



UiT The Arctic University of Norway

**Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education**

## **To Know by Hands**

*Following three practices of resource extraction:*

*A study on connections between the sensorial, the material, and the environment,  
in Troms, Norway.*

**Margit Reppen**

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Has one really done multispecies fieldwork without also thanking the non-human beings one has met during fieldwork? I am not so sure. And so although you probably cannot read, I do express my gratitude to all I have met that are of other species than mine. I may value my own family more than I do you, yet I am also dependent on you for my existence, and so I will attempt to show you my respects, whenever I encounter you throughout my life.

## **Abstract**

This thesis takes on a sensorial approach to discuss relations between uses of natural resources and connections between humans and nature. Through following three people making use of natural resources in different ways, I argue for a particular kind of knowledge that is tightly linked together with sensorial experiences. I argue that these knowledges require a understanding of the more-than-human world, meaning that of other species, and the local environments they are in. Furthermore I argue for a focus on sensorial knowledge as a way to understand societal developments through a broader lens, that not only focuses on humans in society, but that includes an acknowledgement of the importance of the non-human in our world.

**KEYWORDS:** Senses, multispecies anthropology, embodied knowledge, visual anthropology, natural resources, memories, handicraft, environment, nature and culture.

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# 1. Introduction

This thesis is an investigation on the connections between the sensorial, the material, and the environment in Troms, in northern Norway. Throughout this written thesis, I will introduce three people who all engage in resource extraction from their surrounding environment in some kind of way. I will describe experiences from walking with Trine around her cabin in Lyngen, searching for materials to dye wool with. I will describe a fish-tanning course held by Hilde in Sørkjosen, and an experience from floating in a river with John-Olav, also close to Sørkjosen, in Nordreisa. These activities may seem rather different, but I will argue that they do in fact have similarities, in particular in relation the centrality of the sensorial in these experiences. I will moreover argue that in fact the differences between these experiences, has enabled me to see the sensorial experiences more clearly. And furthermore that the different experiences may open up for some interesting reflections on the connection between the sensorial, the material, and the environment.

All of these three people engage in handicrafts in some kind of way. Trine dyes wool and knits, Hilde engages in leather-work, and John-Olav makes his own flies for fly fishing. Yet they all also engage in activities of material or resource collection. In a time and in a country where products and materials are available both through physical and online stores, one may wonder why people still want to engage in such slow processes of resource extraction, as it relies on so much work, and as there are cheaper products available to buy. Through this thesis I will argue that the activities does not only equate to the action of making handicrafts, or the fact of having an object. Moreover the activities are tied together with an interest in the environment, and the different elements in them. I will argue that there is a specific kind of knowledge-making that goes into the activities of my participants, that I see as tightly related to the sensorial experiences of them. My research question goes as such:

**What can a focus on the sensorial experiences related to use of natural resources tell us about the connections between humans and nature?**

I will take on a approach that relates to the sensorial experiences of these various activities, and furthermore argue how I have come to see these as part of knowledge-creation, that is created through practice, and through interaction.

## 2. Why this project?

I want to provide some reflections on how and why this exact project came to be. The focus for my master project has turned out to be quite close to my heart thematically. My film 'To know by Hands' starts with an introduction of my personal relations to the themes that the film portrays. I will relate shortly to this here, before I further relate to how my own family history may be related to wider societal changes. As I will explain later on, I started off this project with a slightly different focus. However, the focus that it now has with the focus on use of natural materials in handicraft, turned out to be a thematic a lot closer to my heart than I perhaps thought at the time when the field led me into this topic.

As explained in the film, I come from a family that have been very active in making handicraft. What I did not reflect on so much as I chose the topic for my research was however the fact that many of my older family members also have been using materials from their surrounding environment to engage in handicraft. Although this is the personal story of my family, I find that it ties in with bigger societal changes relating to both to handicrafts, and to use of natural materials. First however, I will describe some more in depth the changes within my family, before I relate to the wider context.

The family members I have grown up with have always been occupied with some kind of handicrafts, often knitting or embroidering. My grandmother, on my mother's side, sew almost all the clothes of my mom and her siblings growing up. In addition, she also worked for a while in a shirt factory, so making clothes was part of her living income. For her descendants handicrafts and making things is more of a hobby, and none of my current family members make a living off such work. Now, these activities are not particularly related to use of materials from their surroundings. However, as I started talking with my family about my project, I was reminded that earlier family members were in fact also more engaged in using natural materials. My grandad died when I was very young, and my grandma quickly moved into a nursing home. However, my grandparents' house continued to be kept within my family as I grew up. I remember seeing walking sticks made of wood, and being told that my grandad had made them from wood he found in the area, and used them when hiking or going to their cabin in the mountain. As I started talking with my mother about this, she could also tell me about other projects my grandad had, one of which were included in the film (00:00:18).



But how does this relate to societal changes? Together with increasing globalization and international commodification, products produced far away became available to buy for a cheaper price for the Norwegian population. As a result, today there are for instance a lot fewer factories that make clothing in Norway than was the case during my grandmother's time (Hagen 2019). Since *we* do not have to make things from the bottom up anymore, fewer have a relation to the natural resources in the same way as they did in the past.

The wider interest in handicrafts within Norway seems to have increased in the later years however, mostly related to ideas of sustainability. During covid, a lot of people picked up an interest in handicrafts, perhaps mostly to make time pass. These are contexts that also have influenced me and my interest in handicrafts in general. The aspect that has manifested the most engagement in relation to my thesis, is the alienation I have felt to the production process itself. Most of my clothes and belongings are produced far away, and as such I have had a huge distance from the production process. I have had a sense from stories told by my current family members, that my earlier family members had a closer relation to this process. My interest in researching handicraft use in Norway, aspired from this feeling of alienation, and a longing to get to know how things may be made here, as they have been in the past.

## **2.1 Development of project**

Before the start of my fieldwork, my idea was to study handicrafts in relation to identity expressions. What is different from being up here in the north of Norway rather than further south where I grew up, is the high number of Sámi and Kven populations. The Sámi history I had heard quite a lot about, and been taught about in school, while the Kven people and their history was something rather unknown to me in the beginning of my masters. So, I figured it would be interesting to study ideas of belonging through a focus on Kven handicrafts. And so this was the research focus I started with when beginning my fieldwork. Bear in mind that I did not have any personal relations with people with Kven belonging from before, nor many Sámi for that matter. And so my only knowledge was through what I had read. I got in contact with Hilde in Nordreisa, who makes accessories that may relate to Kven identity expressions. During my first field trips to Nordreisa, I started seeing more the complexity of ideas of belonging. I saw how important the matter of Kven belonging was to some people, and how they were fighting for recognition within the wider society of Norway. I experienced a crisis where I was not sure what path to follow. I very much would like for my thesis to be a

project that could help lift Kven voices, yet I also saw how complex the issues were. In a period where people are actively fighting for recognition, what is told publicly might become very important and carry consequences for the people themselves. I realized the impact I possibly could have through my project, yet I also had a strong feeling that perhaps it was a bigger project than what I would be able to give justification for given the timescope of my fieldwork, as well as my own capacities.

Hilde introduced me to the term of “Tre stammers møte” translated as something like “three tribes meeting”. She described how it was used to describe places with a high number of both Kven, Sami, and Norwegian population. After some reflections I started trying to talk more with people about “Tre stammers møte”, and I saw how much easier this term opened up for discussions with people. I believe the presence of the camera also had a big impact on what topics people were open to talk about. The notion of “Tre stammers møte” was very relevant in Nordreisa, and so if I was staying there throughout my fieldwork this definitely could have posed an interesting research. However, this is a topic that I believe would have liked to spend some more time on. I believe that mapping out a research solely focusing on the term would have been quite encompassing. I therefore decided to change the focus furthermore. Since Hilde also focuses a lot on use of natural materials in her work, a turn towards this felt like a natural change. However, this does not mean that I see relations to the term of ‘Tre stammers møte’ as irrelevant for my thesis’ focus. I will argue later on in the thesis for the fact that I have come to see the term as quite closely related to knowledge about use of natural resources and materials in Troms. This does not suit as an extensive work on the term itself, but more as a statement of its relevance in the area.

The change towards a focus on the use of natural materials felt suitable also as the surroundings of Tromsø has made me reflect more on my own relations to nature, and about my own relations to processes of commodity productions. The focus on use of natural materials felt like a topic that merged my experiences of the surroundings around me, with an interest in studying the process of how things come to be.

## 2.2 Reflexivity - in Film, field and text

As described, the film 'To Know by Hands' that is part of this thesis, portrays a rather personal approach through its introduction and ending. Some may consider this style untypical for an ethnographic film. I wanted however, to enable the viewer to be carried with me in my approach to the topics in the film, as I did indeed have my own relations to the topics of handicraft and nature. I find that as I started to reflect more on the sensorial experiences, the approach also somewhat automatically took a more personal approach. Paul Stoller writes about his approach to the sensory in anthropology that: "Sensuous Scholarship is an attempt to reawaken profoundly the scholar's body by demonstrating how the fusion of the intelligible and the sensible can be applied to scholarly practices and representations." (Stoller 1997, xv). And so, a sensuous scholarship is what I will attempt to enact through my thesis. He furthermore writes that: "(...) sensuous scholarship is ultimately a mixing of head and heart. It is an opening of one's being to the world (...)" (Ibid., xviii). As we anthropologists engage so directly through participation in the world of our participants, I believe that conducting fieldwork is always a mix of head and heart.

A topic which is not addressed in the film, is my relation to Sámi and Kven culture. As shortly described earlier, I did not have any particular relation to these ways of belonging, other than an interest to learn more. I believe that my own background however, undoubtedly has been of relevance regarding the discussions I have had, the connections I have made, and the kind of analysis I will now engage in. I believe this could both be seen in a negative and in a positive way. If one has a lot of knowledge from before, one could perhaps more easily and quickly come deeper into the topics one wants to study. However, I believe that my own background in my own fieldwork served more as a somewhat neutral ground in relation to Kven and Sámi identity, whose ideas of belonging may clash at times. It is important to note my background as a Norwegian is still not neutral, if one considers the history of the norwegianization. Yet I did not feel that I was met with any issues because of this.

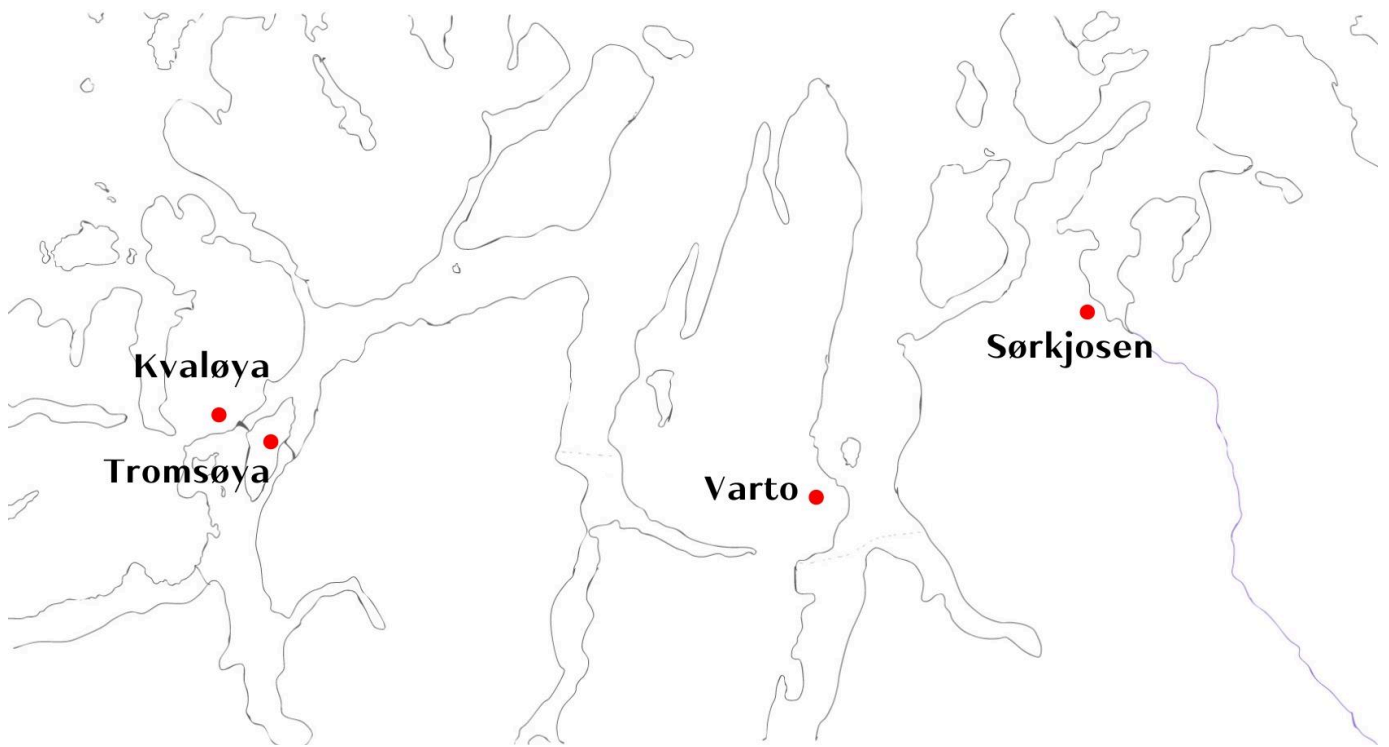
I want to reflect a bit on the effects of turning experiences from fieldwork into text. I will argue through his written thesis for the importance of a kind of knowledge that is very experiential and practical in its kind. As I am putting experiences into words, it may be considered as a practice that is disembodied in its character. I will through this thesis do my best at providing a sense of experiential closeness to the reader, although the film might suit

better for such means. I will first provide some context to situate the experiences that I later will go more in depth in.

#### **4. Presentation of field locations**

My fieldwork has been somewhat multi cited, in that I have done fieldwork in not just one city or village, but in several locations. All of the locations are however located within the county of Troms. While having my base in the city of Tromsø, I have made fieldwork-trips to the various places that make up my fieldwork. I have conducted fieldwork at Kvaløya, in Nordreisa, and in Lyngen. It is however the trips to Nordreisa and Lyngen that I will focus particularly on throughout this thesis, as I find these experiences to be of most relevance in relation to the focus I ended up having. I will however in this section shortly describe a group I met at Kvaløya as well, as it does give some important insight to handicraft traditions of relevance in Norway.

The decision to go to these three locations is mostly a result of the people whom I was able to make contact with. Initially I was hoping to conduct research close to the city of Tromsø, as I had agreed to continue in my part time job over the summer, which in hindsight is not recommended in combination with fieldwork. It soon became clear though, that when looking for handicrafters making use of natural materials, I was quickly drawn further away from the city. However, I am not sure to what degree this is the somewhat random result of the contacts I was able to establish, or if there are in fact more handicrafters making use of natural materials further away from Tromsø, than closer to the city. It would however make a lot of sense that people who value spending a lot of time in and having a closeness to nature decide to locate themselves in areas where this is more achievable. Nevertheless, It was a rather specific group of people that I was looking for, and so I had to travel to where they were situated with their work. I will now go more in depth about the specific locations, before I present my participants.



*Map illustrating the places of my fieldwork.*

### **Nordreisa - Raisi (kven)- Ráisa (sámi)**

Around three and a half hours by bus, two ferries, and one ‘svele’<sup>1</sup> away, lies the small town named Sørkjosen, located in the municipality of Nordreisa. The place has three names in local languages: ‘Sørkjosen’, which is in Norwegian, ‘Reaššegeahči’ which is in Sámi, and ‘Rässikäinen’ which is in Kven language. Sørkjosen was previously the town center in the Nordreisa municipality, which now has moved about 20 minutes away to Storslett, where most stores, cafes and restaurants are now located. Sørkjosen has 817 inhabitants (SNL 2023), while the municipality of Nordreisa has 4746 inhabitants (Engerengen and Thorsnæs 2024). Nordreisa has the title as a national-park-municipality, being that it hosts the national park “Reisa”. A national park may be described as: “(...) a delimited area that is protected to take care of a larger natural area. It must contain distinctive or representative ecosystems or landscapes. The area must be free of heavy natural encroachment.” (Statsforvalteren 2020, my translation). My impression during my trips here, was that a lot of people value these surroundings very much.

### **Lyngen- Yykeâ (Kven)- Ivgu (sámi)**

Located about 2 hours away from Tromsø by car, a ferry and a good waffle, lies Lyngen municipality, with 2729 inhabitants (Lyngen Kommune 2023). I went to Lyngen with Trine,

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Svele’ is a kind of pancake often served at local ferries in Norway.

who has a cabin in the area. Specifically, Trine's cabin lies in an area called Varto or Várdu, which she explained to me means “viewpoint” in Sámi language. During the trip there I only went to my participant Trine's cabin, although we did stop by the supermarket on our way there. As such, I do not have a very thorough impression of what kind of place Lyngen is, although I do have a decent impression of the exact place where Trine's cabin lies. However, the fact that Trine greeted a couple of people in the store, gave me an impression of Lyngen as a rather typical Norwegian low-populated area. Moreover it confirmed that Trine has traveled to Lyngen quite often, since she knows local people there.

### **Kvaløya - Sallir (Sámi)**

Less than 10 minutes by bus, or around 20 minutes by bike from the main island of Tromsø, lies Kvaløysletta at the island of Kvaløya. Kvaløya is part of the municipality of Tromsø. The municipality of Tromsø has 77992 inhabitants (Tromsø kommune 2022), while Kvaløya has 13030 inhabitants (Thorsnæs 2024), with Kvaløysletta being the area at Kvaløya with the most inhabitants. Kvaløya is a rather big island, but the direct connection with the bridge to the main island of Tromsø, makes it easily available both for people to travel from Tromsø to Kvaløya, and the other way around.

## **5. Presentation of participants**

### **5.1 Hilde - Doudjar and store owner, Nordreisa**

The first participant I met was Hilde who lives in Nordreisa. Whilst looking for participants, I discovered Hilde's store “Kronebutikken” in Sørkjosen, Nordreisa, where she makes her own handicrafts, from various kinds of leather. Hilde is a duojár, which may be considered a Sámi traditional hand crafter (Nordlige folk 2024). I spent time with Hilde in her store, observed her making a buckle, partook in a Kven-festival that took place outside her store, as well as partaking in and observing one of her courses in tanning of fish-leather. I first visited her in May, and took trips from Tromsø to Nordreisa over the summer. I am very grateful for my time spent with Hilde, who is a rather busy hand crafter always with things in her hands, quite literally. I will now describe my first meeting with Hilde.

My trip to meet Hilde in Nordreisa was my first fieldwork trip for this master's project. I took the bus from Tromsø, a trip that takes about 3 and a half hours. Having grown up further

south on the westside of Norway, being a 'southerner' in a north-norwegian context, I noticed how the landscape is different from home. It does not take long after departure in Tromsø, before the landscape is a lot more desolate. And although I come from a small township in Norway myself, I found myself surprised by the long stretches between villages and houses. When arriving in the small village of Sørkjosen, I felt quite desolate and out of place. In retrospect, I can tell that this had more to do with the place being unknown to me. After having visited several times, and getting to know some of the people there, it does feel so desolate.

For the first visit, Hilde had suggested that I could come spend a day with her in her store, as such I could get to know her, and get an impression of her work.

Her store is packed with things, the walls are covered with shelves containing a variety of handicrafts, fabrics, some locally made food, and beautiful woolen socks are hanging from the roof. In mounters are displayed accessories that Hilde makes, with shining silver combined with leather, some with elements from wood and fish-bones. From the radio plays the channel P3, a popular channel that I myself have listened to a lot. I felt welcome and at ease in the atmosphere. For filming we had to turn off the radio, which unfortunately takes away some of the charm of the space, and a part of Hilde's character as well.

I was anticipating that such a store would be rather quiet in such a small town on a random day. However, after having some coffee and talking a bit, people started coming in, and I got an insight into Hildes' variety of tasks. Some people just wanted to look, and some people had particular questions regarding planning of Sámi clothing-elements that Hilde could help them with. Some people came in to talk with her about catering for an event, which is something Hilde also does, as she has a kitchen in the back of the store for such occasions. In-between the customers, Hilde would come to me in her workspace that has an open entrance to the store, and talk more about what her work entails. We did an interview which parts of is shown in the film, where she explains that the idea of giving back to nature is important for her in her work as a handicraftswoman. She showed me some polished fish-bones from the fish's spine, and explained that sometimes she will collect them when she serves fish at caterings. She then polishes them, and uses the remains from the berry-jams and juices she makes to color the fish-bones. She makes them into beads that she uses in her accessories. In my impression, Hildes idea of giving back to nature is depicted in the sense that she wants to make as much use of the materials she uses as possible, to extract as much

of the available uses as possible, and in this, she creates as least as possible of remains that need to be tossed. This is also clear when looking at her workspace, where she amongst other things keeps leftovers from fur in buckets, for later uses.

## **5.2 Kvaløya Husflidslag - Wool spinning class**

Kvaløya Husflidslag may be described as a club or an organization, where people spend time together making handicrafts, and hold courses in various handicrafts. 'Husflidslag' is the name of a handicrafts-organization that are spread throughout Norway into local handicraft-clubs. I went to a group that is part of Kvaløya Husflidslag, that solely focuses on wool-spinning. I will not focus on my fieldwork-experiences here as much throughout my thesis, as I find my other material more relevant in the direction thesis has taken. However, this part of my fieldwork was relevant in order to get a bigger picture of how people make use of natural materials in handicrafts in Tromsø. The people that were present here seemed quite occupied with where the wool came from, and they mostly used Norwegian and rather locally-based wool.

## **5.3 Trine - Dying of wool with natural materials, Lyngen**

I got to know Trine through my contact with Kvaløya Husflidslag. Trine lives in Tromsø, but has a cabin in Lyngen to where she frequently travels. Trine was at the time I met her working as a bioengineer, dyeing wool as a hobby, although she also has a company through which she has sold some of her productions, in small scale. Trine is now retired, and told me she was looking forward to spending more time at her cabin. I first met Trine in July, where I attended a course of hers in use of natural materials in dying of wool. The course was held in Tromsø. I did not bring my camera here however, and participated mostly to get to know some more about her work, and how the process of dyeing wool with natural materials goes on, so that I would be more prepared for filming with her later on. Before engaging in the actual dye-process, Trine held a presentation about her work. In this she particularly put focus on her background in chemics, and she uses the catchphrase “from chemics to magic”, which rhymes in Norwegian. The chemics being the knowledge about how much to use of the various elements for dyeing, use of PH-level papers, and sometimes a small use of chemicals, and the magic being the actual transformation that takes place, from one color to another.



## **5.4 John-Olav - Nature enthusiast**

John-Olav nor the ‘Husflidslag’ is part of the film. I still find my meeting with John-Olav as highly relevant for my thesis, and I will therefore focus more on these experiences through the written part of the thesis. John-Olav lives in Sørkjosen in Nordreisa, rather close to Hilde’s store. I wanted to find more people with direct connections to extraction of sources in nature, and as such my supervisor luckily introduced me to the angling-enthusiast John-Olav. John-Olav was at this time a janitor at a nearby school, and he also enjoys spending time in nature. For this trip I got to join John-Olav when he counted fish in some selected rivers in the area of Nordreisa. As I understood it, he does some of this as paid work, and other times voluntarily. It was fascinating to see John-Olav swim in the rivers, as he has his own technique that has developed over around 14 years of doing this. I got to try it out myself, and it was a great experience. While snorkeling in the rivers, I truly experienced a completely different environment than what is normal to me. John-Olav also makes his own flies for fly-fishing, and as such he is also a craftsman.

## **6. Wider contexts**

### **6.1 Tre stammers møte**

As noted earlier, the term of “Tre stammers møte” was something that was introduced to me by Hilde. I have found very few academic texts that directly relate to this exact notion. There is however one book titled “Tre stammers møte”, written by Carl Schøyen (1977). One might say that Schøyen has taken on a kind of ethnographic approach, in that his stories relate to his own experience. However, the preface by Nils M. Knudsen encourages critical reading of Schøyens elaborations (Ibid., 5-33). A perhaps more secure source regarding the notion of ‘Tre stammers møte’ may however be found on the website of Nordreisa municipality. They use the term like Hilde did, to describe it as a place that relates to both Norwegian, Sámi, and Kven culture (Nordreisa kommune 2017).

The Sámi people are recognized as Norway's only indigenous population (FN 2023). Norway does however have five groups with the official status as national minorities, one of which is the Kven people (Regjeringen 2024). ‘Kven’ describes a population that migrated from Finland to northern Norway some time before 1945 (Forsgren and Minken 2024). Both the Kven and Sámi population were subjected to Norwegian colonization politics that took place

from the 1850's until the 1960's, where the Norwegian state sought to eradicate cultural traits of the groups (Berg-Nordlie 2024). However, both groups are still fighting for recognition today. While the Sami indigenous people are widely known in Norwegian context as well as probably to a certain degree in international contexts, The Kven people and their history is far less known. Kven people have received more attention in the recent years, and some describe it as the Kven spring (Hauge 2021). I want to be careful in how I phrase myself in relation to differences or similarities between these two groups of belonging, as these are sensitive issues, and there is a wide span in peoples opinions and ways of relating to these issues. Nevertheless, this does not make recognition of both groups less important.

## 6.2 Relations to nature

I find descriptions of Norwegian laws relating to use of nature and use of natural materials as relevant to include, as they describe the context that my participants are situated in.

Norwegian common law:

“The common law gives us the right to move around and stay in rangeland (utmark) in Norway. The right is a free common good that is part of the Norwegian cultural heritage.” (Regjeringen.no 2021, *my translation*)

About the Open Air Act, ‘Friluftsløven’, as part of Norwegian common law:

“The Open Air act is a Norwegian law that regulates people's rights and duties for stay in and use of nature in Norway. (...). The law concerns the right to move freely in nature and, within certain boundaries, make use of nature's resources.” (Lovdata 2024, *my translation*)

I have furthermore attempted to find some sources on the general relationship between people and nature in Norway and Scandinavian countries. I have found sources from both Norway, Sweden and Finland, that all claim that their particular relationship with nature is extraordinary for their own country (Beery 2013) (Næss 2007). As such, It seems clear that the countries take pride in their respective relationships to nature, and as such it seems to be a highly national romanticized relationship. Arne Næss, known for establishing ‘deep ecology’ (Stabell 2024), reflects on the relationship to nature in Norway in his book *Naturlig Rik* (Næss 2007). In a poetic short story he describes; “It was a big week (in nature), with both nature and culture, at the same time, and place. It was as if nature and culture met. As if living in the borderlands between nature and culture...” (Næss 2007, 18. *My translation*).

Næss here describes a story portraying a wandering person who encounters a man living in a cabin up in the mountains, playing music on a piano (Ibid). What I find interesting is this description of ‘culture’ and ‘nature’ as meeting each other. If one looks to Sámi relations to nature however, it is often considered as part of the culture, and so this distinction between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ is not really there (Rudi 2020). I will reflect more on the thematics of nature and culture later on in my thesis.

### **6.3 Handicraft in Norway - Husflidslag**

I consider the Husflidslag and their activity throughout Norway as a central part in understanding handicraft traditions in Norway. It could indeed be possible to conduct research focusing solely on this, but for the purpose of this thesis I will only provide some brief contextualization. In the book *Tenkende Hender*, Åsa Elstad (2022) describes the history of Tromsø husflidslag, and moreover sets the context of the organizations very start in Norway overall. Elstad explains how the organization started off as encouraging self-sustainment amongst the population (Ibid., 9-69). The ideas Elstad writes about, that led to the start of the organization in 1910 (Husflid 2024), took place at a time where the Norwegian population was in a lot poorer state than today. With the economic growth that followed oil extraction, the increased international commodification became available to the average Norwegian. My impression is that the idea of self sustainment was not so prevailing for several years later, at least not when compared to the early years of the Husflidslag that Elstad describes. However, in recent years, there seems to be an increased focus again on the ability for self sustainment, although in particular relation with food (Regjeringen 2024). I believe the Husflidslag is perhaps today most known for being an organization that focuses on carrying forth handicraft traditions. The traditions do however often carry with them a closeness to the materials that might be said to be part of an ability to be self-sustained.

Several of the Husflidslag in Troms also have a focus on Kven and Sámi traditions. This was particularly clear when I met some people in Nordreisa that were part of the local Husflidslag there. I will not go in depth about these encounters, yet a lot of the people I met were taking part in a Husflidslag, and as such I find it relevant to consider.

## 6.4 Handicraft in Norway - Duodji

Since Hilde, one of my participants, is a duojár, I want to briefly describe what a duojár is. Shortly put, duodji might be described as traditional Sámi handicraft. Yet from my understanding, both through talks with Hilde and through reading about the craft, it is a knowledge that goes further than just the particular techniques themselves. To my understanding it is a craft deeply tied together with knowledge about the materials themselves, and moreover a way of relating to the world. What Hilde told me about her relation to the craft, she did not always describe directly as being grounded in her being a duojár, however, when I have read more about the duodji practice, I can tell that what she described also suits well with other descriptions of doujár's relations to nature and to handicrafts. Reading the book *Duodji Reader* by Harald Gaski and Gunvor Guttorm (Gaski and Guttorm 2022), helped me understand duodji practice in a bigger context, with descriptions that suited well my impression of Hilde's work. It is relevant to note that there are different branches of duodji. Traditionally there has been a differentiation with women doing 'Dipmaduodji', translated as "(...) soft duodji, objects made of textiles, reindeer hide and sisti (tanned reindeer leather) (Ibid., 174), whilst men engage in 'Garraduodji', translated as "(...) objects made with wood, bones, horns and antlers (Ibid.,174) (Reaidu 2024). Hilde mostly works with textiles and leather, however she also does some work with bones, which I will elaborate later on. Me and Hilde never really discussed these differentiations, but I find them worth to mention in relation to the bigger context that duodji is situated in.

As noted earlier, Hilde explained that she values the idea of giving back to nature through her craft. She explained that giving back to nature for her means to make use of as much as possible of the materials, or of the source where she retrieves the material from. I will go more in detail about this when I present her work more thoroughly. What is particular about Hilde's work however, is that she also makes craftwork that speaks to Kven notions of belonging. Hilde was the person who first introduced me to the concept of "tre stammers møte", and she explained that this was something she valued through her work. This was shown both in her own work, but also through the variety of objects by other crafters that she sells in her store. In the book by Gaski and Guttorm, Duojár Lars Pirak says about his handicraft work that;

“(...) I often think about the Sámi tradition and the adjustments it must make to modern times. The duojár is a sensitive person who is influenced by current trends. Tradition is both love of cultural heritage and love of one's native area. It is a

love that grows in proportion to one's distance from that local area and its cultural environment. Everything is rapidly changing in changing in the world of the Sámi today. (...) The work of the *doudjár* should, therefore, carry a traditional, timeless element within it, but also, in function as well as decoration, reflect our modern time period (...)" (Gaski and Guttorm 2022, 144).

Hilde seems to share a similar approach to *duodji*, where she wants to preserve the techniques and knowledge, yet still is not afraid to try out new materials or make new combinations.

What is also interesting is that this statement by Pirak is from the 1960s (Ibid.,144), showing that this idea of *duodji* also as taking inspiration and being affected by contemporary society is not a very recent development. Natalia and Matthew Magnani in the article titled "Decolonizing Production" argue that contemporary production of *duodji* "(...) carries continuities of past meanings, continuously transforming in dialogue with social and political processes" (Magnani and Magnani 2022, 391).

## **7. Methodology**

Sarah Pink (2015) proposes a description of the process of ethnographic accounts as:

"(...) a process of creating and representing knowledge or ways of knowing that are based on ethnographers' own experiences and the ways these intersect with the persons, places and things encountered during that process (...) visual ethnography (...) should aim to offer versions of ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, the embodied, sensory and affective experiences, and the negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced. (Pink, 2013:35)." (Ibid., 5)

This is definitely what I wish to achieve through my thesis. What Pink describes is however not a simple straight forward process to indulge upon. I will now reflect upon how I have taken on this challenge, and relate my approaches and experiences with relevant literature on methodology. First I give a short description of the methods I have used in fieldwork.

### **7.1 Methods**

This fieldwork was conducted using the film camera as the main method of assembling information, in a manner that is described as participant observation within the field of anthropology. I will reflect on the meaning of this for my specific fieldwork later on. I also did a couple structured interviews with my main protagonists, so as to ensure that I had some

information I knew I wanted, on camera. Other times I was actively engaged myself without the camera, through for instance participating in crafting and other activities that I will describe in detail later on as I delve more into the empirical accounts. There were also times where I did not use the camera, nor actively participated through specific actions. These were the in-between moments of coffee-breaks and car-rides, moments that are also considered important for the anthropologist in fieldwork (Madden 2010, 16). I will now delve more into reflections on methodology.

## **7.2 Observational cinema & participant observation**

Associate professor in visual anthropology at UiT, Bjørn Arntsen, states that: “The Tromsø variant of ethnographic film is anchored in the observational cinema approach.” (Arntsen 2021, 66). While observational cinema might be the anchor, it is to my experience an approach that highlights the reflexive aspects as a vital part of making ethnographic film. Early observational cinema has been critiqued by amongst others David Macdougall and Bill Nichols, for a ‘fly on the wall’-approach, not recognizing the presence of and relationships between filmmaker and the subjects, as summarized by Grimshaw and Ravetz in “Rethinking Observational Cinema” (2016, 541). Grimshaw and Ravetz state that “(...) observation is not a straightforward or everyday way of looking at the world. It involves the cultivation of a special kind of attention.” (Ibid., 542). Furthermore they state that observational cinema is not the only approach that may be suitable for conducting phenomenological anthropology, which is what they are here considering (Ibid., 554). Grimshaw and Ravetz asks if observation could be “(...) understood as a set of practices that might vary considerably according to the different social formations through which it was developed?” (Ibid., 547). I find that this is a view of observation that gives space for social relationships and contexts to be the deciding factor as to what kind of observation might be available and suitable. During my fieldwork I discovered the sensibilities required in relation to what moments should be filmed, and when people perhaps just need a bit of a break, and other ways of interaction are more suitable. I have come to see anthropological fieldwork as a process of learning a particular kind of skill. A skill that develops through a navigation in the field, that is shaped by different contexts, social relationships and inevitably of the anthropologist themselves. I find that the approach argued for by Grimshaw and Ravetz, gives space for the anthropologists to be open and reflexive about how observation actually took place in the field. Grimshaw and Ravetz approach to observational cinema is to me an approach that

describes observation of a participatory kind. When I am talking about learning a particular kind of skill during fieldwork, it is indeed the skill of ‘participant observation’. But how is this actually to be conducted?

The terms of “observation” and “participation” to me immediately sound contradictory to each other. Yet participatory observation is what the field of anthropology may be said to rely on as a field. Judith Okely writes that; “Participant observation involves more than co-residence, verbal interaction and observation; it also involves knowledge through the body, through all the senses (...)” (Okely 2012, 77). This may shortly be described as ‘shared action’ (Ibid., p. 77). Okely relates to assertions that critiques participation as in danger of being unscientific, while “(...) detachment is conflated with objectivity” (Ibid., 76). As part of her counter-argument to this, Okely compares the fieldworker with that of craftsmanship, stating that:

“Anthropology is also a craft, using ‘hand, brain and heart’. The fieldworker works through the body, emotions not cerebral distance. Beyond such divisions as ‘both an art and science’ (Powdermaker 1967: 9), I argue that the notion of science should be broadened as knowledge (Okely 1996a)” (Ibid., 78).

I agree with Okely’s arguments, and I argue that this is really at the core of what anthropology might contribute with, as a science, or as a field that contributes with knowledge, however one would like to define it. Life is filled with ambiguities, and this is exactly what anthropology often so well captures. I believe anthropology as a scientific field helps us deal with realities that don’t fit neatly within categories, or that cannot easily be transferred as data into a tablet or a graph.

Although this was a slight diversion on the topic of participant observation, the point is that it is reality that we as anthropologists are occupied with, and reality is most often complex. As argued above with Grimshaw and Ravetz, it is this reality that also to a certain degree informs the methods suitable, or available. We do of course have guidelines to follow, but within these guidelines, variations may occur. And so despite the fact that I have conducted fieldwork, I find it difficult still to say something concrete as to how participant observation is to be conducted. I believe it must however be conducted with a sensibility towards the people or topics one works with, and with an openness to possible changes. What happens in real encounters in fieldwork is most often spontaneous, and so this is part of what participant observation entails, to be flexible in relation to how life unfolds.

I discovered during this fieldwork that it is one thing to conduct observational participation with yourself and perhaps a notebook, and another thing to conduct observational participation-with a camera. I discovered during my fieldwork some of the struggles with wishing to indulge in participation on the one hand, and wishing to film as much as possible on the other. When having the camera in your hands it inevitably becomes difficult to participate directly *with your hands*. The observation is very much there, and one could say that one is participating simply by being present in the activities that takes place, yet I found that carrying the camera may be limiting both in relation to participating directly, and just in general in social encounters. I experienced that some people would back off because of the presence of the camera, which is something I completely understand, yet it did mean that certain interactions became inaccessible. Nevertheless, I think the camera enables certain information yet it might come in the way of other kinds. One such example may be the cameras ability of bringing tactile experiences through the visual. MacDougall writes that: “Bringing objects into close-up allows them to be touched, as it were, by the eye, and their surfaces more intimately inspected.”(MacDougall 2020, 3). However, the action of holding a camera and filming the tactile makes it difficult for the filmmaker to actually *feel* the tactile with their hands. Ideally I would have liked an extra pair of arms and an extra pair of eyes, and I would not mind having the owl's physics of turning my head 360 degrees either. This is for the future anthropologists to figure out. However, limitations may also come with revelations, which I will get back to as I discuss fieldwork experiences more in detail.

### **7.3 A multispecies approach**

Multispecies approaches is an approach that has continuously been developed since around the 2000's (Hartigan Jr 2021) (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010). John Hartigan Jr (2021) writes about it's development that:

“Anthropology was founded as “the study of Man” but reformulated its central subject as humankind broadly, with additional attention to hominids generally and a range of closely related primate species. The human, however, is permeated by a panoply of nonhumans; this recognition is the centerpiece of the “animal turn” in the humanities broadly, as theorized by Donna Haraway.”  
(Ibid., 846-847)



I see my fieldwork as characterized by a multispecies approach in the sense that my participants engaged with other species and natural resources in different ways, and in order for me to understand their work and their view, I found a multispecies approach suitable. It is important to note that rather than studying socialites of other species directly as some anthropologists with multispecies approaches have done (Swanson 2017) (Hartigan 2021), I have in my fieldwork been more occupied with the human relations *to* other species. Katharina Ameli argues that “Using the method of Multispecies Ethnography (...) recognizes the interconnectedness and inseparability of humans and other life forms of the more-than-human world, such as plants or animals (...)” (Ameli 2022, 113). I see the multispecies approach in relation to my fieldwork as a lens that enables understandings that are more open to influences from multiple standpoints, including non-human agents.

Having read up on multispecies approaches in preparation before this masters project made me curious about the presence of other species in the field. Having this attention to other species lead to some interesting encounters. During my trip with Trine to her cabin in Lyngen, we encountered a lot of sheep. I wanted to film some of the sheep as they were so present there. Furthermore I also wanted to make a visual relation in my film between the wool Trine is dyeing, and the source from where wool comes from. Trine does not however use wool from these specific sheep, so in the film it is more meant as a visual relation between wool and its source in general terms. The attempts of filming the sheep nevertheless resulted in some interesting reflections.

I do not have a lot of experience with sheep, other than meeting them here and there on hikes and when walking by enclosures. During my first sheep-filming trial, Trine stopped the car so I could jump out and film some sheep grazing along the road. Some sheep immediately got caught off guard and ran away, but I managed to get a bit closer to a group grazing and laying on the ground. I managed to film for a bit, but at a point when filming a big sheep and a lamb, whom I assume was a mother and their offspring, the big sheep stomped her feet, and I understood my stay was overdue, and left. This was a somewhat rushed situation, as Trine was waiting for me in her car. Later on, I saw some sheep grazing in the area around Trine’s cabin. I had understood that some sheep seemed a bit frightened by the camera, understandably enough as it upon reflection definitely gives some predator connotations, sneaking up in silence and staring intensely. This time I talked friendly to the sheep as to try and exclaim my friendliness. I was in no rush this time, sat down in the grass, filmed some

different plants and simply hung out a bit in the area. This time I managed to film the sheep closer up, and seemingly without disturbing them as much as the first time. Surprisingly enough this experience was not too different from my experiences of filming people. In both cases trust is crucial for a successful encounter.

Bearing in mind an interest in more-than human connections in the field, I find opened up for a broader understanding of the field. Had I not been so interested, perhaps I would not try as much to film the sheep, and perhaps I would not have them on camera. My interest in them also opened up for knowledge Trine and her husband had, for instance that we at some point talked about the sheep, and they informed me that you need to talk with them to gain their trust. Fijn and Kavesh suggests audiovisual mediums as a suitable tool for conveying multispecies ethnographies, also arguing that the sensory experience might be evoked through the audiovisual (Fijn & Kavesh 2020, 11-15). I will get back to these relations, but first I will go a bit more in depth about the sensory ethnographer.

#### **7.4 The sensory ethnographer**

A sensory approach was something that aspired out of my experiences from fieldwork, rather than as a method I consciously partook in from the start. Despite this, I still find reflections concerning a methodology of senses as relevant. Sarah Pink writes that; “Many researchers who have undertaken ethnographies that attend to the senses have done so without any special preparation: the multisensoriality of the research context is often something that emerges through one’s encounter with both people and the physical environment one is participating in.” (Pink 2015, 51). Without directly reflecting on it, sensory ethnography is kind of what I have been doing, through a material-directed approach, with the goal of researching links between people extracting resources and their environment. Madden writes that: “The ethnographer’s body, and the sensations it records, are part of the ethnographic script.” (Madden 2010, 19). This was not something I really considered before this fieldwork, but as I reflect back to my fieldwork after gaining more knowledge in the field anthropological sensory approaches, I can see that the sensory elements in my experiences were very vital to my understanding of them. The sensorial also prevails in my observations of how people were interacting with the materials and with the environment where we were. Both in terms of how they acted, and what they said. The sensorial experiences were so

present in many of the situations I partook in with my participants, as I will describe more in detail further on as I elaborate on empirical examples.

There were times where I found the presence of the camera as an obstacle, in relation to participation. The most positive experience I have from using the camera however, is the fact that I have been able to capture quite detailed processes of the handicraft-work. Through this I can hopefully enable the audience to feel closer to the process, and the materials themselves, through watching the participants in the film touching and engaging directly with the materials. It was however vital that I also engaged a bit directly myself, to get more insight into what participating in this process actually means, to gain a better understanding myself. Rather than seeing the presence of the camera only as a negative experience in relation to the experiencing sensorial, I think the contrasts in themselves also helped me in seeing how vital the sensorial part of the knowledge actually was. Had I only participated, perhaps it would not stand out as such.

## **7.5 The anthropologist as an apprentice**

Christina Grasseni has done several fieldworks where she has made use of a sensory approach (Grasseni 2022, 2021). Grasseni argues for a term of ‘skilled vision’, described as a kind of vision acquired through learning processes, that occurs through social, embodied and sensory grounded experiences (Grasseni, 2022, 1-3). I will go deeper into her definition of the term in the theoretical part, for now I want to focus on her reflections on apprenticeship, that I find central to my methodological reflections. Grasseni argues that anthropologists, similar to other apprentices, are also in processes of learning to see (Grasseni 2021, 19-22). About the fieldwork process she writes that: "We observe while we participate. This means literally looking, seeing, noticing, while working also with our other senses: listening, moving around, doing things and adjusting our bodily posture and behavior (with or without tools) to produce particular points of view." (Ibid., 12). Grasseni has done fieldwork amongst gardeners, and writes that similarly to an anthropological fieldworker, a gardener apprentice makes use of senses, as well as the positioning of one's body and vision, in order to over time learn the skilled vision of a gardener (Grasseni 2022, 4-7). I relate to Grasseni's descriptions of learning processes to a large degree. During my fieldwork I experienced that I was simultaneously learning to see as an anthropologist in the field, while attempting to learn from my participants about their handicraft and their lives in general. As such it was two

processes of learning to see occurring simultaneously, although they were part of the same process.

I find that the Grassenis term of ‘skilled vision’, perhaps makes it seem like the learning at some point is complete. Yet what doing fieldwork has made clear to me, is that although one hopefully is able to learn somewhat the skilled vision of an anthropologist, it is a learning-process that never stops. My own learning process in this has also made me relate to the learning process of my participants. They have a skilled vision as they have been doing what they do actively for several years, but this does not mean that they have stopped learning. Both Hilde and Trine expressed that they were always looking for new materials to try out. Particularly through my trip with Trine, I saw in practice how open she was to trying out new materials and combinations, as may be seen in the film as she experiments dyeing with iron-leftovers (00:07:27-00:08:46), which was something she had not done before. My point about continuous learning is however not that I really believe Grasseni sees the ‘skilled vision’ as a end point. I believe she does see skilled vision as the goal of an apprentice, yet I do not think she sees it as a clear ‘end’ of learning, but more so that some visions may be more skilled in certain ways than others.

## **7.6 The sensory through the visual**

I found that my own learning-to-see also continued after my fieldwork, as I was reviewing my filmic material. It is hard to take detailed notes while in the field, but having the camera to film also acts as a safety net of information that one can look back at later, also to discover new things. I found that having material filmed kind of extended my time in fieldwork. Although through a screen, having the audiovisual material allowed me to get back to the different situations, the sounds, memories of textures, stories, and to my surprise smells, or the lack of smells. Fijn and Kavesh write that “While the ‘visual’ inevitably is often the predominant sense, David MacDougall (1997, p. 289) stresses that we can consider the visual within films as being able to ‘offer pathways to the other senses and to social experience more generally (...)’” (Fijn and Kavesh 2020, 14). The viewing of the film material allowed me to discover sensorial engagements that I did not think much of in the situations themselves. As I noted earlier, I did not have a conscious sensorial approach to my fieldwork. However, upon time of watching the film material, I was more aware of senses as a method. To my surprise I could discover participants sensorial engagements that I did not have clear in memory. I was talking with my supervisor about the various ways I had observed the use

of senses during fieldwork, and we started talking about smells. Did my participants use smell actively in relation to their work? I felt sure that they did, but I had no clear memory of a concrete situation. I had a look through my material and could discover that yes, there were specific situations depicting an ‘action of smell’.

One such example of ‘action of smell’, I found in filmic material of Trine and me walking around in the forest, where she points out various kinds of resources that may be used for dyeing. She picks a plant of the ground and reflects to herself whether or not it is the plant named ‘pors’ in Norwegian. She smells it and says it has no strong smell, but that she can see that it is ‘pors’. Peculiarly enough, I ask if I can smell it too, and confirm that no, it does not really smell of anything. It is a somewhat strange example, yet the situation showed that smell may be relevant for Trine as she navigates her way of knowing, and if the smell is not there, then other senses like sight is the source that must be relied upon.

## **8. Theoretical framework**

Trevor Marchand writes that “The notion of ‘the man who thought with his fingers’ (Mauss 1973 [1950] Warnier 199) is perhaps the best approximate description of the complex of mental, somatic, sensory, and kinaesthetic understanding that is involved in reflective and purposeful action.” (Marchand 2010, 69). This is a statement by Marchand in his collaborative book *Making knowledge: explorations of the indissoluble relation between mind, body and environment* (Marchand 2010). I will through my thesis argue for an understanding of the sensory in a similar way to that of Marchand. In relation to the quotation, I will argue for a way of thinking or knowing, that occurs through the sensory.

Sarah Pink (2015, 8-12) is critical to earlier anthropological studies of the sensorial, as she writes that they often focused on hierarchies of senses as differing culturally. She writes that: “(...) taking cultural difference as the unit of comparison can be problematic when it shifts away from the immediacy of sensory experience as lived, and abstracts it into representational categories.” (Ibid., 9). As such, Pink argues that it is important to keep a focus on the immediate and experiential when reflecting on the sensorial anthropologically. However, Pink also states that senses are; “(...) part of how we understand our past, how we engage with our present and how we imagine our futures.” (Ibid., 3). It seems however that in relation to the first quoted statement, that she is not necessarily critical to studying the

sensory in relation to cultures per se, but more so she is critical to research that makes the sensory as aspects within cultures appear as frozen in time. What Pink seems to argue for, is an approach to the sensory that is open to a multiplicity of senses, and an approach that takes into account; “The experiencing, knowing and emplaced body (...).” (Ibid.,28) both of the ethnographers and the participants (Ibid., 25-26). Pink is amongst others inspired by Cristina Grasseni’s approach to the sensorial (Ibid., 11), whose approach I now will elaborate on.

## 8.1 The multisensorial

Cristina Grasseni argues through the notion of ‘skilled vision’ for a vision that incorporates a multiplicity of other senses as well (Grasseni 2022, 1-7). One could argue that vision is always working in relation to the other senses, since it is all part of our body, and since our senses usually are not physically isolated from each other. However, the point of Grasseni’s term is to describe a vision of a *skilled kind*. Very shortly put she describes it as a vision that is learned (Ibid., 2). Grasseni divides the term into ‘enskilment’ and ‘vision/sight’ (Ibid.,2). She states that; “(...) “enskilment” (Pálsson, 1994) happens in contexts where a complex process of embodiment “mediates” skilled vision (Grasseni and Gieser, 2019), often using the interaction of two or more senses, proprioception, and purposeful action to achieve perceptual acuity (...).” (Ibid., 2). And furthermore that “(...) learning to see means adapting one’s perception to social rules, coming to embody more-than-perceptual sensibilities by literally aligning oneself with the point of view of more expert practitioners.” (Ibid., 2). As such, Grasseni views ‘skilled vision’ as multisensorial, learned and situated (Ibid). I find that her term of ‘skilled vision’ suits well in describing and analyzing the kind of knowledge that my protagonists enacted in their activities. Most of the activities I observed and participated in were conducted in a teacher-apprentice kind of style as described under methodological reflections, and so I find that I have partaken in situations that are somewhat similar to the ones described by Grasseni.

The title ‘To know by hands’, is a title that refers to the tactility I found so present in knowledge productions I observed in the field. This does not mean however that touch is the only way of coming to know in the activities I participated in and observed. I will argue similarly to Grasseni, for the importance of acknowledging a multiplicity of senses, as I view this as central in the learning processes that I took in part during my fieldwork. These

learning processes have encompassed learning about the process of extraction of natural resources, learning about the process through which the natural materials are used in handicraft, and also as a learning process of *being* or *acting* in specific environments. I will get back to elaborations of these processes as I describe empirical examples later on.

‘To know by hands’ may be seen as a flip of Grasseni’s term of ‘skilled vision’. Similarly to Grasseni’s reflection of a vision that is not only visual, I describe examples of tactility that is not only related to touch. The point is not really to differentiate between vision and the tactile, but to argue for their intertwinement in the experiences I participated in and observed. Like Pink, I see the realm of the sensorial as closely linked to the realm of the experiential. Although inherent in the term of ‘the experiential’ is the presence of ‘the now’, I will argue how these experiences are also formed by the past, and of relevance for the future, which I will elaborate on further in this theoretical framework.

## **8.2 The material and the cultural**

My fieldwork has been highly centered on various materials, and specifically uses of them. I will reflect on a material approach through work by David Miller (Miller 2009). About his and his research associates’ approach he states that;

“(…) we do not restrict ourselves to conventional material culture, because this order may be located in other relationships. These may be relationships to place, to persons, to the state and to discourse. They are the mechanisms that, in practice, bring alignment between the order we discern at the level of the individual and the order we discern at the level of society.” (Ibid., 21).

During the first half of my fieldwork I had a more specific focus on handicraft as identity expressions. I believe that changing one's research approach mid-field definitely is not ideal, however, an unexpected result of this is that what I learned about identity-issues during the start of my fieldwork, later on enabled me to see links between material use and other societal relations. Rather than distinguishing between material culture and other societal aspects like Miller seem to do in the described quotation, I have found that discussions on materials have opened up for discussions on other relations. Be that relations to other people, or to places. I cannot really say that these discussions do not still deal with the material, for they do, yet since I have been focused so much on *processes* of acquiring materials, the approach is somewhat broader. The point is really that I have come to see the material uses as intertwined

with other kinds of relationships, as I will elaborate when I relate empirical descriptions to the discussion of the material and the cultural.

Shortly put I will further in this thesis relate to Miller's reflections as he discusses the social and the material, and furthermore I will relate to Seremetakis as she links the sensorial experiences of materials to memories and societal changes. Similarly to that of Pink, Seremetakis links the immediate experiential with the past and implied possible futures (Seremetakis 1994, 1-19). Through Seremetakis I will discuss the link between the sensorial and cultural knowledge. Furthermore I will engage in a discussion surrounding relations between different kinds of cultural knowledges. I have come to see a relation between what may be referred to as cultural knowledge, to that of the experiential and sensorial relations to local environments, and the different interactions that this encompasses.

### **8.3 Environments and places**

As my protagonists all engage in retrieving resources from their environment, I want to reflect upon some arguments regarding how one views environment and places. Tim Ingold is critical to the notion of “the natural environment”, as this implies a division between humans and nature (Ingold 2000, 40-43). He argues that as humans are a species part of nature, it does not really make sense to create a differentiation between humans and nature, as the one cannot exist without the other (Ibid). I find Ingold's reflections as relevant for discussing relationships between humans and our environment, and how we relate to our surroundings. Although I do agree that differentiations between terms of “human” and “nature”, does not really make sense, I do have some issues regarding some of his arguments. Ingold seems to a large degree to put emphasis on the intertwinedness that makes up the world (Ingold 2000). I will argue how it still makes sense and may in fact be important to talk about particular places or environments, while still having an understanding of how it is all connected.

Sarah Pink relates to issues regarding the notion of places relating to the fact that “(...) anthropologists now normally do not consider their research as the study of closed cultures in circumscribed territorial places.” (Pink 2015, 33) She highlights two questions in relation to this anthropological studies of places:



“(…) first, how can a place be defined if it is something that is not fixed or enclosed, that is constituted as much through the flows that link it to other locations, persons and things, as it is through what goes on ‘inside’ it? And second, given that places are continually constituted, rather than fixed, then how can we understand the role of the emplaced ethnographer as a participant in and eventually author of the places she or he studies?” (Ibid).

I will argue for a view of places as both local and specific, and as intertwined with other places.

Fijn and Kavesh state that; “By developing a sensory analysis (...) anthropology can develop a deeper appreciation of both human and more-than-human lives connected through shared spaces (Fijn and Kavesh, 2020, 9). As explained in the methodological reflections, I took on the focus of this research with an interest in multispecies approaches. Through further reflection I discovered the centrality of the sensorial in my fieldwork experiences, and so I have come to see that what Fijn and Kavesh state here, is really what I want to achieve through my master thesis. It is a sensorial approach that sees the environments as a shared space of more-than-human lives, and specifically focusing on what studies of individual resource-use can teach us about this. I will further argue how I have come to understand this argument by Fijn and Kavesh, through relating to my fieldwork, and engaging in reflections by other academics.

## **9. The sensorial - the material - the environment**

In this section I will present empirical descriptions, and reflect more on the theories presented above. As noted earlier, the three people I will focus mostly on in this thesis engage in activities that may seem rather different. Hilde and Trine has on first impression more similarities since they engage in retrieving natural materials to be used in handicraft, whilst the activity I describe in relation to John Olav stand out a bit more. I will however argue that these differences have become part of how I have come to see the matter of the sensorial in relation to our interactions with the more-than human elements and with the environments we were in.

Some empirical examples describe situations that occur in the film, while others are not part of the film, yet I see them as important for my thesis. For each section describing empirical material I will relate to relevant theories, before I engage in broader discussions relating the different empirical material and relevant literature together. I will argue that common for all these situations is the sensorial experience in some kind of way. The first empirical example describes a part of a walk with Trine, in the area around her cabin. Although this situation is not part of the film, I find it provides as a good example for further reflection, as well as showing a broader spectrum of encounters in the field.

### **9.1 Coming to know in the forest**

The following is describes excerpts from my fieldnotes, combined with transcriptions of film material:

*We park the car, and start to walk up towards the cabin, it is not a very long trip Trine explains, around 20-30 minutes. From the very beginning of the walk, Trine starts to point out various plants and mushrooms along the path. She presents their name, and what they can be used for, particularly in relation to dyeing. She pointed to so many that I don't have a chance at remembering all of them, but there were mushrooms, heather, lichen, chaga and cuckoo, and different kinds of these as well. Although I am a Norwegian myself who has spent a decent amount of time outdoors in similar environments, I would never be able to point out the different species in the way Trine does.*

*For a short time we walk in a forest, first next to a dense spruce-forest, then through birch-forest, and suddenly the landscape opens up beautifully, and one can see bogs and lakes. After some time, Trine points to a regular pit-stop on the cabin-trips. Particularly when her grand-kids join the cabin, it is essential with a break at the 'kiosk-stone'. The 'kiosk-stone' is a big stone right next to the path. As you might have guessed from the name, here the kids can get small treats to keep up the spirit on the walk to the cabin. We stop by the stone, and Trine points out a kind of lichen that grows on the stone. We stop by this 'kiosk-stone', and Trine has something to show me here. She points to a kind of lichen that grows on the stone, called "stone-lichen".*



*Trine: - Here it is. It looks so boring... ( Trine picks up a piece of the lichen). This we could actually soak in water first, and then boil. And back in the days when they didn't have that much, they spun the wool, knitted the stockings and colored with stone-lichen. I was told that the kids sat around, excited for what kind of color their sweater would turn out. I find this lichen very nice. It's kind of rare so I don't find it that much up here, but I have used a lot of this.*

*Me: - What color does it make?*

*Trine: - It turns squirrel-brown. It dusts on your lap when you knit, so a lot of people don't like that, but the color is fantastic.*

### **9.1.1 Learning to notice**

I find that Grasseni's notion of skilled vision is fruitful in understanding the kind of knowledge that Trine displayed during my stay. Through walking in the area with Trine pointing out all the different plants and growths suitable for dyeing, some of which are shown in the film, I really got the impression that Trine indeed has a 'skilled vision'. This is to a large degree a visual one as we navigate the environment, looking for specific things. But it is also a highly sensorial one, both in relation to the overall experience of the environment, in relation to searching for materials to use, and when it comes to the experience of the dyeing process itself. When walking I found that sight was very central, but as we got up close to the different organisms in the area, Trine would most of the time touch it or pick up a small piece in her hands, and sometimes smell it.

Although I see this kind of knowledge as highly sensorial, the learning processes do not thereby exclude the vitality of language as a communication of this knowledge. The teaching that took place by Trine was to a large degree communicated through language. Yet I see the knowledge as one that is largely connected with the senses. Grasseni quotes Goodwin in that; (...) nuancing and describing in words what one is pointing at influences the shared interpretation of what should be taken to have in fact been seen (Goodwin, 1997).” (Grasseni 2021, 14). The knowledge about the different material sources were thought to me by Trine through words, but if I were to walk alone and try to deploy the knowledge I had learned from Trine, it is very likely that I would touch and smell the items myself, as a way to navigate in the environment, and as a way of distinguishing or recognizing species in the future. With a certain awareness of possible poisonous species of course. I relate this to Grasseni’s argument of skilled vision as something learned. It is easy for me to relate teaching and learning as something that happens through words, yet perhaps Trine’s bodily enactment of the sensorial also can be seen as a way of teaching, although it was not directly expressed as a strategy through words. I will come back learning through the sensory as I describe other empirical examples. For now I want to focus on another aspect of the walks we had around Trine’s cabin.

Grasseni quotes Rudolf Arnheim who states that; “(...) “the object we see (...) is dependent upon who we are and what we recognise from past experience” (1969,278).” (Grasseni 2021, 26). In this Grasseni links the immediate experience of seeing to memory. Trine has walked the path to her cabin many times before, and she has built up a lot of knowledge about the plants in the area. I see her knowledge, specifically the knowledge she shared while walking, as highly situated. She could of course have told me about the different plants and growths from inside her house for instance, yet I do not this would have communicated the knowledge in an equally effective and precise way. Through discussing research on senses and memory, Sarah Pink concludes that “(...) sensory memory is an inextricable element of how we know in practice, and indeed part of the processes through which ways of knowing are constituted.” (Pink 2015, 44). I will relate back to a reflection on knowledge as situated later on in the text, but for now I want to relate to notions of ‘the material’. Both Trine and Hilde use materials to make things, and as such I find it relevant to focus on.

## **9.2 Coming to know through the material**

I briefly described Hilde`s store in the presentation of my participants. I will now go in some more detail about the different objects and the materials Hilde uses. As presented, there are a lot of things in Hilde`s store. There are the things she has made herself, such as: different kinds of buckles, bracelets and earrings, tiny traditional shoes named ‘komager’, and also food items such as jam and juice. Some of the accessories have ornaments that relate to Kven identity expressions, some relate to Sámi identity expressions, and some more neutral in terms of symbolisms. There are also a lot of things made by others that Hilde displays and sells in her store. Traditional woolen slippers or boots named ‘kartanker’, a lot of knitted socks and mittens, some locally produced food items to mention some. She has some handmade products from other places in the world, yet most of the products are locally produced.

Early on after meeting Hilde, we got talking about the process of how she makes the items she sells. The process of extracting the resources are a very central part of Hilde`s work. As described earlier, she emphasized the idea of giving something back to nature. Specifically she is occupied with the fact that everything she uses is going to go back into nature at some point, and as such, it is important for her to use as much of the different materials from the resources as possible. I will get back to explaining how exactly Hilde goes on about this task, but for now I want to discuss a bit the term of ‘material culture’. I find it relevant to discuss, as I have been so occupied with a focus on products and materials during my fieldwork.

### **9.2.1 The material and the cultural**

A lot of conversations with Hilde started out from looking at certain objects in her store, and then discussing the materials they were made from, and further on more about some specific processes. As such, I find it makes sense to reflect on some anthropological reflections on material culture. In “Individuals and the Aesthetic of Order”, Daniel Miller reflects on his fieldwork in London where he investigated how people use material culture as a way to deal with loss (Miller 2009, 15). Miller reflects about a man named Malcolm and his relation to things and particularly his laptop. He writes of how a lot of Malcolm`s social life occurs through the laptop, and poses critical reflections on the possible direction of analysing Malcolm`s material relations (Miller 2009., 16-17). Malcolm is of Aboriginal inheritance, and Miller writes how this could have been a lens through which to analyse his material

relations (Ibid), yet Miller seems critical to this direction and notes how this reflection could not solely derive from an analysis of the individual of Malcolm (Ibid., 17).

Now, the analysis Miller engages in cannot directly be transferred to that of my own. My aim is here to reflect on the handicraft products that Hilde makes, and some of these carry direct links to her work as a *duojár*. And so I argue that the identification between the material and the cultural is not so far-fetched, as Miller seems to imply in relation to Malcolm. My point with bringing up Miller's reflections is moreover the questions that his analysis makes me reflect on. Where do we find the meaning of 'things'. Is it in the objects, or is it elsewhere? A thing in itself might be meaningful because it is functional or beautiful in itself. The things Hilde makes are of course beautiful, yet I will however suggest that the objects may also entail meaning in a different way.

Whereas the computer of Malcolm is important because it has certain functions, the importance of the objects in Hilde's store is somewhat different. They are of course completely different things; the objects that Hilde sells are mostly accessories rather than functional objects in themselves. The value in the things that Hilde sells cannot however really be separated from the process through which they were created. Every object created by humans on earth does of course not exist *without* a process, yet I believe that a lot of the meaning of the things Hilde sells, lies in the very process that makes up its creation. For these particular things were created by a *duojár*, and as such they are also considered beautiful or meaningful precisely because it was created by a *duojár*. Putting meaning in the title of a 'duojár' or not, the importance lies in the *process* that typically goes in the work by a *duojár*, such as with Hilde (Gaski and Guttorm 2022).

### **9.2.2 The processes behind the material**

I will now describe more of Hilde's use of materials from the fish, as this was the material I got the most insight into through our interactions. Hilde does as noted in the presentation noted not engage only in handicrafts. She also takes on catering-jobs where she takes part in making the food. Her work with the caterings and her work with handicrafts are however connected. She explained to me that she collects parts of the spine from the fish that has been served. She cleans them, and then polishes them as is shown in the film (00:12:19). The bones may now be used as beads, for bracelets, necklaces and earrings. Her work with the bones also ties together with her production of jam and juice. She explained that she uses the

remains from the berries to dye the bones, although she also may dye them with other things such as lichen. In this way a lot of Hilde's work is tied together, as the leftovers from one production may be used in the production of something else. She also uses the skin of the fish, that undergo a process where it is made durable enough to act as leather (00:13:08-00:17:19). As is shown in the film, she explains how this process works best when conducted in summertime, preferably on a windy and sunny day (Ibid). It is as such not only the extraction of materials that is seasonal, but also the times when she engages in specific parts of the crafting of the specific materials.

Hilde told me that it is important for her to preserve the duodji-techniques. To my understanding from my time with Hilde, the techniques are highly interwoven with the choice of materials. I have come to see the senses as highly present in the processes of preparing and working with the materials. Before I relate more directly to a sensorial experience, I will turn to Seremetakis who discusses loss of sensorial knowledge.

### **9.2.3 The sensorial as historical and contemporary**

C. Nadia Seremetakis starts her book *The senses still* from a personal approach, describing the sensations of the peach named 'Rodhákino' in greek language (Seremetakis 1994, 1). She explains how the peach ties back to Greek mythology, being known as 'the breast of Aphrodite' (Ibid). Seremetakis writes about how she stayed in the US, but traveled back to Greece: "Every journey back was marked by its taste. Summer was its permanent referent, yet its gradual disappearance from the summer markets passed almost unnoticed. A few years ago, I realized that the peach was nowhere to be found in the markets (...)." (Ibid). She further writes that; "People only alluded the disappearance of the older peach by remarking on the tastelessness of new varieties, a comment that was often extended to all food, "nothing tastes as good as the past." "(Ibid).

I find that Seremetakis is able to describe something that I have been thinking about, yet found difficulty in explaining concretely. She links the experience of food and cooking in Greece, to modernization processes in the society (Ibid., 3-4). Through the example of the peach she shows sensoriality is linked with knowledge, and how these kinds of knowledges become affected by societal changes. She writes that there is a difference in the knowledge about the peach generationally. She writes: "For me the peach had been both eaten and

remembered, but for the younger generation it was now digested through memory and language.” (Ibid., 2). Now, what may be the issue with this one may ask? Some change is inevitable, and change does not necessarily equal bad. However, the possible issue in the cases Seremetakis portrays are as she argues that; “Sensory premises, memories and histories are being pulled out from under entire regional cultures and the capacity to reproduce social identities may be altered as a result.” (Ibid., 3).

When Hilde says that it is important for her to preserve the particular handicraft techniques, I do not believe she wants to preserve them only because of the *techniques* in themselves. I believe it is about something it goes beyond this. As described above, from my observations and talks with Hilde, my impression is that the techniques are very much tied together with the process it takes to transform resources to the materials she works with. Phrased differently, her handicraft as a *duojár* entails more than having knowledge about certain techniques. Relating to material properties of *duodji*, Natalia and Matthew Magnani argue that “(...) it is not just the agency of things (Gell 1998; Latour 2005) but also the unfolding experience of making these things that allow people to reorder their worlds.” (Magnani and Magnani 2020, 391). Through my meetings with Hilde, I have come to understand how *duodji* as something often related to identity expression, also may be tied together with knowledge about the surrounding environment and the elements within it, and furthermore as a knowledge which cannot really be distinguished from the very process of making *duodji*. The Magnani’s phrase a similar understanding quite poetically;

“While shaping local burl, tools allow the hand to respond to physical properties and the developing form (Ingold 2000:299–302), generating therapeutically meditative attention to the unwritten script between material and body and evoking ties to practices and environments shared across borders and intergenerationally.” (Ibid., 395).

#### **9.2.4 Fish-tanning course with Hilde**

I now turn to a situation in the fish-tanning course by Hilde, as another example of a learning process of a sensory kind. I partook in a course in tanning of fish-leather, led by Hilde outside her store in Sørkjosen. As described earlier, I met Hilde for the first time in May. At this time there were still leftovers of snow outside, and we were talking about the different aspects of her work as a hand crafter, and how it is largely dependent on the seasons. She described that the coloring of fish-leather must take place on a bright summer's day, and that there should be



some wind as well, so the leather could hang up to dry quickly outside. And so this was indeed the case. In the beginning of June we met up again, on a bright, windy summer day. The first day of the course I filmed a lot, as I was concerned with getting enough footage. On the second day of the course I felt more at ease, and put the camera more down. This opened up for me to try out parts of the fish-tanning as well. I will now show a description of a situation that tuned me more into how learning skills of a handicrafter may unfold itself.



*Still from film (00:15:41)*

*At a moment the participants in the course were stretching out and softening the fish skin, after it had been drying in the sun. One of the participants gave me a piece of fish skin to try out. I asked if there was a particular technique or way of handling the skin. Someone responded: - No just try it out, do some like this and some like this. They were making movements with their hands, showing a scrunching method and a stretching method. I remember first at this point sensing the smell of the fish, as one had to be quite close in order to smell it, moreover feeling the texture of the leather, and experiencing how it was to work with.*

I have had several experiences like this during my fieldwork, where I have asked ‘why do you do it this way/is there a reason?’ and I have been met with, ‘it just works, so that is why I/we do it this way’. There were also instances where I observed other participants engaging in similar talks with Hilde, or exclaimed similar questionings to me about current techniques

or stages in the process. Hilde however knew through experience that these particular ways of doing it worked. To me this shows how the handicraft-knowledge is largely embodied in its kind. Even though I might be able to provide a somewhat decent summary of how to color fish-leather using natural materials, I am not so sure I would actually know *how* to do it, as I did not take part in all of the processes physically myself. It would at least be a more exploratory approach without an expert present.

As described I had for some time during the course just been filming and observing the participants as they were learning how the process of fish-leather-tanning goes on. But when I got to try it out myself, and really had to *understand how to maneuver my hands*, it enlightened me as I experienced the learning process as highly physical. The participants may be instructed through language about what to do and how to do it, but there were also instances characterized in the same way as the empirical example above. The vocal instructions here where; work with the tactility to figure it out! One really needed to get the hands-in-there, in order to feel the state of the leather. Could it do with more stretching, or is it thin enough? Is it dry enough? I am sure the participants that participated physically in all the processes could mention a lot more than I am able to.

Related to physical knowledge, Sarah Pink She writes that embodiment had an increased focus during the 1990s, and that through this, social scientists started to be critical towards the earlier argued division of the body and mind, towards an understanding of “(...) the body not simply as a source of experience and activity that would be rationalized and/or controlled by the mind, but itself as a source of knowledge and subsequently of agency.” (Pink 2015, 3). I find that this understanding of the body and mind suits well in describing the kind of knowledge that I see as characteristic for my participants' work. Not every kind of knowledge needs to be rationalized and represented in the mind, but takes place *in* the body.

Grasseni also points to embodied knowledge, and how the body's physical positioning is of matter; “For example, it was necessary to physically align my act of looking with Corinne to appreciate the difference between the two leaves in her palm. This required proactive bodily repositioning on my part, coming close to her, (...) to change my experience of seeing.” (Grasseni 2022, 4)”. This is very similar to what I experienced during fieldwork. There are certain kinds of knowledge that are inaccessible unless you reposition yourself. I will now

relate the reflections on skilled vision a bit back to relations to cultural knowledge, as briefly touched upon in relation to Hilde's work as a duojár.

### 9.2.5 Reflection on cultural knowledge

It is easy for me to relate Hilde's practice of handicraft to a kind of 'cultural knowledge' since she does duodji that is considered as traditional sami handicraft. But it is somehow harder for me to relate Trine's practices in relation to culture. I believe this has to do with my own positionality. It is perhaps easier to relate practices that are different from one's own as 'cultural', but harder to view one's own practices in such a view. I did however not have any relation to color dyeing from beforehand. There is however another aspect of Trine's practices that one could see in relation to culture, which is related to the relations to nature, as in how one 'exists' in nature. One might talk about such a thing as norwegian "cabin-culture". Marianne Lien and Simone Abram has written a book on Norwegian relations to the cabin in *Hytta: Fire vegger rundt en drøm* (Lien and Abram 2019). I find this important to note as it says something about commonsensical ways of viewing culture coming from a majority background. It is harder for me to note what may be considered 'Norwegian culture', than it is to relate something to 'sami culture'. I cannot really pay this discussion justice here because of lack of space, but I find it an important issue to note.

My point about reflecting on this is not really to argue that cultural knowledge should be or are in practice distinctly separated. The point is to show that cultural knowledge and traditions are of importance to people, and they may be related to in different ways. Below I will describe a couple of interactions to exemplify how people relate to cultural knowledge.

This first example is from a walk with Trine. The quotation is transcribed from film material, although not part of the finished film. Trine approaches a birch, and points out a black crumbly growth on its stem.

**Trine:** - *These are the remains of a chaga. I use it to dye wool. It gets a nice yellow brown color. In sami tradition, however, they make tea from it. It is supposed to be very good for your health. This was a pretty big chaga, but someone has been here and taken some of it, but there is more left.*

Although Trine is not of Sámi heritage, or at least not as she knew of she exclaimed, she did relate to Sámi knowledge a couple of times during our trip. She also related of the name of the place where we were, ‘Várdu’, to its meaning in Sámi (00:04:08). I state this to show how the Sámi history is reflected in the cultural landscape, also by others than Sámi themselves.

In June I partook in a Kven-festival in Nordreisa, as also portrayed in the film (00:17:41-00:22:55). Hilde brought me there, and I got to meet a lot of interesting people. One of the ones I talked with was a man named Gjermund Vik. Gjermund seemed happy to share his knowledge about the ‘Lyngshorse’ (00:20:46-00:22:32). Shortly put he describes how the Lyngshorse is related to the term of ‘Tre stammers møte’. To me this shows a telling example of how the non-than human is related to human culture. Another interesting aspect is how this meeting linked the places of Nordreisa and Lyngen together, namely through meeting a horse ‘from Lyngen’, in Nordreisa. This gives an idea of how the places are linked, also through the more-than human. This brings me into the next section where I will focus more on experiences of the environment. The empirical material depicts a distinct environment, and distinct places. Yet the example with the Lyngs-horse also shows how the places are related, not only because of geography, but also because of the history of the different animals and organisms.

### **9.3 Coming to know in the river**

As noted in the presentation about John-Olav, he is an enthusiastic fisherman and nature-explorer. When I went to meet him, I expected him to stand out a bit in relation to my other participants, where I knew from beforehand that handicrafts would be the focus. When invited into John Olav’s living room, I was surprised to see that his desk looked rather similar to that of Hilde’s work-desk, in fact both in her store and at home. Filled with lots of fur in various sizes and colors, tools and different kinds of materials for use. It turned out that John Olav, in addition to both counting fish, and going fishing, also makes his own flies for fly-fishing, which is the kind of fishing he engages in mostly nowadays. Now, this was something we mostly got talking about right before I was leaving, as I was only staying for a weekend. But it is important to say that John Olav is not only a person engaging in nature, ‘*in nature*’. At home he also engages a lot in nature, for instance through making flies, and as such he really is a craftsman as well. He also has a collection of a lot of different stones, and

has spent spare-time researching the different kinds of stones and minerals, and where to find them in the area. John Olav may be considered a nature-expert in a lot of ways. I will now describe the visit I had with him in Sørkjosen, Nordreisa.

John Olav counts fish in the rivers in the area around Sørkjosen. He counts them for an overview of the fish-stock. Are the numbers going down or up? What development is to be expected in the coming seasons? Some of this he does as paid work, and some he does for his own interest. This activity gives John Olav a special view into what areas will be good for fishing. The way he counts the fish is by swimming into the river himself and together with others, wearing a dry-suit, water-goggles, a snorkel, and sometimes flippers.

In late October I got to join John Olav on one of his fish-counting trips. I brought a fellow student with me for the trip, and it turned out to be a good choice as I got some more reflections on how we experienced swimming in the river differently. I will show an example of this, but first I want to situate how the event took place.

*After meeting up with Jon-Olav in Sørkjosen, we sought to drive towards Vaddasfossen, a waterfall located further north in Nordreisa. Me and my friend were driving behind John Olav, unaware of where we would end up. After a while there were less and less houses, the road got narrower, bumpier and also snowier. At a spot we drove past several other cars, and saw an all-terrain vehicle with trailers drive into the forest. John-Olav could later inform us that these were moose-hunters that had just shot a moose, driving to pick it up.*

*After driving about 20 minutes or so on the bumpy road we stopped, and it was time to dive into the unknown. My friend tried out diving with John Olav first, so I could be sure to get some on film. When stopping the car, it was time for the two to jump right into the diving-suits. Seeing the two walking in diving-suits in the snowy landscape was a new sight for me. A friend of John Olav was also joining the trip. Right from the start of the excursion he and John Olav started pointing out the traces of people in the landscape. Both historically and from newer times. They pointed out traces of earlier power plants, and newer open huts made of wood in the area.*

*After a short walk, it was time to dive in. I was happy to observe first, being a little bit of a wuss. My friend and John Olav floated seemingly peacefully down the river-stream. The*

*reason I can say seemingly peaceful, is because I later got to try it out myself. At the first spots they only saw two fish, but luckily to me, we had more luck once it was my turn to try it out. It was the first time for me drifting down a river, and I was surprised by how strong the current feels, despite the river being rather shallow. I had never seen such moss underwater before, it was long and hairy, dancing in the water. Looking closely one could see several fish-hooks that had got stuck or lost in the water. Suddenly in a more open spot, several fish passed by. I was surprised by their speed. I could only catch a brief glimpse before they were gone somewhere out of sight. At this spot we counted about 15 fish, and John Olav expected the biggest to be around 7 kg. There were both salmon and sea trout.*

*Later on, me and my friend stopped by the supermarket before heading home to John Olav. I spotted a fish in the freezer, and thought it looked strikingly similar to the ones I had just seen myself swimming in the river. I took a picture of it and asked John Olav later if it was the same kind. He said yes, but that he never buys farmed fish himself. He explained that this was because of how they were fed, and nevertheless he did not need to buy this kind of fish. He also told me that he will sometimes switch food with his neighbors. They get fish from him, and in return he gets homemade meatballs.*

I will now describe the different experiences we had floating in the river. I put our views on our experiences snorkeling for fish as quotations. This is not quotations from one singular discussion, but a summary from various discussions.

**Miguel (fellow student):** - *I felt that I was experiencing how it was to be a fish.*

**Me:** - *I really felt like I was in my own bubble, away from my environment, almost like watching TV.*

**Jan-Olav:** - *I've done it so many times, it feels natural to me.*



*Picture: John- Olav in his element.*

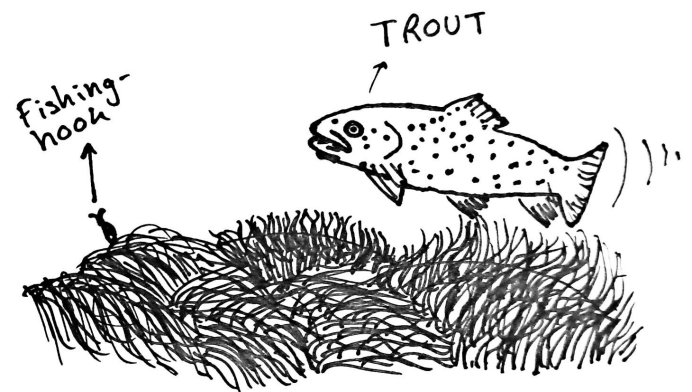
### **9.3.1 Reflections from being under water**

When looking back to the experiences from my various field-sites, I find that the experience from diving with John-Olav shows particularly well how notions of the sensorial and skilled vision may be tied together with experiences of the surrounding environment. When speaking of the sensorial here, I relate specifically to how the experience of diving is tightly linked to the embodied experience. Rather than the direct feeling of touch that is central for instance when working with the fish-skin, the sensorial here is more in relation to an overall bodily experience, the feeling of being in the water. In the water when wearing a full drysuit and goggles as we were, the only senses present are really that of sight and embodiment. The dry suit makes it difficult to feel texture, so the tactile here was more in the overall bodily sensation of being in the water.

The floating sessions went along quite efficiently. It was clear that we were tagging along at John-Olavs usual working routine, at least so was my impression. Although I had not been in a river in the same way as before, I was quite happy that I had a bit of previous diving experience. If not, I think I would only have thought about how to maneuver my body in the water, and how to breathe through the snorkel. Although it definitely was a new experience floating in a river, I felt comfortable enough to try and observe more of the environment around me. This reflection on my own previous embodied diving knowledge, reflects back to the arguments discussed regarding walking with Trine. Through the river-floating, I felt that I experienced very directly how my past experiences affected my way of knowing, in a particular environment. And also through noticing how much more skilled John Olav was. Not only is he skilled in his way of moving in the water, but also through what he is able to

take notice of through this experience. For instance, John Olav was able to consider the weight of the fish just by seeing it, something that I do not have the experience to do.

*Illustration: Rough drawing-sketch of the river from my own memory. Now, this is the memory of an inexperienced 'river-floater'. It would be interesting to see if a drawing by John-Olav would have been similar or not.*



The skilled vision that John Olav enacted is something that has been built up through him floating in the river, searching for fish. He also had a skilled way of seeing, quite literally. After the river-floating I got to talk a bit more with John Olav about how he maneuvers in the water. He explained that he tilts his head to the side, in order to get a better perspective with his eyes, covering the whole depth of the river. I see his skilled vision as consisting of multiple aspects. It is a sensorial or embodied knowledge, reflected in how he moves in the water, and it is knowledge about *what* he sees, such as deciding what kinds of fish he sees, and approximately their size.

When we were floating in the water it became abruptly clear to me how one is truly in the environment and one's experience cannot be distinguished from it. In this I relate to Tim Ingold and his notion of being in the environment. Ingold emphasizes the notion of humans as beings in the world. As noted in the theoretical framework, he is critical to the notion of nature vs society, as it distinguishes them from one another, as if one can be outside nature or outside society. He has written a chapter relating to hunting and gathering as ways of perceiving the environment (Ingold 2000, 40-60). By criticizing scientific enquiries relating cultural intelligence as something that comes forth through our minds, Ingold argues that, "In the hunter-gatherer economy of knowledge, by contrast, it is as entire persons, not as disembodied minds, that human beings engage with one another and, moreover, with non-human beings as well. They do so as beings *in* a world (Ingold 2000, 46). As noted, the fact that we are making sense of our environment through our bodies got very clear to me when floating in the river with John-Olav. When suddenly in an environment that did not feel



natural to me, it was impossible to ‘view it from the outside’. Humans are often however rather adaptable, as was made clear when John Olav said that being in the river felt natural to him. To me this evokes a reflection that our environment and how we live our lives impacts what feels natural to us, a notion I find quite poetic.

## **10. Connections between knowledge, resources/materials, and environment**

### **10.1 Skilled knowledge**

I have come to see the knowledge that these three people have, as knowledge that are dependent on participation in the various activities described. As reflected on under methodology, I believe that the presence of the camera and the limitations that followed with this, also made me more aware of how important participation is, in order to understand what such knowledge entail and encompass. Rather than Trine and Hilde only having skills in handicraft-techniques, they do similar to that of John-Olav, have a skilled knowledge about the environment from where the materials they use come from. Like Grasseni and her arguments on skilled vision, I argue that these knowledges comes from their engagement *in* the environment. Hilde’s, Trine’s and John Olav’s work is all affected by and in a tight relationship with the different seasons of the year, and they know where and when to look for the specific resources they are looking for. Nature is however very much alive, and might change a bit from time to time, yet my impression is that they do have a skilled vision that helps them in their navigations in nature.

I have spoken about retrieving or collecting materials, but perhaps one could also speak about retrieving knowledge, as I see the knowledge as being dependent upon an engagement *in* the environment. I could have just spoken with Trine, Hilde and John Olav about what they do, which for one would not have been very anthropological, but I strongly believe that although I would have gotten information about *what* they do, I do not believe I would have gained a deeper understanding of what it *entails to do* what they do. Marchand writes that for several of the co-authors in his book ; “(...) an apprentice-style method of “learning about practice by practically doing` nurtures truly”embodied” discoveries about the temporal, social and physical processes that are inseparable from acts of learning and communicating knowledge (...).” (Marchand 2010, 7). Similarly I see learning about these practices properly, as

dependent upon a participation in them. The participation also opens up for knowledge that otherwise may not have surfaced, such as the example of having seen the fishhooks on the ground in the river.

Before entering the field I had an understanding of duodji as important because of its relevance as an expression of Sámi identity. Through my meeting with Hilde however, I now have a broader understanding of what this practice may entail, and how it can be related to broader knowledges about the environment one is surrounded by. It was my impression of all these three people, that they had a big respect for the nature around them. As examples, Trine is occupied with securing future growth as she picks materials from around her cabin, Hilde is occupied with using as much of the different parts of the resources as possible to minimise waste, and John Olav is occupied with the conditions of the fish in its environment.

## **10.2 A deep relation to the material objects**

The way I see it, these various process-focused activities has an impact on how Trine, Hilde and John-Olav view finished products. It is a view that focuses on objects through its process of coming to be. As reflected earlier about Hilde and her relation to the products she sells in her store, John-Olavs close relationship with the fish in their environment, makes him view the fish in the store in relation to how it has gotten there, and not only its matter as a resource for food. Rather than having only having read up on fish farming which anyone could do, I see his reflections also as the result of his own physical engagements with the world, here specifically his engagements with fish. Trine similarly told me, as noted above, that she was occupied with where the wool she buys comes from. This shows that although she does not produce the wool herself, she is occupied with its whole process.

I believe these reflections about viewing objects as having come-to-be, would not have come through so clearly had I not experienced myself the sensorialities that are part of this process of coming-to-be. I find it important to note however, that I can understand how my arguments thus far could stand in danger of a romanization of these processes and activities. My point is not to take a moral stance, but to argue that these perspectives may be of importance, yet this does not mean that I would disregard other perspectives. I want to reflect a bit on a term that I believe is often seen as related with a romanization, namely the term of ‘nostalgia’.

Early on in this thesis, I reflected on how changes in my family's relation to handicraft and to natural resources has changed over time, and how I see this in relation to bigger societal changes. As I reflect back to childhood experiences of being in nature, or my mother teaching me how to knit, I might be struck by a feeling of nostalgia. Seremetakis reflects on the term of 'nostalgia' within a Greek context. She argues that: "(...) "Nostalghia is linked to the personal consequences of historicizing sensory experience which is conceived as a painful bodily and emotional journey." (Seremetakis 1994, 4). As mentioned before, she relates the personal sensorial experiences of the peach together with wider societal changes, and furthermore she relates this to the term of 'nostalgia', as here described. I believe nostalgia could in certain instances be related to a romanization, but I also believe it may occur in the way Seremetakis explains. Nonetheless what this view of nostalghia does, is to take seriously the sensorial experiences, as parts of how humans experience societal and historical change. I find that these arguments by Seremetakis show how we as humans are affected by our environment, and all the elements it incorporates, or described differently, the non-human.

### **10.3 Experiences of different environments**

Seremetakis relates the sensorial to the physical environment as she writes:

"The child arrived to the smell of the ocean, the trees, lemon, orange, olive, the sound of the donkey's bray, and the omnipresent, loud, loud music of the cicadas: sensory gates that signified entry into a separate space." (Seremetakis 1993, 5)

Seremetakis here notes how the sensorial may be part of our experiences of different spaces. I will now reflect more on relations between the sensorial and the experiences of different places and environments. Tim Ingold argues for the importance of seeing humans as a species in a common environment, that is made up of entanglements between all other species that live on earth (Ingold 2000). I truly believe this is important to have in mind. Related to this, Grasseni writes that: " While agreeing with Ingold (2005) that vision "unfolds in circuits of action and perception, without beginning or end, that are set up through the placement of the perceiver from the outset as a being in the world" (99, emphasis in original), I focus analytically on the proactive (re)positioning of the perceiver." (Grasseni 2022, 7). In a more recent argument by Ingold however, he does not necessarily seem to disagree as much with Grasseni as she here portrays, as he states that: "(...) conscious awareness does not retreat with practice, or subside into the murky depths of unconscious automatism, but rather

increases in concentration and intensity with the fluency of action, along the ever-extending pathways of the body's sensory entanglement in the lifeworld." (Ingold 2010, 130).

Moreover, Marchand describes Ingold's arguments as such: "Becoming knowledgeable is not a matter of assembling information, Tim Ingold argues, but rather knowledge is formed through everyday activities and knowing is coterminous with our movement *through* the world." (Marchand 2010, 15).

I very much relate to Ingold's argument about knowledge as created through movement in the world, together with Grasseni's term of skilled vision. In my fieldwork I experienced Trine's skilled vision as connected with our walks in the forest, and with John Olav I came to know his skilled vision through floating in the river. Moreover it was the floating or 'movement' through the water that enabled my reflection on the frozen fish in the store. Had I not had the experience of seeing the fish in the water, I probably would not have related the two kinds as the same species of fish. And perhaps I would not have talked with John-Olav about the fact that this was not a fish from the river, but from a fish farm. As such I very much relate to Ingold's notion of knowledge produced through movement, yet I also see it as something more actively created by a person, in the way Grasseni does through focusing on the body's active positioning. I can take as many walks in the forest as I would like, yet this does not necessarily mean that I will come to know what Trine knows. Grasseni puts light on how knowledge is also purposefully attained by an interested and actively engaged person, and how this knowledge is often socially created (Grasseni 2022).

As described earlier, I have been following quite different activities, taking place in different environments; the river, the forest, a store in a small village. I believe having my base in the city of Tromsø made the differences in the experiences of the different places and environments stand out even more. The experience of floating in the river with Jon Olav made me excruciatingly aware about how the environment I was in was of matter of my experience of and navigation in it. Although the river and the forest around it are connected, my experience was that they are still quite different environments to move in. While I agree in seeing the world as a intertwined place like Ingold, I still believe it is of importance to consider in what ways places and environments *do differ*. If not, I do not think we humans would be that interested in going different places, moving ourselves around. The people I have met go to these places in order to extract resources, yet I truly do not believe that Trine for instance would spend a lot of time at her cabin, if she did not also enjoy spending time

*there*. I see a danger in Ingolds in a possible neutralness in how we humans engage in the world. To put it a bit on the edge; It is all our environment, so what does it matter if it is a city or a forest?

As is probably clear, I argue that there is an importance in stating that there is a difference between these places. Let me provide a bit of an exaggerated example to make it even more clear. Let us think of the difference between seeing a lion in a cage in a Zoo, and seeing a lion roaming freely around in the wild. Notably several things change, including the power-relations. In the city the soundscape is largely made up of traffic, it smells of exhaust, and the ground is most often paved. When coming out in the forest with Trine, the prevailing sounds were birds and the sound of wind in the trees, not to mention the sheep always somewhere either close or more distant. The air is fresher, and the ground is softer. My experience is that when far away from the city, I can more clearly see how I am part of the more-than human world. As this is said, the experiences of being in the various environments and places, however also made me realize that humans actually are most places. The area of Trine's cabin is not so distant that human traces are not traceable. For instance, one could still hear and see planes passing by from time to time. In the river which I normally would consider rather 'non-human' as we cannot live our lives underwater, yet there were still physical traces of human interactions through the fish hooks on the riverbed. If these places would be transformed through even more human interaction however, this would very likely change the resources available in the area. My experiences of being in the city, in the forest, and the river, enabled me to see more clearly how the differences between them matter.

Penny McCall Howard critiques multispecies approaches as he states that: "Efforts to unite analysis of humans and nonhumans have led to a lack of attention to the divisions within human societies (...)" (Howard 2018, 64). I see the validity in Howard's argument, yet I do not see multispecies approaches as 'a big bad wolf', despite the connotations of this exact expression. I see it as central to the multispecies approach to challenge the way in which we may order our interactions hierarchically. This does not mean that divisions within human societies are *not* important, but that other topics are also of importance. I argue that multispecies approaches *do* most often regard power relations, although more often between species rather than between humans. I believe that many of our interactions in daily life also encompass more than human socialites. These may be interactions with our environment,

architecture, materials, or other species. As beings in the world as a world that consists of more than humans, I believe multispecies approaches have a lot to offer.

#### **10.4 Knowledge as interaction**

Marchand states that “Making knowledge (...) is an ongoing process shared *between* people and *with* the world.” (Marchand 2010, 2). Similarly I have come to see the knowledge that my participants enact, both as entailing an active process of engagement as earlier reflected on through Grasseni, and as an engagement with and in the world, a notion strongly argued by Ingold (Ingold 2000). I find that that the notion of the three tribes that Hilde in particular related to, suits as a good term that encompasses the different kinds of local knowledge that is intertwined through humans, through engagements with the more-than human, and through the geography. What I experienced during this fieldwork was how different people related to these different knowledges, sometimes related to their own background, and sometimes unrelated to this. It is important to note that not every interaction was related to talks about cultural knowledge. And as argued before, the point is not really for me to say that ‘this relates to this cultural knowledge’, and ‘this relates to the other’. The point is really that the ways in which we maneuver around in our environment, most often is learned and related to our own social lives. Marchand argues that; “(...) though the cognitive processes of interpretation are individual, the production of knowledge, as mental representations, is social. Knowledge is realized (...) *in* communication and, more generally, *in* interaction.” (Marchand 2010, 12). I argue through relating to Grasseni as I have earlier, that these ways of maneuvering, when specialized through particular practices, are well described through Grasseni’s term of ‘skilled visions’. I see the skilled visions that I have observed through my participants ways of navigating in their different fields, as something learned and social through human interactions, but also as something that has aspired through interactions with other species, materials, and engagements with the environment.

## 12. Conclusion

I have in this written thesis and through my film, searched to investigate connections between materials, senses, and the environment, through different practices. As I have been an apprentice both in visual anthropology, and of the knowledge of my participants, and I have come to see the practices I have observed and engaged in as tightly connected with processes of making knowledge. Through Grasseni's analysis I have argued that these knowledges are 'skilled' in their kind, and that they reflect past experiences, as they are enacted in a present situation. I have argued that central in these kinds of skilled vision or knowledge, is the experience of the sensorial. The one cannot really exist without the other, they are skills that are learned through physical practices, through engagements with resources, materials, and with the surrounding environment. I have also through the notion of 'Tre stammers møte', seen how skilled visions may be linked with cultural knowledge, and that culture in this sense goes beyond the human interactions, but as closely related with interactions beyond the human, through interactions with other species, and the wider environment.

Through relating my fieldwork experiences with arguments by Seremetakis, I have come to see how the sensorial aspects of the skilled visions can be of importance regarding social changes, both past, and future ones. I see the skilled visions that I observed my participants as enacting, as tightly intertwined with a respect for their surroundings, which I see as a result of the processes through which the different skilled visions were acquired. I worry that if similar skilled visions are not practiced, there may be a danger in losing a particular kind of relation with the surroundings and the different elements it entails. I can go on as many walks as I would like, I can go for swims in the river, and I can sew in leather, yet this does not mean that I will acquire a skilled knowledge of the kind that my participants enact. These skilled visions are dependent on an interest in learning about the resources, materials, and the environment. It is a kind of knowledge, that is made through active bodily and sensorial interactions.

## **11. Possibilities for future research**

My impression is that a lot of people living in Norway express great gratitude for the nature that we are surrounded with. Several people express worries about the more ‘untouched’ nature, as human interventions in nature keep expanding (Nyhus 2024). With the term ‘untouched’ I here relate to nature that is less shaped by human presence. It is important to note that I do not deem all human presence as bad, but I believe that there are different ways of being present. I believe that research that focuses on the sensorial experiences and interactions with the more-than human, could be very suitable for investigating how people deal with such changes.



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