Participatory Sensory Methods for Inclusive Climate Decision-Making

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Project: *Observable Climate: Archival Photography of the Arctic as a Visual Rhetoric of Transformation, Loss, and Absence*

The project addresses the documentation of transformation, loss, and absence through archival photography of the Arctic. My aim is to explore the potential of archival photography to materialize ecological awareness - to acquire what might be called an „eco-eye“. My methodology draws on polar ethnography and its emphasis on local cosmology. This perspective highlights the ways in which animals, plants, humans, and the non-living tundra have shared a centuries-long history of sensory communication. Observing these interactions as they were once captured by photographers enables me to better understand how environments change, and what has been - perhaps irretrievably - lost.

Project: *The Meadow that Makes Sense. Sensory-anthropological Perspective on Biodiversity*

Central Europe's semi-natural grasslands are Palaearctic biodiversity hotspots, shaped by centuries of low-intensity land use and bearing cultural value. Today they face intensification, abandonment, and loss of ecological knowledge. Slovakia's grasslands illustrate this paradox: despite EU frameworks and ecological recognition, biodiversity continues to decline, raising questions about the human dimensions of grassland survival.

This study in Nová Bošáca explores why farmers - primary meadow managers - often neglect biodiversity-supporting practices or abandon management altogether. Using ethnographic methods, we examine farmers' perspectives, decision-making, and sociocultural constraints within a broader transdisciplinary program on Carpathian socio-ecological systems.

Methodology

Sensory and Multispecies Approaches

- Approach: sensory anthropology + multispecies ethnography
- Question: How do humans, animals, plants, and landscapes co-create ecological knowledge?
- Challenge: Beyond technocratic framings → situated, embodied care

Sensory Knowledge

Sea-mammal hunting Chukotka and Pastoralism in Slovakia as a

Multispecies Practices

- Not only about subsistence or production, but also about *reciprocal sensory communication*.

- Forms of knowing: sight, scent, sound, touch.
- Practices:
  - Reading animal behaviour before storms.
  - Recognizing the quality of hay through smell and touch.
  - Coordinating hunting or grazing through sounds and rhythms.

- Knowledge as *embodied, affective, and relational*.

Theoretical Contributions

Tim Ingold's *correspondence*
Roland Barthes' *pathos*
David MacDougall's *affectionate knowledge*
Michael Taussig's *sensuous mimesis*
Gilles Deleuze's *affection-image*
Donna J. Haraway's *becoming-with*
Anna L. Tsing's *arts of noticing*

Aim: capture *how knowledge is transmitted across generations and species*.

Author	Term	Key Characteristics
Tim Ingold	correspondence	Mutual attunement and co-presence in movement
Roland Barthes	pathos	Emotional stirring evoked by an image, one that wounds or deeply moves.
David MacDougall	affectionate knowledge	Knowledge arising from attentive, affective, and sensory contact with others and with the environment.
Michael Taussig	sensuous mimesis	Bodily rooted mimesis that transforms the subject.
Gilles Deleuze	affection-image	The filmic image expressing pure affect – a bodily state without action or reaction.
Donna J. Haraway	becoming-with	Existence is always co-constituted, shaped in companionship.

Doing Sensory Ethnography I.

- On-the-go’ interviews in fields and pastures.
- Embodied Mapping and Walk-alongs
- Immersive video and audio documentation.
- Home photography – Photo elicitation methods
- Olfactory and visual naming tasks (Majid & Burenhult 2014).

Doing Sensory Ethnography II.

- Soundscape Recording & Listening Sessions
- Material Touch Kits
- Participatory Video Diaries
- Scent Collection & Olfactory Memory Work
- Rhythm & Movement Observation
- Participatory Drawing or Sketching
- Seasonal Diaries & Sensory Calendars

Sentient and Sensorial Ecologies.

Landscapes as Participants

- Landscape shapes and is shaped by human–nonhuman interactions.
- Engaging elders, children, animals, plants
- Capturing tacit and non-verbal knowledge
- Practices of *care and stewardship*:

  - Hunting and haymaking as olfactory, tactile, temporal event.
  - Seas and meadows as spaces of shared presence of humans, animals, plants, and other non-human beings.

- Biodiversity sustained through *attention, perception, and relational care*.
- Opening space for more democratic climate decision-making

Key Findings

Shared experiences in the Arctic and Slovak Carpathians

- Deep attachment to sea/meadows and appreciation of marine mammals/biodiversity
- Trapped between romanticized imaginaries, economic pressures, cultural disruption and corruption
- Retain ecological knowledge but doubt its present-day applicability

Where success occurs

- Diversified livelihoods
- Consistent technical & institutional support
- Networks valuing local practices, reinforced by markets & activist engagement

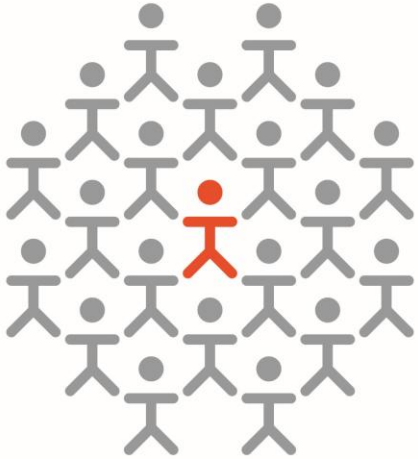
Ecological crises cannot be solved by technical fixes alone → policies must engage with lived realities.

Implications: *Rethinking Biodiversity Care. Conservations as Cohabitation.*

- Not external intervention, but *attuned, lived coexistence*
- Sensory & affective knowledge as critical
- Support **intergenerational transmission** of sensory skills
- Integrate **local sensory indicators** into climate & biodiversity monitoring
- Rethink policy-local people relations:

1. Acknowledge the research partners as **knowledge and value holders**
2. Develop **flexible, locally-adapted support mechanisms**
3. Address **market barriers** undervaluing extensive farming products, incl. corruption bias
4. Facilitate **knowledge exchange** between the research partners, scientists & conservationists
5. Align **modernization** with biodiversity goals

Thank you for your attention.



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