climate change, how they experience it and how it impacts their daily lives. In this text, we demonstrate how anthropology investigates climate change and how it contributes to a better understanding of it, citing examples from specific studies conducted in Poland.

Climate and climate crisis research is dominated by the sciences, especially climatology, geology, geography, and physics, which is hardly surprising. Climate change is predominantly atmospheric and physical phenomena, which these disciplines are in a position to register, investigate and describe. However, as we will demonstrate in this text, they are also simultaneously socio-cultural phenomena. Climate change, its causes and consequences, is also a topic studied by the social sciences and humanities, by sociologists, cultural scientists, literary scholars, and historians. This is why interdisciplinary cooperation, which offers a holistic view of the issues under discussion, is so important for a better understanding of climate change and for identifying ways of adapting to it. Social and cultural anthropology, and its sub-discipline of environmental anthropology, can be of particular relevance, and it is this field of science and its role in comprehending the climate crisis that this text is concerned with.

Anthropology enables us to better understand the socio-cultural aspects of the climate crisis. First, it examines the anthropogenic causes of climate change. The historically shaped human role in accelerating and exacerbating climate change, and bringing about the crisis, is immense. No wonder the current geological age is referred to as the Anthropocene, which the philosopher Ewa Bińczyk, among others, addresses at length[1]. Second, anthropology studies the consequences of climate change and helps to understand how it affects the everyday experience of humans and non-human beings, i.e. the other components and subjects of the natural world. One example of such research is the work of anthropologist Małgorzata Kowalska, who is investigating Lake Niedzięgiel in the Gniezno Lake District and the changing networks of interspecies relations taking place there[2].

Ethnography is the most fundamental method in anthropological research. It involves long-term participation in the life of a given community, participatory observation, individual and group interviews, returning to the same people and places, and analysis of documents to capture the processes and changes taking place. Like all qualitative research, this methodology is marked by an individual and localised approach, which prevents simplistic generalisations or the transfer of research findings to other regions. Anthropological research is deeply rooted in a specific time and place, but always examines the phenomena occurring within a wider socio-cultural and environmental context.

1 Ewa Bińczyk, *Epoka człowieka. Retoryka i marazm antropocenu* (Warszawa, 2018).

2 Małgorzata Kowalska, “Antropologia więcej niż ludzka jako praktyka badawcza i propozycja etyczna”, *Etnografia Polska* 66 (2022), p. 93–111.

First, anthropological research allows us to explore the meanings, cultural codes, and political relations underpinning knowledge and interpretations of climate change. Second, such research helps us to understand the relevance to contemporary debates of historical and cultural context, both locally and globally. Third, anthropology provides a holistic view that factors in the social system and nature as well as the changes within them.

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Anthropologist and geographer Jessica Barnes and her co-authors have identified three areas of anthropological research that allow us to further our understanding of and adaptation to climate change[3]. First, anthropological research allows us to explore the meanings, cultural codes, and political relations underpinning the knowledge and interpretations of climate change. Second, such research helps us to understand the relevance to contemporary debates of historical and cultural context, both locally and globally. Third, anthropology provides a holistic view that factors in the social system and nature as well as the changes within them.

Some areas of the Earth have already been catastrophically affected by climate change. Although countries in the global North are contributing greatly to the climate crisis, its consequences are felt primarily by societies in the global South. Threats that seem abstract from our local perspective, such as flooding caused by rising water levels, are devastating for insular communities, such as the island of Vanuatu in Oceania. Still, the consequences of climate change are also present in Europe, including Poland. We would like to take a closer look at two examples of climate crisis research from an anthropological perspective to illustrate more precisely the topic at hand. We will briefly discuss increasing heat as a consequence of climate change and new technologies as a means of adapting to it.

Embodying urban heat

The increasingly frequent and longer heat waves are a consequence of anthropogenic climate change[4]. There are places on Earth that are already reaching temperatures which humans can no longer bear. The heat is particularly severe in larger cities as a result of what is known as the Urban Heat Island (UHI). This is the result of an urban material and energy infrastructure which makes temperatures a few degrees higher on average in city centres than outside the city. Although more frequent and longer heat waves are a biophysical phenomenon, the occurrence of UHI is a biophysical consequence of human activity. For example, the growing number of air conditioning units, while providing relief to individuals, exacerbates the problem on a city-wide scale. Similarly, how heat is measured, understood, and portrayed in public life, such as in the media, how it is managed by policymakers, and how heat is experienced by groups of people who are particularly vulnerable to its negative consequences are all socio-cultural processes.

3 Jessica Barnes et al., "Contribution of anthropology to the study of climate change", *Nature Climate Change* 3 (2013), pp. 541–544.

4 IPCC. *Climate Change 2022. Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Summary for Policymakers*, https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/

As the sociologist Eric Klinenberg observes, to understand holistically the prevalence of heatwaves and their consequences we should not only measure whether a particular heatwave is greater than the previous one or how often they occur, but also study how they affect people's daily lives[5]. One's reaction to heat is influenced by age, gender, or socio-economic situation, as well as by the place of residence. Older people are a group particularly vulnerable to the negative consequences of heat stress, including increased morbidity and mortality, due to a number of bio-social processes. With age, physiology changes, including, for example, the body's ability to thermoregulate[6]. Older people are also more prone to illnesses. Their social situation is also affected, as seniors are more likely to be lonely, have fewer contacts with family and friends, which has an adverse impact on their mental and physical health, and makes it less likely that someone will check on them during hot weather to see how they are coping, whether they are hydrating properly, whether they need anything, etc.

Adaptation to heat is culturally determined. Under the EmCliC project[7], we carry out studies in Madrid and Warsaw. In Spain, which has geographically and historically experienced heat for a long time, both people and urban areas are better adapted. This can be seen, for example, in the architecture: the buildings are light-coloured, constructed with appropriate materials, the vast majority of flats have external blinds. In contrast, flats, buildings, and whole cities in Poland have so far been better adapted to cold temperatures. Differences can also be seen in cultural practices related, for example, to clothing or meal times. In Spain, it is quite typical to have a siesta during the afternoon, which allows you to relax, stay out of the sun in the middle of the day when temperatures are highest, and cool down a bit. Dinners, on the other hand, are eaten very late, only after the city has cooled down a bit. Such cultural practices are evidence of a long-term adaptation to high temperatures that we have not yet developed in Poland.

The cultural and historical adaptation to heat in Spain does not really show that heat is not a problem there and does not negatively affect the lives of many people, especially those working outdoors, such as cleaners or construction workers, but also the elderly. One of the consequences of the heat, which our ethnographic research

5 Eric Klinenberg, *Heatwave: A social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*, 2nd ed. (Chicago—London, 2015).

6 Katarzyna Broczek, *Health-Related Effects of Heat Exposure*. Zenodo 2022, https://zenodo.org/record/5798640, access: May 15, 2023.

7 The project "Embodying Climate Change. A Transdisciplinary Study of Urban Overheating" is funded by the National Science Centre under the EEA Financial Mechanism 2014–2021 (2019/35/J/HS6/03992).

Today, mankind is faced with the great challenge of how to continue what we consider to be the grand achievements of civilisation: the scope and speed of transport, the availability of cheap electricity and heat, large urban agglomerations, the speed of services, or the use of many useful household appliances.

in both Madrid and Warsaw has shown, is that the participants in our research experience weakness, pain, and a deterioration in their health and well-being. Long days, and even more so nights, when the temperature does not dip, are exhausting and tiring for the elderly and result in isolation. Many people choose to stay at home to avoid going out, thereby cancelling planned social events or doctor's appointments. The longer this situation continues, the more isolated and lonely the elderly beome. In turn, there are also people who cannot stay at home because their flats get so hot that they simply become unsafe. And at the same time, they are unable to cover the costs associated with installing air conditioning. It turns out that there is a lack of places, common spaces, where such people can spend time and cool down.

Furthermore, our research indicates that older people often feel that they are already far too hot at lower temperatures than those that define the official heat wave. In Warsaw, for example, participants in the qualitative research indicated that they were already too hot at 25°, while the official heatwave and the associated warning systems only start at temperatures above 30°. In Madrid, by contrast, there are as many as three different alert systems, but apart from providing information, they do not offer support for the elderly during a heatwave.

If we look at heat not just through the lens of changing atmospheric trends or calculating temperature and humidity indices, but from an anthropological perspective, we can analyse it as a socio-cultural phenomenon. This helps us to understand what in urban infrastructure influences heat, what are both urban and individual adaptation strategies, and how heat is experienced by different groups of people, especially those more sensitive and more vulnerable to heat stress. Only a combination of biophysical and socio-cultural perspectives will allow us to better grasp what heat is, what consequences it entails, and how we can effectively adapt to it.

New technologies as a way of adaptation

In addition to studying people's experiences and socio-cultural relations and structures, anthropology studies technologies. Here it comes close to social science and technology studies (STS), which deals with the social aspect of technologies[8]. It analyses the impact of technologies on the shifts taking place in nature, as well as their role in adapting to these changes. The technologies of energy generation that have, since the 19th century, accompanied mankind's staggering economic development and increased the comfort of everyday life, such as the steam engine with all its modern variations, have also contributed to enormous environmental degradation. Today, mankind is faced with the great challenge of how to continue what we consider to be the grand achievements of civilisation: the scope and speed of transport, the availability of cheap electricity and heat, large urban agglomerations, the speed of services, or the use of many useful household appliances.

Naturally, these goods are not distributed evenly across all societies. We often encounter a divide between societies in the global South and the North, the former being considered poorer, while the North is perceived as prosperous. This is a conventional division, but there is no denying that if one were to visit an average household in the United States, Canada, or Germany, one would find more household appliances, robots, and other machines to improve daily life there than in, for example, Argentina or Nigeria. Polish households differ in the quality and quantity of appliances, too. This has a number of consequences. A lot of appliances in the home can mean high electricity consumption for daily activities. On the other hand, very modern appliances may be more energy efficient. It is also significant what sources the energy we use comes from – renewable or fossil – and how we organise these activities in the household. Therefore, anthropology seeks to understand what our choices, even those everyday ones concerning technology, can mean for our relationship with the environment and whether our lifestyles and daily practices are a greater or lesser burden on the planet.

The plethora of technological options that can accompany us at home, in the office, in public spaces, on means of transport or in hotels, as well as the variety of configurations they create locally, invites anthropological reflection on the relationship between humans and technology, the role of technology in the organisation of local societies, and the meaning we attribute to them. The battle against the global climate crisis has blacklisted some technologies. These include e.g. internal

8 Energizing the World: STS and Anthropology Towards Social Studies of New Energies (OPUS NCN 2017/25/B/HS6/00880).

Anthropology, therefore, opts for a cautious, attentive, and holistic consideration of the significance and role of specific technologies. When analysing local means of transport, it is tempting to marvel at the clean electric cars, buses, bicycles, or scooters. However, a broader look at the life cycle of batteries, an essential component for these clean vehicles, from lithium extraction to battery recycling, demonstrates new dangers for both people and the environment.

combustion engines, coal-fired power plants or any energy-inefficient household appliance. In turn, other technologies have been hailed as environmentally friendly, such as electric vehicles or energy generation from the sun or wind. These classifications are not necessarily clear-cut, as phasing out coal combustion means economic collapse and job losses for many regions, while photovoltaic panels or batteries for electric cars make humanity dependent on the extraction of metals such as silicon or lithium, whose acquisition and processing result in new geopolitical dependencies[9]. A case in point is the huge dominance of Chinese companies in countries such as Argentina, Chile, and Bolivia, which reproduce the extractivist relationships and practices which are familiar from fossil fuel extraction. The term extractivism refers to a type of activity that leaves no taxes, resources, jobs, technology, knowledge, and skills at the site of extraction; the only thing left behind is a degraded environment and areas inhospitable to human and animal life[10].

Anthropology, therefore, opts for a cautious, attentive, and holistic consideration of the significance and role of specific technologies. When analysing local means of transport, it is tempting to marvel at the clean electric cars, buses, bicycles, or scooters. However, a broader look at the life cycle of batteries, an essential component for these clean vehicles, from lithium extraction to battery recycling, demonstrates new dangers for both people and the environment. Furthermore, anthropology seeks to

9 Mathieu Blondeel, Michael J. Bradshaw, Gavin Bridge, Caroline Kuzemko, “The geopolitics of energy system transformation: A review”, *Geography Compass* 15,7 (2021); Vincent Bos, Marie Forget, “Global Production Networks and the lithium industry: A Bolivian perspective”, *Geoforum* 125 (2021), p. 168–180.

10 Energizing the World: STS and Anthropology Towards Social Studies of New Energies (OPUS NCN 2017/25/B/HS6/00880).

understand why we succumb to the promises of some technologies, while others do not seem as attractive or relevant to us. This knowledge is also very useful in the context of climate change adaptation. the technologies we choose as societies will further affect our relationship with the environment, with each other, and with other species. The way out of the current crisis has not been determined. It is rather a combination of different decisions and relationships that we choose or are forced to enter into by living in our local communities. Therefore, an essential demand of anthropology is to reflect on this way, considering the role and importance of technology.

How does anthropology contribute to climate change research?

Anthropological research provides a more holistic understanding of what climate change is, how it affects our lives, and how we can adapt to it. As we have shown using the example of urban heat and new technologies, anthropological analysis allows us to comprehend human and non-human experience, the larger processes in their historical and cultural context, and the impact of political and social relations on nature and consequently on us. Anthropological analysis helps us to better understand the complex causes of the climate crisis and to think more comprehensively about the consequences of change, especially the inequalities associated with it, and ways of adaptation.

A close insight into human activity, which anthropology obtains through ethnographic research, i.e. long-term observation, conversation, and interaction, helps us to understand who we are today and how we contribute to the changes in our planet. This participation varies from one part of the world to another as we look at nature and the species that accompany us differently and build different relationships with them. The position of anthropology is that this close and in-depth view of modern humans and their daily activities provides an excellent starting point for bringing about change. In this way, the anthropological perspective is always bottom-up, avoiding the fantasy of large-scale change projects without the grassroots, local participation of people themselves.

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Stéphanie Barillé
Markus Meckl

The Romance of Winter in Northern Iceland

This contribution discusses the romanticisation of winter in the Arctic region in migrants' narratives and cultural productions. Iceland has been diligent in using winter aesthetics by sustaining romanticised representations of the harsh and dark Icelandic winter. This aestheticization has impregnated migrants' stories who project these idealisations of the winter into their own narratives. Using ethnography and an analysis of cultural productions, we explore the ways in which winter aesthetics are portrayed and idealised in Icelandic cultural productions and their impact on migrants' discourses and experiences. The analysis of winter aesthetics in cultural productions and within the participants' experiences of mobility is useful to understand how perceptions of Icelandic nature and the weather in Iceland are constructed and assigned. This exploration will help to understand how migration in the Arctic leads to reimagining interactions between the environment, the landscape and the humans who inhabit it.

Since Beowulf in the 7th century, winter has served as literary inspiration to medieval and present-day authors[1], and literature has greatly contributed to the romanticisation of the "winter pastoral"[2], an idealised representation of rural life in the winter. Among a collection of European masterpieces, Bruegel's *Hunters in The Snow* from 1565 is conspicuously displayed in the refined Picture Gallery of Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum. Described as the "first and most prominent winterlandscape of European painting"[3], the piece depicts a group of hunters returning to a snow-bound village with their dogs and their meagre game → Figure 1. The emergence of winter landscapes in European painting signified a change in the ways humans relate to their natural environment, as they become a spiritual tool for contemplation as well as a mirror for intense human emotions[4]. The landscape paintings of the nineteenth century have been a source of inspiration for the representation of landscapes in contemporary Nordic Noir television drama[5]. The Nordic Noir genre represented in film, television, and literature has gained popularity across the world and often features winter landscapes.

Eighteen century travel writing simultaneously depicts Iceland as a "dreary country [...] filled by [...] appalling misfortunes" and a place and a people that should command sympathy and respect for despite being "surrounded by difficulties, and struggling with poverty, [the people of Iceland have] emerged from the barbarism which then shrouded Europe"[6]. Portraying Iceland and its long dark winters as an unhospitable and wild environment allowed its inhabitant to represent themselves as a strong, resilient and independent people making a living amid this harshness. In XXIst century, the tourism industry and cultural productions have been increasingly drawn to use the imagery of winter to make Iceland and its landscapes exotic, desirable or unique. In the highly popular HBO show, Game of Thrones, the images from "beyond the wall" are filmed in Iceland. We start our chapter by exploring representations of winter in Icelandic cultural productions and continue by examining the impact of these representations in migrants' narratives.

1 Jane Ciabattari, *Cold comfort: Why authors love winter*, BBC, 17 February 2014, https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20140216-cold-comfort-reading-for-winter, access: May 1, 2023.

2 Aslaug Nyrnes, "The nordic winter pastoral: A heritage of romanticism", in *Ecocritical Perspectives on Children's Texts and Cultures: Nordic Dialogues*, Nina Goga, Lykke Guanio-Uluru, Bjørg Oddrun Hallås, Aslaug Nyrnes, eds. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 75–89.

3 Philip McCouat, "The emergence of the winter landscape: Bruegel and his predecessors", *Journal of Art in Society* (2014), https://www.artinsociety.com/the-emergence-of-the-winter-landscape.html, access: May 1, 2023.

4 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_landscapes_in_Western_art, access: May 1, 2023.

5 Kim Toft Hansen & Anne Marit Waade, *Locating Nordic Noir: From Beck to The Bridge* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

6 Arthur Dillon, *A Winter in Iceland and Lapland* (London, 1840), p. s. 24.

↑ 1. Pieter Bruegel, *The Hunters in the Snow*, 1565, oil on panel, Museum of Art History in Vienna

In Trapped *or* Katla*, two popular Icelandic television series available on the streaming platform Netflix, the landscape and the weather act as unsettling features that transport the viewer to an unhospitable place where death and suffering could be at any corner. It is in this appropriation of winter aesthetics that the exotic North and Icelandicness are portrayed and conceived.*

Winter in Icelandic cultural productions

"Everything is more beautiful when it's below –20 degrees"[7], such is the headline of an online article published in March 2023 on The Icelandic National Broadcasting Service Rúv. The Icelandic media is using the popularity of Nordic Noir to romantice the Icelandic winter, turning it into an exotic place. Nordic Noir is "a term associated with a number of books, films, and television series that have emanated from the region of Scandinavia in northern Europe"[8]. Although Nordic Noir is mostly rooted in the Northern latitudes, scholars insist on the fluidity of the genre across locations since Nordic Noir aesthetics and ambience travel beyond the Nordic region. Television scholar Glen Creeber defines this genre of crime fiction as a "heady mixture of bleak naturalism, disconsolate locations and morose detectives"[9]. Scholars examining the significance of the landscape in the Nordic Noir genre go as far as claiming that locations and landscapes become central characters in Nordic crime fiction[10].

If we turn our attention to appropriations of winter aesthetics in Nordic Noir novels and television, we see that most of these cultural productions rely heavily on winter and snow landscapes, as well as bleak and desolate locations. The "parents" of contemporary Icelandic crime fiction Arnaldur Indridason and Yrsa Sigurðardóttir have published several books in English where winter and darkness feature heavily on the covers. Another novelist of Nordic Noir crime novels, Ragnar Jónasson, has published twelve books in English, of which nine depict winter or heavy

7 https://www.ruv.is/english/2023-03-11-everything-is-more-beautiful-when-its-below-20-degrees, access: May 1, 2023.

8 Annette Hill & Sue Turnbull, "Nordic noir", in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice* (2017).

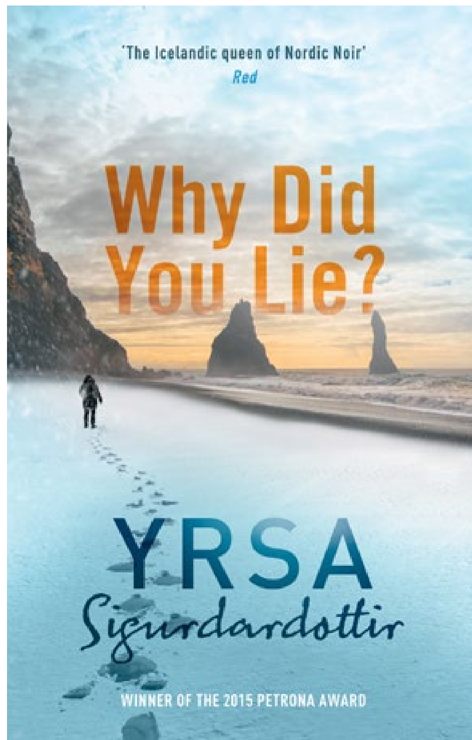
9 Glen Creeber, *The Television Genre Book* (London, 2015), p. 21.

10 Les Roberts, "Landscapes in the frame: exploring the hinterlands of the British procedural drama", *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 14,3 (2016), pp. 364–385.

snow on the cover → Figure 2. Another crime fiction novel by Icelandic translator Quentin Bates, *Summerchill*, is set at the end of a hot summer in Reykjavík, and yet the cover of the book reveals an Icelandic snow-bound road in what seems to be the depths of winter. This heavy reliance on winter aesthetics is no doubt connected to the interest in the Nordic Noir genre which has boomed in recent years, which uses the cold climate of northermost regions to create danger and terror[11] as well as melancholy[12]. In Icelandic crime fiction novels, the winter and the snow can serve as additional elements to reinforce feelings of risk and insecurity. The same can be said about Icelandic Noir television, where the use of images and soundscapes enhance the possibility of something unwelcome or unpleasant happening. In *Trapped* or *Katla*, two popular Icelandic television series available on the streaming platform Netflix, the landscape and the weather act as unsettling features that transport the viewer to an unhospitable place where death and suffering could be at any corner. It is in this appropriation of winter aesthetics that the exotic North and Icelandicness are portrayed and conceived.

Certain images are recurrent in Icelandic cultural productions, and the construction of the exotic North occurs in television, film and literature through winter representations and in particular heavy snow and wind, blizzards, and storms. Such representations are contributing to the production of exoticism; Iceland has increasingly been seen as an exotic destination for intrepid travellers, especially in winter. Icelandic nature is copiously highlighted in television series, and the latter often mirror the Icelandic landscape with the characters: in *Trapped*, filmed in Seyðisfjörður in East Iceland and in Siglufjörður in Northern Iceland, chief of police Andri Ólafsson is dishevelled and tormented, while the weather outside is inclement. The name of the series in Icelandic is even more telling of the analogy that exists between the landscape and the characters: *Ófærð* signifies 'impassable' and the term is referred to when roads are closed due to the weather conditions. In Arnaldur Indriðason's novels, inspector Erlendur Sveinsson is as miserable as the cold winters of Reykjavík in which some of the crime stories are set. Moreover, he is obsessed by the disappearance of his brother during a storm when they were children; the landscape and the weather, responsible for this dramatic turn of events, have shaped Erlendur's future by transforming his grief into tenacity. If he cannot entirely comprehend what happened to his brother, Erlendur has become an inspector to help others find answers to the tragic end of their loved ones. From emotional disturbance to the weather outside, the thematic of the storm runs through all of Indriðason's novels.

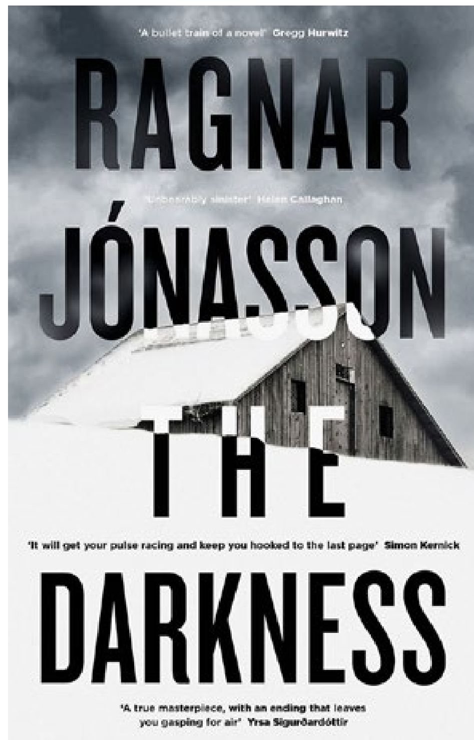
11 Jane Ciabattari, *Cold Comfort*.
12 Kim Toft Hansen & Anne Marit Waade, *Locating Nordic Noir*.

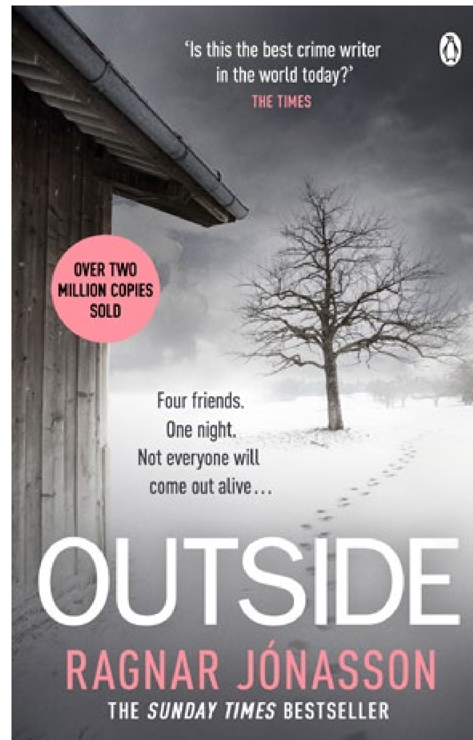


↑ **2. Covers of the English editions of *Why Did You Lie?*, *Strange Shores*, *The Darkness* and *Outside***

Although the production of these images suggests that life in the North is full of melancholy and hardships, the effect on the audience is often fascination and wonder[13]. This can be explained by the fact that these landscapes, these characters, and these stories are intrinsically out of the ordinary for the international audience of Nordic Noir. The appeal of the genre is rooted in this distinctiveness. This idea resonates with XIXth-century travel writing depicting Iceland as a land of extremes and ambiguity, where the harshness of the landscape can only match the resilience of its people[14]. The stereotypes of Iceland and Icelandic national identity are used in television and literature depicting the landscapes of the country and the lives that people live there. Prevalent imaginaries of Iceland as an extraordinary location are at play in Nordic Noir cultural productions which highlight the exoticism of the country and use it as

13 Ibid.
14 Peter Davidson, *The Idea of North* (Reaktion Books, 2005).





an extension of the Arctic North[15]. These images and imaginaries of the Arctic North have not only been used in cultural productions but in tourism and nation-branding campaigns, and they have found resonance in the discourse of migrant communities across Iceland. It is to these discourses and narratives that we now turn.

Winter in migrants' narratives

During our ethnographies spanning several years in Northern Iceland, we have listened to migrants discuss the highs and the lows of living in Iceland, and to their stories and thoughts on daily life, employment, education, gender, childcare, health, or discrimination. Icelandic nature, the landscape and the weather were never at the forefront of the discussions, but they were always made mention of. Before we turn our attention to the Icelandic winter specifically, we want to show how the portrayal of

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15 Katrín Anna Lund, Kristína Loftsdóttir & Michael Leonard, "More than a stopover: Analysing the postcolonial image of Iceland as a gateway destination", *Tourist Studies* 17,2 (2017), pp. 144–163.

Respect and appreciation of the winter grows into a form of cultural identification for migrants living in the Icelandic Arctic North, who become co-producers of local resilience.

Iceland as an exotic Arctic space has permeated the discourse of migrants, and how it allows migrants to emphasise their adaptability and resilience. Maria and Lena[16], two women from continental Europe, explain the reasons that took them to the North of Iceland to settle and live; Maria wanted to "explore the beautiful North", while Lena wanted "to discover the island and enjoy the still wild nature of Ultima Thule". Lena's careful wording, "still wild", indicates her anxiety about the future which may be related either to the increase of tourism of the past decade, or to climate anxiety. Both these anxieties speak to the potential lack of wild and natural spaces in the future, which may spark more appreciation for the natural world and landscapes in the present. Furuseth explains how snow and ice have become "grievable entities" in Nordic contemporary fiction, and more research is needed to explore how people's emotional attachments and representations of seasonal aesthetics are connected to anxieties about the future[17].

From migrants' narratives, two opposite opinions were usually voiced about the winter in Iceland: it was either something to endure or something to cherish. Seasonal depression, difficulty to cope with the lack of light and the cold, and the abundance of snow as an impediment were discussed by some; while the beauty of the snow, the enjoyment of the dark and feeling the power of nature in the blizzards were discussed by others. It is to these narratives that romanticises winter that we wish to focus on. We start by showing how the harsh Icelandic winters have been recuperated and transformed into "charming" experiences, as exemplified by five other migrants. Cleo explains: "You know, the winter is actually not that bad. And it's even charming…", while Sol discusses how Iceland "is kind of a paradise for me". Another migrant, Matthias, continues: "The long winters never bothered me. I actually like it, I like the storms…". For these migrants, the beauty of winter brings charm and a sense of wellbeing to their experience of living in Iceland. Elaine explains: "I was happily surprised when I arrived in Akureyri, because it was the winter thing with the little candles, the snow, all that, it was the spirit of Christmas and the representation we

16 All names have been modified.
17 Sissel Furuseth, "Nordic Contemporary Fiction Grieving the Loss of Snow", *NordEuropa Forum* (2021), https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/handle/18452/24556, access: May 1, 2023.

have of it". Another migrant, Sierra, explains how she learned to fully appreciate life in Iceland by learning to love darkness and the winter. Coupled with the endless days of summer, the Icelandic winter can set people up for the perfect life:

> *I came here when it was dark, completely dark, and if you feel that you can't stay here in the wintertime in your future it will never become your dream to stay here. But I think that the sun is already coming, the days are faster, and I will miss the darkness…* […] *I've already fell in love with the darkness, so if you love the darkness here, this darkness that is the worst, you will love also the summer-time for sure, so you will never leave.*

Sierra's complete idealisation of life in Iceland reminds us of the impact the seasons and the landscape can have on human emotions: awe, fascination, a slight terror maybe ("the worst") but above all, love and adoration for the elements and the life which is about to be lived indefinitely ("you will never leave"). Winter is also associated with purity, silence and authenticity. Two migrants express their concerns regarding the increase of tourism in connection with their experience of winter:

> *I like that [the North] is totally Iceland, not Reykjavík where there are more foreigners and tourism, even though here it is growing, you feel like you are in Iceland, at least in winter. It's close to the nature, you feel like in a luxury society, going to the swimming pool and being almost alone.*

> *Well there is not too many [people] here anyway. First it was strange for me but then I got used to it. Now during summer I am even annoyed that there are so many tourists here!* [laughing] *In winter I can go with a friend for a coffee and we are the only clients in the coffeehouse.*

The first excerpt shows the relationship between the peace of winter and authenticity. In this narrative, the North of Iceland is "totally Iceland", and winter is intrinsically connected to this region and to authenticity; on the other hand, the

capital of Iceland, Reykjavík, is suggested to be "lacking". This idea may be influenced by discourses and media portrayals of Reykjavík as depreciated by tourism and its accompanying Airbnb's and puffin shops. The North of Iceland comes with the idea of the authentic, and like the Arctic for the international traveller, "prompted and visualized as remote, 'clean', and unpolluted"[18]. Both excerpts show that the crowded summers in Northern Iceland are perceived as an anomaly, a break occurring during an otherwise genuine and undisturbed existence. This portrayal of the Arctic North as pristine and pure is reappropriated and re-localised by migrants in the North of Iceland, which is then re-imagined as a place of authenticity where unspoiled nature and an authentic lifestyle prosper alongside each other. The migrants' narratives above suggest that the good life is to be lived during winter in the North of Iceland, mirroring the themes of the romantic rural pastoral. Moreover, similarly to the audience who experiences wonder at the suggestion that life in the North is challenging in cultural productions[19], migrants' narratives we have used in this chapter unveil an appreciation for the beauty of winter despite its harshness – it is possible that milder and more forgiving winters would not inspire such feelings of awe. The brutality of the weather impacts many aspects of the self-identity of those who live in Iceland, who learn to develop and value resilience. Those living in the Icelandic North can identify with the valorous and resilient people described by eighteenth century writing. There is no doubt that the development of resilience as a Nordic attribute is connected to the environment[20]. Respect and appreciation of the winter grows into a form of cultural identification for migrants living in the Icelandic Arctic North, who become co-producers of local resilience.

In this increasingly globalised and "overheated" world where everything is 'too full, too fast'[21], Iceland has managed to capitalise on a successful nation-branding and promotion campaign highlighting the charms of this secluded island of the North Atlantic. This success draws millions of travellers to the country every year, as well as thousands of migrants looking for job opportunities or a lifestyle more suited to their needs and desires. The combination of the success of Nordic Noir cultural productions, as well as anxieties leading to cherish snow, glaciers and natural marvels, has also drawn attention to the Arctic North and its perceived wonders. The portrayal of the North of Iceland as an exceptional space has been

18 Katrin Anna Lund, Kristina Loftsdóttir & Michael Leonard, "More than a stopover", p. 143.

19 Kim Toft Hansen & Anne Marit Waade, *Locating Nordic Noir*.

20 Megina Baker & Judith Ross-Bernstein, "No bad weather, only bad clothing: Lessons on resiliency from Nordic early childhood programs", in *Thinking critically about environments for young children: Bridging theory and practice*, Lisa P. Kuh, ed. (New York and London, 2014), pp. 49–69.

21 Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Overheating: An anthropology of accelerated change* (London, 2016).

established both by local and national promotion work, and is reflected in the views of some migrants, who have come to see this place as exotic and unique. These narratives embrace and embody the cultivation of a timeless and authentic space, somehow removed from the contingencies of modernity and its constraints – especially in winter.

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