



# The Intersubjective Ecology Lab: Collaborative More-than-Human and Artistic Pedagogies

Sessions presented at The Highland Gathering /  
Ekologos Global Environmental Humanities Winter School 2023

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## Introduction: The Intersubjective Ecology Lab

Founded on the premise that all living beings and systems are subjects in their own right, the Intersubjective Ecology Lab (IEL) is a collaborative effort at innovative, creative and experimental ways of reviving or arriving at socio-ecological knowledges and relationships that can help us reimagine our present and future beyond the so-called era of 'the Anthropocene'<sup>1</sup> by supporting ecosystemic well-being on a local and planetary scale. The lab is headed by experimental philosopher and artist Jonathon Keats, co-run by Philosophy of Indigenous Studies scholar and artist Anna Ziya Geerling (undersigned) who co-coordinates the Ekologos Global Environmental Humanities Project and hosted at the Highland Institute by co-founder Dr. Michael Heneise who also leads Ekologos, and institute director Catriona Child. This

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1. For example, towards the 'Humilocene' (Abram, Milstein, & Castro-Sotomayor, 2020) or as Jonathon Keats proposed, back and towards the 'Greater Holocene', through his artistic-philosophical project '*Pioneers of the Greater Holocene*' (2019). For a discussion on the Anthropocene concept, see Haraway, 2015, in which she proposes the 'Chthulucene'.


year's Highland Institute Summit was a collaborative effort with Ekologos, which is an international project oriented at facilitating pedagogical events, tools and exchanges that converge around the topics of Indigenous Ecological Knowledges (IEK) and climate change. Ekologos brought in delegates from all partnering institutes,<sup>2</sup> and of course the staff and associated scholars of the Highland Institute which hosted this first Winter School gathering of the Ekologos project, as well as other professors, scholars and regional experts.<sup>3</sup> The Intersubjective Ecology lab hosted a third of the workshop sessions, engaging participants in collaborative and artistic methods to think, converse, imagine and craft through the complex issues of our times, with a session led on speculative futures by Evan Tims; a session on climate adapted heritage cuisine by Tümüzo Katiry, Akum Imchen and Saktum Wonti in collaboration with Jonathon Keats; and sessions led by myself, described below. Additionally, the IEL hosted sessions on 'The Atlas of Ecological Knowledge', a collaborative project with Ekologos, and co-coordinated by undersigned, with the intention of creating a digital platform for local and Indigenous knowledge revitalization and dissemination – a type of 'Indigenous wiki'. During the gathering this was tentatively explored through the Wiki commons platform, with Shyamal Lakshminarayanan guiding several sessions to explore its infrastructure. Pivotal amidst such exploration of traditional knowledge digitization is the consideration of ethics, intellectual property rights, and risks, so that We dedicated one of the 'wiki sessions' to hosting a first open conversation discussing such. This was followed up on one month later by organizing an online seminar by PhD scholar Aswathy V., who offered a thorough introduction to intellectual property rights in the Indian legal context. Below follows an overview of the workshops and sessions I hosted during the Ekologos & Highland Institute Gathering.

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- Haraway, D. J. (2015). 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin,' *Environmental Humanities* 6(1): 159–165.

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2. Namely Unicamp in Brazil with Antoniono Guerreiro, Thomas Bøhn, from the Norwegian Institute of Marine Research, Piyush Roy and Meera Baidur from RVU in Bangalore.
  3. Among which anthropologist Sahana Ghosh, archaeologist Tiatoshi Jamir, and the Nagaland Climate Cell.



# Dialectics of (un)learning: Decolonizing our relationship with 'Nature'

Session by Anna Ziya Geerling

The first session hosted by the Intersubjective Ecology Lab (IEL) was an introduction to the converging themes of cultural diversity, philosophy of science, and ecology, within the contexts of colonial political oppression. The set-up was a reflective dialogue rather than a lecture, seeking to stimulate active involvement by participants in an egalitarian and participatory learning environment. As such, I guided and mediated a conversation between the participants, which existed out of a diverse crowd in terms of age, gender, nationality and academic background; from anthropology and religious studies to biology and geology, from Brazil to Norway, and from the UK to India. Having written the title of the session 'Decolonizing our relationship with nature' on the whiteboard, I engaged the participants by discussing the concepts in the title, co-creating a word map as we went along.

## Decolonizing Cultural Ecology

Starting off our discussion, we reflected on what 'decolonization' means, which led us to consider the various forms of coloniality of past and present – from land theft to other forms of domination, such as by proclaiming cultural advancement, imposing both religious dogmas, and today, dogmas of 'valid' knowledge production, as well as the workings of the economic system today. Offering certain leads, and filling in the gaps with further information, we talked about the *terra nullius* doctrine which roots coloniality firmly in Eurocentric notions and policies of land use, and how this shaped the international legal system and was used to legitimize colonization.<sup>4</sup> This brought us to discuss current iterations of a similar logic, in which 'Western' ideas about land use and conversely – the necessary other side of the coin of such exploitative resource use – nature conservation, can sometimes fuel current 'green colonialism' practices of conservation on Indigenous land without consent, and without consideration of local lifeways.<sup>5</sup> The ways

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4. Namely, by failing to recognize Indigenous land use and regarding land as uninhabited or unused when not used or exploited according to 'Western' standards. See Åhrén (2016) for a legal explanation and discussion.
  5. Taking the form of 'fortress conservation' through the creation of 'wilderness' areas that are guarded to avoid human interference, based on the idea that nature can only thrive without human presence. Such historically and currently still often involves displacement and even murder of the local inhabitants. For more on the

we treat and learn about each other and ‘nature’ is shaped and regulated by cultural-societal values, which also give shape to laws, and are based on how we see and understand ourselves as humans, and the world. It is these axiologies, epistemologies, and ultimately ontologies or cosmologies that interpret and create the world which need inspection as we face ‘ecological crises’ caused in reality by our socio-economic models.<sup>6</sup> Indigenous cultures and knowledges offer much needed different understandings of and approaches to the multi-species entanglements that we are part of and depend upon, and acknowledging the importance and validity of such epistemic diversity is part of the ‘unlearning’ that is part of a decolonizing process.<sup>7</sup> Specifically, the mental divide between human (civilization) and ‘nature’ or ‘nonhuman’, also perpetuated in the name of conservation, needs inspection as a central dogma of the colonial idea of ‘modernity’, in which (certain) humans are seen as superior to the rest of the world, with ‘culture’ imagined to be a linear progression away from or above ‘nature’.<sup>8</sup> Such a divide allows the objectification of anything not human, giving rise to widespread exploitation without moral consideration, but also a resultant approach to ‘nature conservation’ focused only on protecting an imagined ‘pristine nature’ or ‘wilderness’ elsewhere; thereby failing to address the causes of exploitation rooted in the ways (and executed in those places where) we *do* use, interfere and co-exist with and within the ‘natural world’.<sup>9</sup> We need to move towards a relearning of how to use resources, knowledges and technologies for our survival *wisely*,<sup>10</sup> i.e. for our common survival, and ideally while contributing to biodiversity wellbeing through balanced and diverse biocultural landscape management systems.<sup>11</sup> As partakers in the dance of ecosystem relations, with our cultures and ecologies co-evolving (or co-deteriorating), we thus need to explore the ways that cultural diversity is entangled with biological diversity,<sup>12</sup> and conversely, how monocultures of mind create monocultures of agricultural and other land management systems.<sup>13</sup>

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history of conservation vis-a-vis Indigenous lands, see Cronon (1995), Short (1991) and Spence (1999) for the case of USA’s first national parks like Yellowstone.

6. Environmental philosopher Arne Næss also referred to this as deep ecology, as contrasting to ‘shallow’ environmental movements; see e.g. Seed, Macy, Fleming, & Næss, 1988, *Thinking like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings*; named after a chapter of famous environmentalist A. Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac* (1977 [1949]), which inspired the deep ecology movement. The fact that much of pollution and emissions causing our current crises was caused by a small affluent percentage of the world population shows how ‘ecological crises’ really are crises of the economic system, and issues of justice.
7. For more on decolonization and epistemic diversity, see e.g. De Sousa-Santos, 2014; Walsh, 2014; Nakata, et al., 2012; Vázquez, 2011; Escobar, 2011; Kuokkanen, 2007; and Mignolo, 2000.
8. Lugones, 2010; for a discussion on modernity/coloniality, in which ‘modernity’ is explained as a logic of a Eurocentric ‘civilizing’ project which fuelled and sought to legitimise colonial oppressions, see also Quijano (2000).
9. With more than 24% of Earth’s terrestrial surface taken up by cultivated systems (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005), an important aspect of maintaining biodiversity, as well as water catchment and other ecological services (ES), is safeguarding or re-establishing agricultural diversity.
10. In a conference on traditional (ecological) knowledge (TEK) in 1995, Inuit participants explained ‘TEK’ to include, a.o., ‘wisdom in using knowledge; using heart and head together’ (Emery 1997: 3; derived from Berkes, 2008 [1999]: 5). This brings awareness to the fact that there must be a relational, moral context to using knowledge for it to actually serve the community.
11. An often-overlooked fact by ‘Western’ understandings of resource use, is that in some cases harvesting – if following certain rules – actually helps species populations thrive. See Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013) on the harvesting of *Wishkpeemishkos*, sweetgrass, by her Potawatomi community.
12. See Posey (ed., 1999) for a tentative definition of biocultural heritage. See also Bridgewater & Rotherham (2019), and the statement by the United Nations Environment Programme (2007).
13. How we use the word ‘culture’ today was derived from a metaphor for (agricultural) cultivation, i.e. signalling a cultivation of the mind. Monocultural cultivation not only threatens agricultural biodiversity, but also depletes soil fertility, often relies on pesticides and fertilizers signalling a type of toxic dependency and creates a vulnerability to pests or erratic climatic conditions while decreasing local self-sufficiency. We can draw parallels to how a ‘monoculture of mind’, signals a hegemonic dogma of understanding and relating to the

## Knowing ‘Nature’

Such discussions point to a reconsideration of what ‘nature’ itself means, which was the second element of our dialogue. We encountered interesting diverging perspectives between the participants, based on their academic backgrounds. From the biological science point of view of one of the participants, nature was indeed understood as something distinct from human and eroding the distinction would potentially decrease our ability to safeguard this ‘nature’, she worried, whereas from an anthropological perspective informed by Indigenous worldviews<sup>14</sup> of another participant, we were all social and ecological parts of a shared world, along with invisible subjects like spirits, which therefore need to be respected if we are to survive. Mediating the conversation meant first and foremost to keep everyone in dialogue, and so for much of the duration of the session, ‘humans?’ was a tentative word map element connected to ‘nature’ on the whiteboard, until everyone agreed to remove the question mark. The questions raised ultimately also point us to scrutinize some of the ‘Western’ disciplines and their epistemological ideals of knowledge production necessitating an imagined ‘objective distance’, while being oriented at making universal knowledge claims,<sup>15</sup> as contrasted with a local intimate *knowing* of a land, indeed a relation between subjects, more similar to the way we ‘know’ persons. Not only should we recognize the validity of diverse knowledge systems and the resulting differing information they offer, but also consider the resulting differing (moral) relationship cultivated between that which or who is known and the knower. We say knowledge is power, but actually knowledge produces responsibility to that or those who are known. The IEL therefore understands and seeks to engage people with knowledge production as an inherently relational practice, in which the world makes itself known, and we respond with our senses,<sup>16</sup> and indeed, in which the world knows us back. In our dialogue, we therefore ended up talking about the manifold and diverse intelligences of other beings; something the ‘Western’ sciences long failed to acknowledge or research because of underlying assumptions about humanity’s superiority.<sup>17</sup>

## Artistic Pedagogies: Storytelling with the world

The dialogue came to a close after 1.5 hours with a whiteboard full of relations and reflections, more questions than answers, and some newly inspired, decolonized understandings of and ways of relating with the world we call ‘nature’. Putting humanity back into a humbler place of ‘being part of’ still addresses our overriding impacts, but also our resulting shared vulnerability. Rounding up our consideration of different knowledge systems and resulting pedagogies that can inspire different understandings about humans and the world, I ended the session by showing a video I made on the topic of humanature relations, which explains how I use and conceive of artistic practice as a form of collaborative storytelling with the world to give voice to such thoughts.<sup>18</sup> While using diverse mediums – from developing analogue

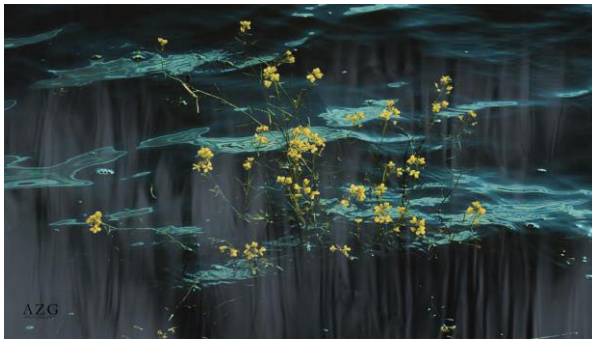
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world, hampering creative thought and diversity, and thus resilience in the current times of crisis in which we need to think outside the current frames of e.g. ‘development’ as a measure for wellbeing, for solutions. As mentioned, coloniality not only imposed hegemonic ways of land use, but also ‘colonized the mind’ by promoting Eurocentric ideas of ‘civilization’, including about culture, knowledge, and religion. See also Shiva, 1993.

14. Specifically, the Kalapalo community, in Brazil.
15. See Haraway, 1988 for her treatise on needing to situate our knowledge systems and knowledge production, as being firmly rooted in place, time, and cultural backdrop, with its ontological, epistemological, and axiological fundamentals, but also the individual and their particular experience and perspective.
16. See also Abram, 1996.
17. For an example of growing research into more-than-human intelligence, see Herzing (2014). See also Jonathon’s Keats’ various engagements with and thought experiments on the topic, e.g. on slime molds at [https://youtu.be/MAtVq89I\\_rQ?si=7okiwPi6L0jIEzo5](https://youtu.be/MAtVq89I_rQ?si=7okiwPi6L0jIEzo5) (Biotopia Lab, 2022).
18. You can watch ‘Arts as Storytelling with the World’ (2022) at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXXdrDQXYKQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXXdrDQXYKQ).

photos of a melting glacier collaboratively with the chemistry of seaweed (instead of usual industrial developing chemicals), to text, ceramics, and other crafts and installations with harvested materials – in my art exhibition project ‘Fluid Futures, Tidal Clocks: The Intertidal Zone’, I address climate change through a poetic portraiture of water, suggesting them as a teacher.<sup>19</sup> The ecotone of the intertidal zone is through poetic and artistic means proposed as a philosophical nudge, a conceptual-material reflection of our current predicament between flood and drought teaching us the art of adaptive resilience rooted in facilitating diversity. The symbolism of poetic language, whether visual or verbal, forces the audience to engage and reflect (rationally), while also touching the emotions (something mere facts and numbers trying to describe the implications of e.g. climate change don’t always effectively accomplish). Artistic practices can therefore constitute a means of communication, as well as a mode of learning and knowledge production, that can evoke introspection and challenge mainstreamed ideas, bring awareness to complex issues, and open the door to imagination for other possible worlds, while reaching diverse audiences. They offer an epistemic approach which is closer to Indigenous pedagogies of storytelling – rooted in engagement and subjectivity and spawning new/old values and relationships.

In conclusion, the quest to find (back) sustainable ways of co-existence, necessitates that we decolonize our thinking and open to the plethora of pedagogies, knowledges and (morals guiding) ways of life available to us. It is time we started humbly listening to the world as a teacher again, and cultivate diversity in our minds, and on the lands we share, alike.



**Figure 1:** Foetus of Life: Entangled Fragility. The Intertidal Zone Series © Anna Ziya Geerling (2023)



**Figure 2:** Biocultural Heritage: Wild Mustard's Last Blossom. The Intertidal Zone Series © Anna Ziya Geerling (2023)<sup>20</sup>


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19. Teaching us the values of fluidity (across imagined borders, between nations, water and land, as between human and ‘nature’), transformation (between phases, from solid to liquid, from stone to erosion, from a capitalist system to a humbling), and relationality (through the hydrological cycle across space-time, realizing that our own bodies are 80% made of water, but also indeed spatially between the various water bodies today).
20. Wild mustard is ancestor of many of our current vegetables, cultivated by humans by seed selection and other ‘natural’ (non-GMO) means of stimulating the growth of certain aspects of plants, constituting a prime example of biocultural diversity created through agriculture. This picture was taken in a flooding lake in Spain, with an added layer of a rainy window in the Arctic, with the series communicating how climate change defies the idea of nation state borders through the case of water connecting us in a global cycle (so that the melting of ice caps in Greenland affects the monsoon in North East India, and the heating arctic affects floods in the south of Spain).

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# Proverbial Observatories & Bestiaries of the More-than-Humane: Improvisation Theatre as a Tool for Participatory and Embodied Storytelling Pedagogy

Session by Anna Ziya Geerling in collaboration with Jonathon Keats



## Bestiaries of the More-Than-Humane

Bestiaries of the More-than-Humane is a project led by Jonathon Keats, which hosts workshops in various countries and is based on the question: *whom have you learned from, and what?* In this case the ‘who’ refers to more-than-human subjects, which could be other animals, plant species, rivers, or mountains. It is based on the understanding that ecosystems are, and are comprised of, agential and knowledgeable subjects, which can teach us not only about themselves (how they work, what they need), but also various values that may inform our own behaviours. These could potentially help us steer our way out of the current exploitative regime of Western capitalism and extractive and domination based ways of knowing and relating to the world, that caused some to name our era ‘the Anthropocene’. Bestiaries were highly valued books with illustrations of various types of beasts (‘natural’ and ‘fantastical’) and ecological elements, which were extensively used in the context of medieval Europe to teach moral values, reflecting the Christian understanding that the world itself was the word of God. Such stories were based on similar, even older storybooks from other cultures and contexts such as the Panchatantra from India, which were themselves based on even older oral traditions. Indeed, Indigenous oral cultures have since time immemorial used fables, tales, myths, and legends to impart knowledge about an ecological world full of relationships between varying subjects – some human, some animal, some plant, some rock, some invisible – reflecting the great diversity of subjects that shape and mediate the animate world. The Bestiaries of the More-Than-Humane project seeks to re-engage such a pedagogy in new ways, invoking the old practice of moral storytelling through bestiary tales, while shedding new light on the intelligences and values of the ‘more-than-human’,<sup>21</sup> including lifeways and (moral) relations distinctly different from human ones; i.e. the swarming

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21. This terminology coined by David Abram (1996) reflects the need to describe a world beyond the human, from which we are not divided but with which we are entangled (i.e. an alternative to the word ‘nature’ which avoids the dualistic mental divide between human and the rest of the world).



knowledges and collectivist behavioural values of termite colonies and bees, the symbiotic relations of algae and fungi through the form of lichens, or the composting action of microorganisms and fungi which materially bridge death to life.<sup>22</sup> However, it seems that the current world system even has to relearn such values that are often considered as human values, like the objection to unfairness, demonstrated by our primate relatives, or the noble bravery often represented by the lion in the Christian bestiaries. Within the Naga context, where the workshop took place, plenty of tales describing the intricate relations between humans and more-than-human subjects exist, from apex predators like the tiger, to plentiful bird species and various types of spirits of which some may embody rivers, rocks or forest patches.<sup>23</sup> Storytelling is the predominant tool of communicating such more-than-human knowledges, values and relations, and is therefore of great pedagogical importance and relevance. A workshop on the Bestiaries project was offered at the Highland Gathering, with the added pedagogical tool of improvisation theatre, based on an earlier collaboration and experimentation using the same.

### The Proverbial Observatories Theatre

This first collaborative effort introducing theatre (after having personally practised amateur improvisation theatre for two years), was for Keats' Proverbial Observatories project<sup>24</sup> on proverbs as moral maxims that reflect socio-ecological observations and relations. For example, how 'birds of a feather flock together' offers a reflection of the behaviour of birds, but also how this reflects onto human behaviour, perhaps steering community-oriented values. Being located in arctic Norway/Sápmi, I set out to collect proverbs<sup>25</sup> by building a proverbial post box, which would hang in the yearly festival at Karlsøy, a remote Arctic island, in August 2022.<sup>26</sup> This led me to conduct the first experiment of using theatre as a pedagogical, participatory tool: stimulating audiences to post proverbs by promising short theatre improvisations on blindly drawn proverbs, I



**Figure 3:** The Proverbial Post Box Theatre at the island of Karlsøy, Sápmi/Arctic Norway, August 2022. Picture by Bruno Rodrigues.

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22. As we seek to learn from the more-than-humane world, we may also look at the communication that happens across taxonomic kingdoms, such as the collaboration between trees and fungi, whose subsoil mycelium networks send signals through the forest's interconnected root network (Simard, 2022). For a take by the field of multispecies anthropology investigating Indigenous ways of such more-than-human learning and living with the multiple agencies of socio-ecological systems, see e.g. Kohn's *How Forests Think* (2013).
  23. For some contemporary literary works presenting or integrating some of such stories or old beliefs, see the various books of Easterine Kire, for example *Forest Song* (2011) and *Sky is my Father: A Naga Village Remembered* (2018 [2003]). For a collection of Naga stories see e.g. the compilation by the Naga Heritage Centre (2016) or the collection on the Ao oral tradition (Ao, 1999).
  24. See <https://highlandinstitute.org/proverbialobservatories/>, where you are also invited to post your own proverb.
  25. The project not only aims to collect proverbs, but also to stimulate reflective engagement with them, as well as question their accuracy or current (renewed) relevance in the context of socio-ecological change, by making people turn the proverbs into questions – e.g. does the apple still fall from the tree? Or, where does the tree fall? It therefore also addresses how social or ecological change has affected such observed ecological as well as human behaviours, and how the proverbs could become pedagogical tools for us again today.
  26. Later that year in September, it would also hang at my solo multimedia exhibition 'Fluid Futures, Tidal Clocks: The Intertidal Zone' on water and climate change, at Amsterdam Climate Week in the Netherlands. Future iterations of this workshop aim to delve further into this important work by applying its tools and methods to the oppressive situation of ecocide.

hosted a show together with one of my theatre colleagues, Nuria Cots. As the posted proverbs originated from various countries, languages and contexts, their intuitively improvised enactment and interpretation (in the current context) was discussed relative to the original meaning after each improv. The show began with an improv introduction discussing the relevance of proverbs today and ended with participatory elements through various exercises and ultimately stage participation by audience members. Participatory improvisation theatre thus proved an engaging and playful way to collaboratively reflect on culturally diverse socio-ecological relations and knowledges amidst global environmental change.

## The Bestiaries Theatre: Embodying the More-than-Humane

The bestiaries workshop at this year's Highland Gathering was thus the second experiment using theatre as a pedagogical tool, namely as a form of embodied storytelling, for the Intersubjective Ecology Lab. As an inherently participatory group activity where instead of spectators, the workshop participants become 'spect-actors'<sup>27</sup> and learning becomes a collaborative and engaging experience, which engages with the conceptual question at hand through embodiment. For the workshop offered at the Highland Gathering 2023, the set-up was rooted in the tradition of Naga cosmology; namely, the understanding that the soul is an agential subject which can leave its host body, giving rise to risks of soul theft by malevolent spirits, but also explaining specialised practices of soul travel, as is the case with the therianthropic<sup>28</sup> practice of *tekhumiaivi* or so called 'weretigers', whose souls embody the body of a tiger<sup>29</sup> during their human body's sleep and dream time. As such, they get to experience the lifeways of their tiger, its problems, successes, territory and tiger politics,<sup>30</sup> and the resulting stories about such weretigers abound.<sup>31</sup> The practice is currently considered demonic after the influence of Christianity, and is therefore not often openly discussed, yet it gives the cosmological foundation for an imaginative soul journey, in which the realities of other subjects of the (animate) world can be explored. As such, it was used as a frame through which to guide the workshop.

After a brief introduction of the conceptual project, the participants' imagination was therefore quick-started through a guided meditative journey in which they experienced the journey of a tree — from seed to canopy, and back to seed by a dropping fruit. After this, several body, imagination, and team building warm-ups followed, which helped to break the ice while building collaboration and trust between participants. Exercises included throwing an imaginary ball to each other, which changes weight, size, form, and consistency with each one throwing it (e.g. from a seed which is blown, to a handful of water, to a heavy stone) and needs to be received accordingly. Doing improvisation theatre together stimulates a collaborative state of mind and an awareness of the collective, as it essentially comes down to building on each other's suggestions.<sup>32</sup> This was practised additionally through a collaborative storytelling

27. Following Boal's concept as articulated in his treatise on *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1993), on participatory theatre as a tool of education for the oppressed in the context of Brazil, by embodying situations of oppression and through imaginative action, seeking out the various ways one could respond.

28. From the Greek '*therion*', meaning wild animal, and '*anthropos*', meaning human being.

29. Or other apex predators that play a dominant role in the social ecology, e.g. snakes.

30. See Furer-Haimendorf's colonial ethnographic account of weretigermen among the Konyak (1946), Sutter (2008) on thus experienced 'Councils of tigers' (p. 272), and for an overview, Heneise (2016).

31. As also comes through in contemporary literature like Easterine Kire's; see for example *When the River Sleeps* (2014), or *Don't Run my Love* (2017) where the weretiger is used as analogy to tell a story about violent lovers. For a discussion of the practice, the related folktale and underlying cosmovision, through a reading of Kire's accounts of such, see also my MA thesis, Geerling (2023).

32. Disagreement can still exist within an improv, but the difference is that the disagreement builds on the reality proposed by the colleague on stage. I.e., when somebody exclaims: "Oh, look, a pink elephant! You love those, don't you?", you may respond "oh no! I greatly fear pink elephants!", but preferably not "I don't see any pink elephants, what are you talking about?". Rules are there to be broken in theatre, yet this rule is an indicative one

exercise.<sup>33</sup> After this, participants were stimulated to do solo micro improves which communicated their biggest fears. Then, lastly, we again entered a meditative state – this time building upon the weretiger practice, the narration drove them into sleep and dream, to find their agential souls wandering the forest until they met a creature or forest element, which they would then closely observe in its ways, from habitat, to food habits, to species interactions, until they felt their souls merge with them. At this point, the participants were invited to actively embody the creature in the space, while mentally exploring the values its life and species interactions had to teach; as such filling the room with the presence of tiger, tree, flowers, snake, deer, owl, who at some point also met each other, while encountering narrated elements of the forest like rain or night. Finally narrating them back into their human bodies, out of their dream and sleep, I asked them to embody the values their creatures had taught them in their now again human characters, while acting a scene in which they were instructed to gather, hunt, buy and/or make food. We ended up gathered around an imaginary fire, with an imaginary collectively gathered and shared meal, sharing tales of more-than-human realities and values. How the deer had felt the rain on her skin as she was hiding in the bush, never sought any conflict, and only responded in flight out of defence. How the snake adapted to the temperature and how the wildflower blossomed silently and humbly in the dusk offering her beauty. We learned about the experience of one participant who turned from a tigerman into an owl, with both hunting in solitary freedom, which – when human again – inspired a sense of freedom from social or societal expectations and pressures. All such experiences offered a perspective leap into the reality of wild animals, plants, and the social ecosystem of the forest.<sup>34</sup>



**Figures 4–5:** Two of the participants, students from Kohima college, with their resulting, hand-crafted bestiaries, December 2023 Highland Gathering. Pictures by A. Z. Geerling

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that stimulates a collective vision; exercises aimed at practising this are often referred to within theatre discourse as ‘yes, and’.

33. In this exercise, someone starts improvising a story until the conductor (me as workshop teacher in this case) indicates another person to take over, sometimes mid-sentence. The exercise produced a dystopian more-than-human storyline in which we followed a tree, or its spirit, navigating the confusion of human society as it had taken a human body to fulfil the task it was given: to save the world.
34. Viveiros de Castro (1998) therefore also theorized the practice of therianthropy as ‘perspectivism’.

## Telling it forward: Crafting bestiaries for the traveling library

The participants were then invited to communicate their experience and the values learned from the more-than-human subjects they embodied through storytelling in the form of handcrafted 'books' designed to their own liking with offered craft materials. Several participants wrote a story and drew and collaged beautiful books, which will join similar physical outcomes of earlier iterations of bestiaries workshops conducted by Jonathon Keats, in a travelling library (visiting places like Mexico City, the US, and other places). As such, people are provoked in various contexts around the world to re-engage with the teachings of the world and the imagining of future values that are rooted in a more-than-human subjectivity, taking into account the needs and opinions of our more-than-human relatives.



**Figure 6:** The Resulting Bestiaries from four participants of the workshop, December 2023 Highland Gathering. Picture by Anna Ziya Geerling

In conclusion, theatre proves a playful and engaging tool for active participation and extends the imaginative faculties beyond the conceptual, towards the embodiment of experience (indeed, one of the more direct ways through which to know),<sup>35</sup> albeit through imagination. In that way, the learning arrives differently in us, and the teachings can enter into dialogue with each other. Such role play indeed is a potent way to actively engage with the realities of other subjects – whether human or more-than-human – and has potential for the active contemplation for forms of politics or justice which seek to represent the more-than-human equally, i.e. legislative theatre,<sup>36</sup> for the cause of multispecies democracies and the legal personhood rights of (elements of) ecosystems.<sup>37</sup> This was therefore only the beginning of experimenting with theatre for the project, and future plans include drafting a template for other contexts to take up the effort locally. Participants reacted very positively, with the students from Kohima college (pictured above) expressing that it was the most interesting workshop for them during the gathering – challenging them to think out of the box, and encouraging them to step outside of their comfort zone – and that they would be interested to attend another session.

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35. For reflections on bodily knowing, see Merleau-Ponty (1962 [1945]).

36. See Boal, 1998.

37. A project pursued by various groups around the world and with various legal results, notably the Constitution of Ecuador of 2008 which reflects the Indigenous cosmovision of 'sumak kawsay' which assigns rights to 'nature' or *pacha mama* as part of a vision for communal wellbeing, as well as the acknowledgement of legal personhood of various rivers, such as the *Whanganui* River in Aotearoa (New Zealand) argued for by the Māori people as part of a treaty settlement with the government. Such visions are furthered by organizations like the Earth Law Center of which Jonathon Keats is a resident consulting philosopher. For a deeper discussion on assigning rights to 'nature' see also Celermajer & O'Brien, 2021.

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# Spirited Stories: The Story Booth Installation

(Installation/) Session by Anna Ziya Geerling

Proposing a permanent participatory element during the gathering, I set up a storybooth – simply a sofa, a camera, and a recorder, with a bowl full of questions prompts. Everyone has a story to tell, and everyone has a relationship with their environment – some more obviously than others. Question prompts were created together with Athul Sarala Nanu, Tümüzo Katiry and Akumtong Imchen, and addressed topics like spirit encounters, use relationships with plants, stories about animals, places, scents, and dishes that conjure childhood memories, cultural traditions and tales, and favourite recipes. Folded into a bowl, participants could draw blindly and respond to the question prompt – either in dialogue with others, or by themselves. I was hosting the storybooth simultaneously to the Tasting Tomorrow workshop as an add on, and sought to bring out food stories as one of the ways people intimately relate with their lands. This session was but a pilot and it became clear that people may feel uncomfortable to operate the camera and microphone themselves, as was the initial idea. I therefore sat twice in 1–1.5 hours conversations with participants, in which we went either through one question, each sharing our own stories, or through several. It therefore took the form of self-guided, or question-prompt guided, informal dialogues, which we maybe could call reciprocal interviews. The set-up led to a few fascinating conversations, particularly around spirit encounters, rituals, and spirited places, and was promising as an element of a future Ekologos podcast. Ultimately, it showcased that each of us has a story to tell in which the gifts and challenges that manifold ‘more-than-human subjects’ pose to us, reveal themselves.



**Figure 7:** In conversation with Esther Swu in the Storybooth, December 2023 Highland Gathering. Picture by Kevizeso Khezhe



# The Atlas of Ecological Knowledges: (Re-)Mapping the Storied Landscape & Ethical Considerations of Digitizing Indigenous Knowledges

Project co-coordinated by Anna Ziya Geerling – Sessions in collaboration with Shyamal Lakshminarayanan (Wiki commons) and Aswathy V. (Intellectual Property rights)

## First Sketches: Indigenous storymaps

Facing Covid-19 restrictions on doing fieldwork for my MA thesis on Indigenous ecological knowledges and relations to the land in Nagaland in 2021, I first generated the idea and ambition to create an online pedagogical ‘story map’ where local youth would be invited and enthused to engage with their elders, to audio-visually document their own oral stories and practical knowledges – from myths to sustenance and land use practices. The idea falls into a wider theory and practice of cybercartography,<sup>38</sup> and spawned for me personally within the context of the Indigenous research paradigm, where besides generally seeking collaborative methods,<sup>39</sup> I questioned what the role of a foreign anthropologist should or could look like today, conceiving of us as allies to locally owned projects, and full participation in the collection and curation of their own stories and knowledges. As my thesis oriented around the pedagogy of storytelling – as part of traditional forms of (socio-ecological) education, with cosmological myths that narrate the spiritual-philosophical relationships between people and other subjects of the land, and livelihood practices teaching the material and practical part of such relations – directly engaging youth in the documentation would meet my intentions in various ways: not only preserving stories, but making youth re-engage with them. At the time, the project was way too ambitious, but as I was finishing my thesis,<sup>40</sup> my supervisor Dr. Michael Heneise involved me in a collaborative project with artist and philosopher Jonathon Keats, which came to propose an even larger scale ambition of creating an international Atlas of Ecological

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38. See Taylor, 2005.

39. See e.g. authors like Chilisa, 2012; Smith, 2012; Kovach, 2009.

40. See Geerling, 2023. It ended up offering an analytical philosophical reading of Naga author Easterine Kire’s novels as a type of socio-ecological pedagogy, especially in the comparative context of the mainstreamed ecological science narrative on conservation vs. land use practices like hunting, found in environmental education material used in Nagaland today, ultimately arguing for the importance of a ‘restoration’ of environmental education rooted in the local cultural diversity. See also Adsit-Morris, 2017.

Knowledge, one of the bedrocks of what would become the Ekologos project. As a project that orients itself at pedagogy, with current funding facilitating student exchange, the idea is to engage local youth in storymapping and give young (Indigenous) researchers a space to immediately give back (the data) to the communities in an innovative and engaging way. Though not without concern, the online space could in this way also function as an engaging way of accessible dissemination of research results as well, and aspires to be a locally curated, created, and ever-expanding platform of local as well as global relevance.

## Mapping the social ecology for climate resilience

The Atlas of Ecological Knowledge is also firmly rooted in the context of the climate crisis, in which Indigenous ecological knowledges and intimate land relationships are fundamental aspects of maintaining or restoring local resilience. Tying into other projects conceived by Jonathon Keats, like the Tasting Tomorrow project described elsewhere in this journal issue, the further ambition is that such local ecological knowledges could be linked to climate analogues, so that the Indigenous knowledges pertaining to ecosystem and climatic zone A, could, with permission, be shared to those people whose ecosystem or climatic conditions B would change into ecosystem A due to climate change. By example, regions that will be facing warmer climates, would benefit to learn from communities that currently live in such a warmer climate. This confronts climate change on two fronts: first of all, it is adamantly adaptive in its approach to changing environmental realities and the need to culturally adapt to those conditions. At the same time, it makes people engage with climate change in a deeply personal way, namely by stimulating the realization of the extent such will affect culturally meaningful practices (such as agriculture and cuisine, but also craft and building, and all the spiritual or mythical relations specific to certain animals or plants for example). It also seeks to engage with those Indigenous ecological knowledges of the past which are still (or even especially) relevant today for local self-sufficiency, as well as ways of sustainably co-existing with such ecosystems. Additionally, IEKs can serve as indicators of climate change (like the prediction of seasonal patterns based on bird sounds for example, which change, or observations on which crop species thrive), or become of renewed local importance, such as in the case of old cultivars which turn out especially resistant to drought, or pests. Mapping such knowledges about, and potentially for adaptation to climate change, could therefore potentially bolster local adaptive resilience.

## Digitising oral culture and IEK: Ethical concerns & software explorations

As co-coordinator of Ekologos my main role is to think through the concept and implications of such a platform, especially the ethical dilemmas and risks that surface when digitizing and potentially publicly sharing Indigenous traditional and ecological knowledges and stories, notably through the risk of intellectual property theft such as biopiracy.<sup>41</sup> The first explorations of operationalizing such a digital platform, and sitting with the questions or concerns it raises, were hosted during the Ekologos-Highland Institute gathering. As a potential software or platform for the Atlas, we explored the Wikipedia commons with the guidance of Shyamal Lakshminarayanan.<sup>42</sup> Through four sessions during the gathering, we engaged with the possibilities, technicalities, and some of the limitations of this platform. Shyamal gave us a comprehensive introduction to the digital infrastructure, and the necessary skills to write articles, link to other sites, and engage with the writings of others. As a platform which is ever changing, it interestingly therefore links to some of the dynamics of an oral pedagogy – while allowing observers to see exactly who made which

41. On biopiracy, see Shiva, 1997. For a more elaborate discussion on the risks of such TEK cybercartography, see e.g. Engler, Scassa, & Taylor, 2013.

42. Who has been working with Wikipedia for many years and is an avid birdwatcher amongst others, contributing himself various articles to Wikipedia.



changes and when – although this also poses a risk, as conflict may arise from edits to previously uploaded materials. The Wiki commons can, however, function as a communication tool between the partner institutions of Ekologos, offering a digital space where research methods and ethics might be shared, as well as potentially a place where data that is deemed suitable and safe for public dissemination could at some point be published, with the idea of slowly building an ‘Indigenous Wiki’. Important limitations are that the platform cannot really host videos and audio directly, needing to operate through external links, and the option to showcase and navigate the information on a map is limited. Most importantly, it may be hard to use and operate, and as such is not entirely accessible to everyone, as we would aim it to be. There is also the concern that the data would be either private yet accessible to all the Ekologos project members, or public to everyone, whereas the type of data we wish to engage with necessitates more nuanced options. For example, it may be that one story is suitable to share to all members of an Indigenous community, but not to anyone outside that community, or some data may be intended to be shared to outsiders but would necessitate personal contact with the community first so that access would be granted on a one-on-one basis. The digital infrastructure needed would therefore have to operate through various map ‘layers’ of varying visibility. It is with the above exemplified concerns in mind however, that we organized the third session, dedicated to ethical considerations concerning accessibility, ease to use, and the types of knowledges suitable or risky for public dissemination. In a group discussion format, we addressed the risks of knowledge theft, like in the case of biopiracy, and the importance of working with a software that safeguards the communities’ local ownership and curatorship of the information shared online. We shared some general ideas and specific insights from the group participants’ experiences, but overall concluded that such always needs to be seen on a case-to-case basis. It also highlighted the importance of adapting the software/digital infrastructure we use to our ethical concerns and project, not the other way around. At the end of the gathering, Professor Antonio Guerreiro from Unicamp suggested a potential other software, much closer to the initial vision, called ArcGIS Storymaps.<sup>43</sup> This software is map-based, oriented at hosting visual and audio documentation, and after initial set-up would allow members to upload stories through a phone app, where the managers can make sure they answer certain questions (e.g. related to consent of the people pictured, or small surveys about the data provided). Local data managers would then be able to scan whether the material is suitable for upload – i.e. has met all ethical concerns – and if some of the data is survey-based, outputs in the form of diagrams could be generated. The ArcGIS Storymaps also seem to allow different layers of accessibility or visibility, although this is still to be further explored. About a month later, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January, I organized another session on the ethics of oral literature and Indigenous ecological knowledges documentation for the Highland Institute and Ekologos project, to engage with the pros and cons of digitising IEK from a legal lens, through an online seminar by PhD scholar Aswathy V., who gave us an introduction to intellectual property rights of Indigenous knowledges and especially within the Indian (legal) context. She also mentioned several other promising software, platforms, and similar existing initiatives, such as Dreamcatcher, which we look forward to exploring.

### **Audio-Visual Documentation, IEK and Story Mapping Fieldwork: Phek District January-February 2024**

The practical work of mapping stories, songs, and relationships to the land, has meanwhile also been set in motion. As an independent researcher, with funding from the Firebird Foundation’s Oral Literature Project, I have organized a collaborative fieldwork with Highland Institute staff – notably the Earthkeepers research project team, consisting of Tümüzo Katiry, Saktum Wonti, and Kevide Lcho, as well as with Sholu

43. See <https://www.esri.com/en-us/arcgis/products/arcgis-storymaps/overview>.

Movi who I brought onto the project.<sup>44</sup> After hosting some initial brainstorming – and offering some informal preparatory camera and audio gear training sessions to the team – we set out on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January towards Phek district. We spent the first week in Zhavame, a Chakhesang Village of Phek district, recording traditional stories, songs and conducting dialogical interviews about sustenance practices and local observations of climate and other ecological change. This was done through a close collaborative effort with Zhavame’s Student Union, as well as the Village Council and the Women’s Society, who had organized and gathered the elders that we should talk to and requested performance groups to perform certain songs for us to record. This, for example, included a performance of the stages involved in weaving with stinging nettle, accompanied by a song about the practice. It also involved singing performances of specific clans, which in one case led to a long conversation about a.o. the traditional educational institute of the *morung*, hunting practices, and the decline of wildlife and other ecological changes. In this way, the conversations happened organically,<sup>45</sup> and the recordings were of those stories and songs that the village organizations felt important to record, or that the people we conversed with wished to share. Of course, we



**Figure 8:** Nettle weaving performance, demonstrating the various steps while singing about the practice. Zhavame Women’s Society, January 2024. Picture by Anna Ziya Geerling



**Figure 9:** Pame womenfolk performing a song next to the paddies, which narrates or orally maps the landscape of and around the village and relates the land to the various clans’ distribution over the village area, in Zhavame, January 2024. Picture by Anna Ziya Geerling

44. The Earthkeepers project has similar goals and was drafted with the Ekologos vision for an Ecological Knowledge Atlas in mind, with a focus on local observations of, and knowledges or adaptations relevant to climate change, and specifically localized in the Naga areas along the Indo-Myanmar border, funded by the International Development Research Centre Canada (IDRC Canada).

45. And interestingly included the elders asking me their set of questions about the ‘West’ at the end of our conversation.

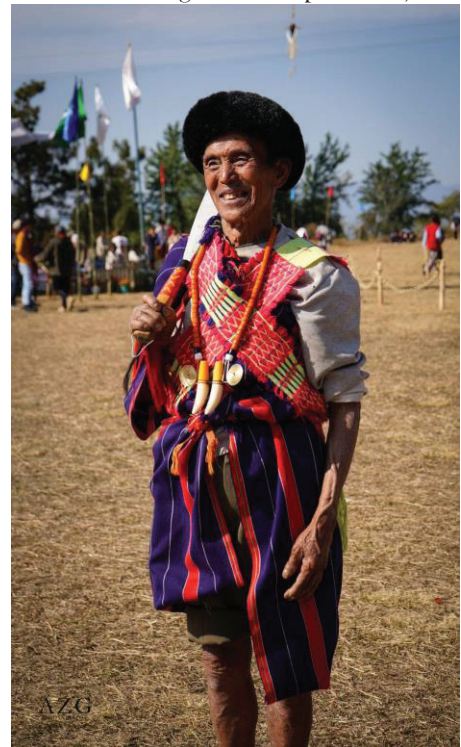
contributed by specifically inquiring about songs and stories that narrate (specific places of) the land. As such, we recorded one song in Zhavame which describes all the mountains around the village, and how they correspond to the location of the different *khels*, amongst other things. This also brought us to record the story of a specific spirited tree, or of specific rocks. With each recording we also took the coordinates of the places where the stories were shared or performed, so that they can at a later stage, be uploaded to the storymap we have in mind to create. After Zhavame, we spent some time in Reguri, Meluri and made a visit to the wonderful Changyangtakhu festival in the four khels of Akeghwo,<sup>46</sup> The last week we spent in Lephori village to do the documentation of their traditional festival *Nyavü Khü* on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of February, celebrating the start of the new agricultural year upon invitation to do so by the Village Council. We documented the celebration of the festival in its current form, including traditional dances and games, held conversations with the elders of the village to discuss the rituals and timings of the festivals and their associated agricultural practices, and recorded the first step of the agricultural year following *Nyavü Khü*: the clearing of the paths to, and of the new jhum fields.

## The Ethics of Collaborative Research & Indigenous mapping

We have felt ourselves tread in the footsteps of exploitative research, trying to demonstrate that there is a better way. Namely, the data is expressly considered the intellectual property of the community, while the recordings are a shared intellectual property of the team members and the community. As such, the raw data will be made directly available to the community upon return in Kohima with the help of a server hosted by the Highland Institute.<sup>47</sup> It is agreed that the community can use the data for educational purposes, and when deemed fitting, promotional purposes, but not commercial activities. Nevertheless we met the repercussions of such previous problematic research – with as prominent example the recent resolution of the Pochury Hoho, restricting non-local researchers doing research among the Pochury Nagas. Although this has been challenging to navigate (especially as Village councils wanted us to do the research), it also shows how the tribe's political representatives have installed firmer research ethics protocols, which prevent



**Figure 10:** Meeting of the village Elders of Lephori village, to discuss the agricultural festival cycle, and record the associated songs, stories, and practices, organized by the Village Council, February 2024. Picture by Anna Ziya Geerling



**Figure 11:** Performer of Lephori Village during the *Nyavü Khü* Festival in February 2024. Picture by Anna Ziya Geerling

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46. Places we were supposed to do proper research, however as we are awaiting approval from the Pochury Hoho we have not been able to pursue such. Nevertheless, we made connections to some of the respective Village Councils and had initial meetings, sharing about the purposes of the project, and were received with warm welcome.
47. Individual members would have to access such through the authorization of the Village Council and/or Student Union.

foreigners from conducting research without explicit benefit to the community, if at all. This is obviously a good incentive, but would need to be finetuned, so that it does not block research of benefit to the community (with our research being co-led by a Pochury researcher, Tümüzo Katiry). Ultimately, the elderly people of the villages we have mostly engaged with, Zhavame and Lepthori, were very keen on our engagement with and documentation of their traditional stories, songs, and practices, indicating their worry for the losing interest by younger generations. The recorded material of Zhavame will for example serve in local educational efforts organized by the Student Union, and we additionally collaboratively hosted a dialogue with some of the local youth, discussing the importance of traditional and local knowledges and stories, especially also vis-à-vis Western sciences, and current formal education. Highlighting that we want to document what is of value to the village to have documented, renders research/documentation a service to the community, rather than an extractive activity. Our role as researchers, then, is to stimulate the conversations, share documentation skills, and to ask detailed questions about the rituals, stories, and practices, to record those aspects which may otherwise remain unmentioned as they are still locally regarded as ubiquitous or common knowledge. In such a way, even to be an ‘outsider’ may serve a purpose, while it remains absolutely and unequivocally necessary to work with village residents and organisations, as well as a locally rooted research team.

All in all, digitizing such stories and knowledges on such an online map through a collaborative research effort therefore aims not only to document and preserve knowledges and stories,<sup>48</sup> but also to engage in conversation about the value of such knowledges and stories with the community – both elders, and when possible, especially youth. A digital storymap would seek to spur youth to train in qualitative methods and videography as an addition to the pedagogical value that engagement with elders by itself offers. Any resulting data on such a platform, would ultimately serve to engage those youth that no longer live in their villages with the knowledges and stories of their lands. Such a methodology of an Indigenous ‘re-mapping’ or ‘counter-mapping’ of land<sup>49</sup> also constitutes a creative response to the dominant gaze of international politics and proclaimed state sovereignty (with borders drawn through continuous Indigenous lands), or systematic ways of reading the land that are oriented at economic gain and resource exploitation.<sup>50</sup> Mapping non-monetary values of the land through local relationships, stories, and co-evolved identities and histories, is a way of documenting ancestral Indigenous land ownership and use (even if areas aren’t used or inhabited), and cross-border livelihoods and cultural continuities, while also giving rise to an incentive to take care of this land. It could furthermore include the mapping of relationships, not only between people and their lands, but also between villages, and could contribute



**Figure 12:** The monoliths lining the path down to the paddies, with Elder Tsukha Movi guiding us and sharing stories along the way, in Zhavame Village, January 2024. Picture by Anna Ziya Geerling

48. Which are often at the brink of disappearing due to the lack of engagement from formalized education, currently and in the past decades, which also sees youth migrating away from the villages (sometimes at a young age), while the elder generation of knowledge keepers is on the brink of passing on.

49. See Peluso, 1995, as well as Louis, et al., 2012.

50. Mapping has historically been used as a tool for colonization, and we currently still understand most spaces by such mainstreamed colonial maps, most notably through nation state borders drawn through continuous Indigenous territories. Indigenous maps often exist through oral tradition, and mentally by reading and simply knowing the stories of the land. Recording Indigenous relations with and understandings of the land, according to Indigenous epistemes, can thereby constitute a decolonial practice. For an overview of decolonial maps, see <https://decolonialatlas.wordpress.com/>.

to language preservation through the inclusion of Indigenous place names and other terminology,<sup>51</sup> besides of course uploading recordings in such languages.<sup>52</sup> The ways of mapping could differ widely in various ways – as Antonio Guerreiro shared about his mapping project in Brazil with the Kalapalo community during a workshop he gave at the Highland Gathering,<sup>53</sup> community-led mapping becomes a way of exploring and highlighting what is of local importance – e.g. the paths that take people from the village to ancestral places, or the place where certain snail were harvested, as exemplified by the project of the Kalapalo – or paths to the field, as we also witnessed in Zhavame. There, the path was lined with monoliths on both sides all the way down the mountain, erected by and for ancestors who had performed feasts of merit,<sup>54</sup> and included several resting places, as well as other types of rocks which carried stories – from spirited rocks, to those used for games, or those erected for rituals involved with tiger killings.<sup>55</sup> Such places, and paths between places, tell us much about the older cosmological infrastructure of the society.

The storymaps, when and if they come into being – depending on funding – would offer an interactive and engaging way for youth to not only navigate their land, but map their own land, not only listen and watch the *oral* teachings of their elders but contribute to the documentation of such. Decolonizing the idea of an archive, from storage places in often externally located, and closed and protected environments, towards living archives of stories and knowledges to be actively shared and engaged with, most importantly means that these are locally created and curated by the communities themselves, allowing for careful consideration which stories are suitable to be shared, and which aren't (for indeed, we were also asked to turn off the camera several times). These practices would then have to be furthered through community workshops and consultations. This would allow for a decolonization of the relationships to land, including values of the land, and ways of teaching about the land (the social ecology). The land holds many stories, and the community knows best how to read those, as well as which are safe to distribute. In the meantime, starting the documentation and conversations, and gathering the elders to discuss the right versions of stories, ritual celebrations, or practices, has already been extremely rewarding. The communities will have recordings that they can use to their own insight. Our team has gained significant experience in audio-visual documentation, and around beautifully woven cane tables, some plans for collaborative mapping and documentation were already being discussed for next visits or documentation efforts.

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51. Sámi artist and scholar Hans Ragnar Mathisen, whose artist name 'Keviselie' was given to him by his friends during his time in Nagaland, is a.o. famous for crafting beautiful Indigenous maps of Sápmi, using local placenames. For more on his work see <https://keviselie-hansragnarmathisen.net/33514829.html>.
52. Indeed, we were specifically told to record stories told by one elder in Zhavame for their knowledge of a local language, so that the video could function as pedagogical material for language learning.
53. Sharing excerpts from one of the two short films that the collaborative mapping gave rise to (*Inhu*, 2012, 21', and *Etepe*, 2014, 14'); see also Guerreiro, 2024.
54. A way of redistributing wealth and gaining status by sharing abundance with the clan, whole village, and even other villages, with indeed various succeeding 'levels' of feasting. Such achievements can be marked by a monolith, but also by added decoration to houses, and by earning the right to wear certain shawls carrying decorations signifying such accomplishments. On feasts of merit, see e.g. Sanglir, 2021.
55. Necessitating strict taboo observances of several days, and more or less marking a boundary line of a safe distance from the village to prevent retribution by the tiger's 'masterspirit'. Especially also the village gate marks a boundary place, between the land ruled by spirits or the land ruled mostly by humans.

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