Rain, reindeer, digging and tundra: children’s visual perception of an archaeological expedition to Northernmost Sápmi (Finnish Lapland)

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I discuss a set of photographs taken by my daughters with disposable cameras, to consider how they perceived an archaeological expedition to northernmost Sápmi (Finnish Lapland). My daughters’ photographic documentation illustrates the views that children from southern Finland have on archaeological fieldwork in an extreme northern environment. Their photographs resemble partly the tourism promotional imagery and Instagram posts, which place emphasis on the impressive landscape, engaging activities, and the gear related to those activities. Based on these imageries, and my personal impressions, the genius loci of this area for outsiders are largely defined by the mountainous scenery and midsummer snow, both unique to this region within Finland. My daughters’ imagery conveys a mixture of familiarity and alienation. There is an awe of facing the new and alien, immersive mountain landscape and the novelty of, e.g., a helicopter ride to the study site in the middle of a roadless wilderness, and a fascination in the familiar expedition activities together with trusted people which creates a sense of at-home-ness. The familiar actions carried out by familiar people appear to act as important means for placemaking and securing the being-in-the-world, which carries also wider importance beyond this case study.

Archaeologists working in remote areas of the world quite often bring their families along on expeditions (Figure 1). This is a rather unique and subject-specific way of carrying out research and fieldwork, and apparently rare in other field-based sciences (see Frohlick 2002). To my knowledge this archaeological field practice has not been studied, but based on my own experiences, it is common at least in many far-off regions, such as parts of Russia, Siberia, Mongolia, Tanzania, and northern Norway and Finland. The latter two belong to multinational Sápmi, the homeland of Europe’s only indigenous people, the Sámi (Northern Sámi place names are used throughout the paper). Based on my

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With visual contributions by Sohvi Seitsonen, Elsa Seitsonen and Elvi Seitsonen

Photo gallery by Sohvi, Elsa and Elvi Seitsonen (Seitsonen et al. 2021).

KEYWORDS

Sápmi; photography; auto-ethnography; auto-archaeology; Instagram
discussions with various colleagues, the reasons and motivations behind archaeologists’ practice of taking their families along are varying and personal. For me personally, it is important to attempt to combine family and work time, spend time with my family at places that have special professional and personal significance for myself, get them acquainted with my profession and its practices, and to try to offer them inspiring experiences that they might not otherwise come into contact with. In many cases archaeologists’ spouses are also archaeologists with professional interests in the studied subjects – such as my wife Sanna Seitsonen who is a zooarchaeologist – or act as field cooks or camp managers. Altogether, the idiosyncratic expedition, work, and camp cultures of archaeological profession have so far been relatively little examined (see Altamura et al. 2017; Bailey et al. 2009; Marsh 2001). However, the archaeologists’ often-eccentric field practices could offer a lot of potential for various kinds of ethnographic, auto-ethnographic, anthropological, archaeological, and auto-archaeological inquiries (e.g. Harrison and Schofield 2009, 2010; Ikäheimo 2020; Starzmann and Papoli-Yazdi 2020).

In this paper, I review a set of photographs taken by my daughters with disposable cameras during an archaeological expedition in summer 2020. The aim is to assess the various ways in which they perceived and experienced this
trip, the excavations, and the new landscape. The expedition was focused on the Lake Megonjávri area situated in northernmost Sápmi (in Finnish Lapland) deep in the roadless Giehtaruohttasa meahccenguovllu (Käsivarsi Wilderness Area; Figure 2). My daughters are familiar with other parts of Sápmi, where they have been taking part in my previous archaeological work, but the mountainous Alpine tundra of this region was a novel and unfamiliar environment to them. Besides the photographs, I have recurrently discussed with them the expedition, their personal experiences, and the images that they took, both on field and afterwards (and have their informed consent of using their photographs for this analysis and the publication of their images). I also

Figure 2. Top: mentioned localities in Sápmi, northernmost Europe: 1. Lake Megonjávri area; 2. Anár; 3. Soadegilli (Background © Esri/USGS). bottom: drone photograph of the excavation area and Lake Skádjajávri during a rare break in the constant wind and rain, from left Lempi Kunnas, Elvi and Elsa Seitsonen, and Olli Kunnas and Sanna Seitsonen excavating in the trench (Photograph Oula Seitsonen).
asked each of them to pick out five photographs that best describe their experience and perception of the expedition, shown in the expedition photo gallery (Seitsonen et al. 2021). First, I briefly introduce my daughters, their photographic dataset, and the environmental setting of the Lake Megonjávri. Then I describe the visual anthropological methods and approaches used for assessing their photographs. Finally, I discuss the perceptions of the expedition and northern landscapes appearing from their visual presentations, compare those with the tourist photography of this area published on Instagram (see e.g. Caliandro and Graham 2020), and mirror these autoethnographically against my own experiences and lifeworld.

My daughters’ images are examined as presentations of person-world relationships based on a phenomenological reading (e.g. Seamon 1990, 2014). Besides being a case study of southern Finnish girls’ visual perception of an archaeological expedition to the Alpine tundra in northern Sápmi, the analysis of their photographic representation can also illustrate some wider phenomena, such as children’s attending to their surroundings (e.g. Günindi 2012), placemaking, and immersion-in-the-world (e.g. Ingold 2000, 2011; Merleau-Ponty 1962; Relph 1976; Tuan 1977). Such approaches can shed light on such diverse issues as, for instance, the making of children’s lifeworlds and feelings of at-homeness, presentation of (de)colonial spaces, and even the past and contemporary refugee crises (e.g. Bajorek 2020; Kirova and Emme 2006; Koponen, Seitsonen, and Koskinen-Koivisto 2018; Koskinen-Koivisto and Seitsonen 2019; Seitsonen, Herva, and Kunnari 2017a).

Archaeological expedition to Lake Megonjávri in summer 2020

I have three daughters, Sohvi (13 years old in summer 2020), Elsa (11 years) and Elvi (6 years) (Figure 1), who have joined me in my field of research in Sápmi many times throughout the years. Elsa was less than half-a-year-old when she was taken on her first excavation in the Muotkeduoddarat area in Anár (Fi. Inari), Elvi was under one, and Sohvi two and a half on their first trips (see Seitsonen 2020; Seitsonen, Herva, and Kunnari 2017a). They had all visited the general area briefly in 2015, during my survey of the Second World War material remains around the Lake Gilbjesjávri (Fi. Kilpisjärvi). Thus, before our 2020 trip the older ones maintained a vague memory of the treeless Alpine tundra and the steep towering fell cliffs (Sámi: bákti) of the area. The younger girls are generally curious about the study of the past, whereas the oldest has as a teenager developed a counter-reaction to all the archaeology and history surrounding her. This is perhaps linked to her age – or just to an overdose of having been around archaeologists so much. However, despite her general I-don’t-care teenager attitude Sohvi continues to take relatively eager part in the expeditions and in the excavation work in the field.
For the summer 2020 expedition to Lake Megonjávri, I gave each of my daughters a disposable camera, such that they each had 32 photographs to take of the week-long trip. I told them that they could document freely whatever they find novel and worth remembering of the trip. These 96 photographs taken by my daughters form the core analytical dataset used in this paper. I did not tell them that I might be using the images for this article during the trip, to avoid affecting their photographic choices as they might have photographed themes that they thought would have interested me (see also below). I asked only afterwards for their informed consent to use their wonderful images for the following discussion and have also referenced to them in Finnish what I have written about them in this paper.

I emphasized to them in the field that there is only a limited number of frames to take, as they are all familiar with the ever-present digital photography and limitless opportunities to snap a multitude of photographs. I also reminded them that we will get paper copies of the photographs only afterwards. Sohvi in fact wrote a planned outline for her photographic content to make certain that she managed to document everything she deemed important with the 32 frames. All of the girls, of course, also had their omnipresent mobile phones along and took extra photographs with them. My family was joined in the field by our good colleague and friend archaeologist Olli Kunnas and his daughter Lempi Kunnas (7 years old), both of whom appear in several of the photographs.

The Giehtaruohttasa meahcceguovllu comprises mostly of treeless Alpine tundra and includes the highest mountain peaks in Finland. The country’s highest point on Håldi Fell (Fi. Halti; 1365 m a.s.l.) is situated ca. 10 kilometers north of the research area and can be seen in the distance in clear weather. Since Lake Megonjávri area is roadless, we traveled to the excavation site from the nearest village of Gibbesjávri with a helicopter (Figure 3). In the previous year I traversed this 30 km distance on foot and took geoarchaeological samples all along the way (Seitsonen 2020a; Seitsonen and Égüez in press). However, in 2020 this was not feasible with all the needed excavation gear and the youngest members of the expedition. During the fieldwork we stayed in a remote wilderness log cabin owned by Metsähallitus (Finnish National Board of Forestry) (Figure 3).

We hiked every morning the nearly three-kilometer distance one-way from the cabin at Lake Megonjávri to the excavation place on the shore of the neighbouring Lake Skádajávri, where we studied a historical Sámi habitation site, and back in the afternoon. Next to the excavation site we pitched my tent for storage use and as a shelter for the children in the poor weather. The weather was rainy and stormy throughout the expedition, with temperatures ranging from +0.5 to +10.5 degrees Celsius and winds of up to 61 km/hour (FMI 2020). This meant that with the wind-chill factor in the open, treeless tundra landscape, the working temperatures were on most days on the freezing side. Also, as is typical, whenever the rain ceased, the hordes of mosquitoes and
blackflies appeared. These are all normal phenomena for July in this area but differ starkly from all the other parts of Finland, including the parts of Sápmi where we have carried out our previous family fieldwork in Anár and Soađegilli (Fi. Sodankylä) regions.

Sápmi has for long appeared to southerners and other outsiders not familiar with the local conditions as an exotic fringe of civilization. North has been described as Finland’s ‘Wild West’ (Länsman 2004, 146), essentially ‘a foreign country’, as Helsinki-based archaeologist Sakari Pälsi (1931) aptly described it a century ago. Northernmost Europe, Sápmi, and Sámi people have had a dissonant place on the periphery of European mindscape at least since the
Early Modern period. On the one hand, the North has been seen as an enchanted, Utopian land with various supernatural and natural wonders and, on the other, as an empty and remote dystopian wasteland (see Herva 2014; Naum 2016; Seitsonen, Koponen, and Herva 2019). These special characteristics, and especially selected elements of Sámi culture, are still eagerly exploited, for instance, in the tourism promotion and commerce which are typically driven by the outsiders (e.g. Herva, Varnajot, and Pashkevich 2020; Niskala and Ridanpää 2016; Seitsonen 2020b).

Looking through my daughter’s photographs

Below I assess my daughters’ photographs with a combination of content analysis and multimodal reading. This allows both quantitative and qualitative evaluation of images, and their themes and elements. For the content analysis, I classified all the images first according to their main theme into 11 categories (Table 1), and then tabulated the various image elements (Figure 4(a,b); see Bell 2001, 10–34; Rose 2016, 85–105; Seitsonen, Koponen and Herva 2019; Seppänen 2005, 142–176). Classification of the different elements is of course subjective to a certain extent, but nevertheless gives a general idea of the composition and structure of the photographs. A multimodal reading of the photographs attempts to qualitatively couple the images with the oral descriptions provided by the girls of their images and their perceptions of the expedition. Stylistic choices were also regarded, such as social distance to people. Social border theory (see e.g. Bell 2001; Kress and van Leeuwen 1996) suggests that a closeup facial image brings the photographed person more personally closer to the camera (and the photographer) than a full-body picture taken from further away (Seitsonen, Koponen and Herva 2019; Seppänen 2005, 171). However, also other factors, such as the general composition and eye contact, play a significant role in creating feelings of contact and closeness (e.g. Seitsonen, Koponen, and Herva 2019; Seppänen 2005, 174). Image content analysis is always somewhat qualitative and subjective, especially when working on such an intimately

| Theme                        | Sohvi | Elsa | Elvi | Total |
|------------------------------|-------|------|------|-------|
| Mountain landscape           | 6     | 10   | 5    | 21    |
| Excavation                   | 5     | 8    | 5    | 18    |
| Helicopter                   | 6     | 5    | 6    | 17    |
| Reindeer                     | 3     | 3    | 7    | 13    |
| In the wilderness cabin      | 4     | 1    | 4    | 9     |
| River landscape              | 2     | 3    | 2    | 7     |
| At the outside fireplace     | 1     | 1    | 1    | 3     |
| Selfie                       | 1     | 2    | 3    |       |
| Snow jassa                   | 2     | 1    | 3    |       |
| In the tent                   | 1     | 1    | 1    |       |
| Wilderness cabin             | 1     | 1    | 1    |       |
| **Total**                    | **32**| **32**| **32**| **96**|
known sample as photographs taken by my daughters and intertwined with personally important places, situations, and people. Autoethnographic and autoarchaeological approaches are intrinsically characterized by the deep personal participation and attachment. This can offer deeper understanding when the personal and emotional involvement is assessed with analytical anthropological reflection and introspection (see Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011; Ikäheimo 2020).

In my daughters’ photographs, the awe-inspiring mountainous tundra landscapes, partly covered with snow throughout the summer and with impressive dark skies above them, form over one-fifth of all images (22%) (Figures 4 and 5). Excavation imagery (19%) and pictures related to the thrilling helicopter ride (18%) are next most common (Figures 3–6). ‘Snow jassa’ in the list (3%) are perennial snow and ice-patches on the fell sides, which are important for the reindeer herders and reindeer, as they offer cooling and respite to the animals.

Figure 4. (a) Photograph themes. (b) Word clouds illustrating the frequency of different elements in my daughters’ images (the larger a word is in the cloud, the more common that element is in the photographs).
from the plague of swarming mosquitoes and blackflies (Itkonen. 1948; Paulaharju 1922; Seitsonen and Viljanmaa 2021; see Herva et al. in this volume). ‘Snow jassa’ are not present elsewhere in Finland and have thus an exotic and novel character for outsiders, also to my daughters – and myself as a child. There are clear differences in the emphasis on imagery taken by different girls. Elsa paid most attention to the impressive mountain landscapes (31%) and the excavation work (25%), Elvi to reindeer (22%) and helicopter (19%), and Sohvi more composedly to various themes according to her photo documentation plan, as she wanted to document as many individual aspects as possible. Still,
the mountain landscapes (19%), helicopter (19%) and excavation (16%) remain the most common themes in her images. These differences illustrate quite well their interests and characters. For example, Elvi loves animals, Elsa is interested in history, geography and various other things, and Sohvi is typically very systematic and thoughtful, and plans carefully her actions.

The pictorial elements of their photographs (Figure 4(b)) mirror the themes of the images. Still, the immersive mountainous landscape, the snow-covered fellsides, and the dramatic, dark skies above dominate most of the photographs regardless of the theme (Figure 5). People are present in about 40% of all the pictures (Table 2). Sohvi included people in over half of her photographs (56%), Elsa had them in little over a third of her pictures (38%), and Elvi least (28%). Of all the pictures with people, 44% has more than one person in the images, which forms majority also in both Sohvi’s and Elsa’s photography (respectively 39% and 67% of the pictures with people). Then again, Elvi’s pictures with people were taken at an intimate or personally close distance (67%). This appears to mirror differences in their approach to photography. Both Sohvi and Elsa used their cameras in most of their photographs as a superficially impartial, casual observer from a distance, whereas Elvi approached her shooting with a more engaged and bodily close-range tactic. This might also have to do with their age and experience in photographing. Elvi has had less time to get indoctrinated herself into common and expected ways of taking photographs, and she does not have a camera or mobile phone of her own.

There are differences in the way that the girls chose to portray people in their images. Of all of them, Elsa’s photographs have most people engaged in various activities, such as digging, backfilling the excavation, cooking, or packing (9/12 photographs with people). Correspondingly, about half of Elvi’s pictures with people (5/9 photographs) and one-third of Sohvi’s images (6/18 photographs) show them taking dynamically part in different activities. The cold and rainy weather and mosquito pestilence are indirectly visible in the imagery: in all the outdoor pictures people are wearing thick clothing, raingear, and mosquito nets. However, my daughters commented that they did not deem these as significant to document separately, since they are basic conditions to be expected at these latitudes. On the other hand, the perennial snow patches, jassa, were a new and exciting environmental phenomenon for them and they wanted to document that separately, as also their own summertime sledding down the jassa.

| Social distance  | Description              | Sohvi | Elsa | Elvi |
|------------------|--------------------------|-------|------|------|
| Intimate         | Head and shoulders       | 4     | 2    |      |
| Personally close | Waist up                 | 5     | 1    | 4    |
| Personal         | Full body, one person    | 2     | 3    | 1    |
| Social           | 2–6 people               | 7     | 8    | 2    |
| **Total**        |                          | **18**| **12**| **9**|
Archaeological equipment is often visible in the excavation pictures (Figures 6 and 7). The technical aspects, such as documenting with the dumpy level, seem to have been of interest to all the girls, as the dumpy level, its tripod, and the levelling work appear in their photographs (Figure 6). Elvi was the only one to take an ‘archaeological’ documentation picture of an excavation level, because she got interested in the stone slabs that had been used in the foundation for the structure of a darfegoahti (Fi. turvekota), a historical-era turf-covered hut (Figure 7). She was especially fascinated by a foundation deposit

Figure 6. Top: levelling the excavation finds, Olli Kunnas at the dumpy level, Elvi Seitsonen collecting bone finds into a ziploc bag, and the author with the stadia rod (Photograph Elsa Seitsonen). bottom: Olli Kunnas documenting with the dumpy level (Photograph Elvi Seitsonen).
found below another of these slabs, a cracked reindeer bone carefully placed under it below the turf wall, most likely as a foundational offering.

Also, distinctively for the year 2020, the Coronavirus/Covid-19-pandemic is visible in some of the photographs (Figure 8). During the expedition on the Alpine tundra there was obviously no need to worry about social distancing or masks, as the only other people we saw were occasional hikers and two Metsähallitus workers who paddled by canoe and visited our excavation. However, on the way north and in the helicopter it was necessary to take precautions, such as using masks and disposable rubber gloves, to minimize

Figure 7. Top: digging and documenting wearing raingear and mosquito nets, from left Olli and Lempi Kunnas, and Elvi, Sohvi and Oula Seitsonen (Photograph Elsa Seitsonen). bottom: excavation area with stone slabs used in the foundation of a darfegoahti turf hut (Photograph Elvi Seitsonen).
the chance of infecting other people, for example the helicopter pilot, and especially to avoid anyone getting sick during the expedition (although my whole family had a Coronavirus infection already in early March 2020 and we all still had antibodies confirmed by laboratory tests during the expedition).

**Southern girls’ perceptions of digging the Northern tundra**

My daughters’ photographs are fundamentally their own private selections of important moments and various phenomena that they wanted to document for
their own memory of the expedition to Lake Megonjávri. The process of handling, looking, and discussing the physical paper prints of these, and the reminiscences, emotions, and realizations that they wake, is a nice example of the unstable and restless nature and materiality of photographs (Seppänen 2014, 96). Janne Seppänen (2014, 96–97) has described the paradoxical dynamic presences and absences embedded in the photographic representation. When a photograph is understood as a representation of some bygone or absent entity, that entity is present in the image as a material trace that reminds about its past existence, but simultaneously the photographic representation makes the entity absent and gone for the observer. Interpretation of photographic representation appears to be best approached with the guidance of the Actor-Network Theory and phenomenological reading, trying to avoid the western binary oppositions of, for instance, materiality and immateriality, and instead emphasizing the binding relational networks connecting the materialities and meanings (Seppänen 2014, 188–189; see Latour 1993). Photographs are in essence hybrid products, simultaneously physical and social objects, which are constructed from the combination of physical photochemical processes that trace light into a material form, and social actions of photographing and interpreting the imagery (Seppänen 2014, 191–192). A relational approach is especially appropriate in the Sápmi context, as the traditional northern environmental awareness approaches the world as an embodied and lived-in cohesive web of relations (e.g. Herva 2014; Länsman 2004; Ruotsala 2002; Tervaniemi and Magga 2019). This stance reminds some of the notions of philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962, 19) and other phenomenologists about perception in general, and about the lifeworld as the taken-for-granted, fluid fabric of the world founded on our corporeal sensibilities (e.g. Heidegger [1971] 2001; Schutz and Luckmann 1973; Seamon 1990, 2014).

While I was browsing through my daughters’ photographs with them, the images gained meanings through their physical interaction with the paper prints that were shuffled from hand-to-hand and spread across the floor. These two-dimensional visual representations stimulated and sparked their imagination based on their entangled personal relational networks that involve the pictured and interconnected human and non-human actors (Seppänen 2014, 191–192). With the images sprawled about the living room floor, one could observe how the girls got animated when picking up certain images that evoked especially vivid memories, for instance, about the excitement of the novel helicopter ride (Figure 8), the shared awe of the mid-summer snow on the mountain sides and summertime sledding, or just a relaxed memory of chilling and cooking at the open fireplace – and the tang of burning marshmallows that Figure 9 evoked. They actively took turns at pouring over the photographs poking them, turning them around to gain better lighting or perspective to observe the details, and commenting on and comparing each other’s experiences and recollections.
This level of engagement juxtaposes their behavior when we are looking at digital photographs from the screen of a computer or a mobile device. Peering at the ‘immaterial’ images on the bright screen appears to be a much more passive and less engaging activity. Typically, interaction with the screen images is gained by asking whoever controls the computer to make this or that image larger or go backwards in the images. It appears that the bodily engagement with the paper prints worked as a further corporeal stimulus that actively coaxed memories and created new connections between the pictured situations and the memorized events and landscapes around it. This might be seen in the light of Merleau-Ponty’s (1962, 161) interpretation that to reach towards a thing with one’s body, our ‘general instrument of ... comprehension’ (Merleau-Ponty 1962, 235), is to answer to the call of that thing. In photographs this extends to the call of the things beyond the picture frame, as pictured in and framed by one’s mind’s eye. Also, it was interesting to note how the pleasant recollections of the impressive mountainous landscape and the exciting shared experiences of the expedition have in their minds overcome the reminders of the pestering mosquitoes, the long slippery hike to the site every morning and afternoon in the cold driving rain, or the biting wind blasting to the bone through all the layers of clothing.

**Instagrammers’ images of Northern tundra**

My daughters’ landscape photographs appear to have commonalities with common tourism representations of the north, which have been strongly
branded around the imagery of unspoiled nature (e.g. Aro, Suomi, and Saraniemi 2018; Koponen, Seitsonen, and Koskinen-Koivisto 2018). To assess this further, I evaluated with content analysis a sample of public Instagram photographs from the area as a comparative dataset (e.g. Caliandro and Graham 2020), with a larger qualitative random sample that I browsed through, and a smaller quantitative sub-sample of 246 images (see below). The majority of those Instagrammers I examined appeared to be trekking tourists originating from further south in Finland. Of course, public Instagram imagery has a distinct target unlike the personal photographs of my daughters. The audience of Instagrammers is (in theory) the entire world, and users target their posts for building their often carefully curated social media networks and profiles, their autobiographies (e.g. Cooley 2005; Fallon 2014; Wendt 2014) that mirror the social rules (sensu Bourdieu 1996) of the Instagram community (Fallon 2014). In contrast, my daughters’ photographs were meant as their own, private material, and intended as immaterial, mementoes and reminders of the expedition experiences (e.g. Chalfen 1987). I admittedly conflict with this in this paper, although with their informed consent. There are of course always power relations at play between a parent and his or her children, which might affect the decisions of children, either to allow using their images or when taking photographs to shoot subjects that they might think their parents want to see (see above). I have received their permission for using their pictures or of them previously on various occasions in presentations and publications (e.g. Seitsonen 2020b, 22, 167, 214), so they are quite used to these requests from me. For the latter matter, I told them only afterwards that I might use their images also for research, if they would allow that, to avoid this from skewing their image choices.

Instagram and other online photograph-sharing platforms, such as Flickr, mirror the conventions of presentation and storytelling of their online user communities (Fallon 2014; Prieur et al. 2009), their ‘collaborative performances’ (Batterbee 2003; Ibrahim 2015). Andrew Miller and Keith Edwards (2007) have argued that these kinds of online imageries tap into a markedly different photographic communication and storytelling framework than traditional paper print photographs do. They suggest that online forum users ‘tell stories with images rather than about images’ (Miller and Edwards 2007, 348, original emphasis), employing photographs to convey information to a potentially unlimited number of people that they do not personally know (Ibrahim 2015; Prieur et al. 2009; Thelwall et al. 2016). In contrast, looking at traditional photographs usually involves purposefully gathering around and recounting stories related to the images to a selected group of people (Miller and Edwards 2007). Richard Chalfen (1987) has suggested in his classic study of traditional printed photographs that they offer a kind of podium for verbally narrating stories which are preserved in the ‘heads of the picturemakers’ (Chalfen 1987, 70) and entwined around images (Ibrahim 2015; Prieur et al. 2009). This suggested
contrast has interesting implications when considering differences observed above in my daughters’ behaviour and level of engagement – both when they examined more actively, discursively and corporally the paper prints and expanded the worlds verbally outside the picture frames, and when they gaze more passively at the digital on-screen images.

Instagram posts were assessed with a qualitative random sample of browsing the images labeled with the hashtag käsivarrenerämäa (Eng. käsivarri-wilderness, 4935 posts), and a smaller quantitative analysis of the photograph themes with the hashtags käsivarrenerämäalue (Eng. käsivarri-wilderness area, 52 posts, 204 images) and käsivarrenerämää (Eng. käsivarri-wilderness, with a typographical error in the end, 30 posts, 42 images) (Figure 10). At the first glance, most of the pictures in these categories appear to highlight the special characteristics that make this region stand out from rest of Finland and Sápmi. These include the spectacular mountainous tundra landscape, with snow jassa lingering on the fallen sides throughout the summer, often with dramatic, dark skies above them. These are namely the same elements that are visible in my daughters’ landscape imagery. People also tend to post pictures of themselves – or their dogs – posing against the dramatic wilderness backdrop. Here, one sees their fellow hikers walking through imposing mountain passes or crossing fast-running rivers, and one glimpses details of their hiking and camping equipment. The demanding weather conditions throughout the year and the plagues of mosquitoes and flies also garner some attention.

The Instagram images that were assessed quantitatively were classified into 16 categories (Figure 10). These coincide with what I surmised from the cursory qualitative assessment of the larger Instagram photography category. Instagram

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**Figure 10.** Photograph themes of the quantitatively studied Instagram hashtags #käsivarrenerämäalue and #käsivarrenerämää.
users seem to place a clear emphasis on sharing images of the area’s imposing mountainous Alpine tundra landscape, unique to Finland. Other themes are represented in much lower percentages in their imageries. Mountainous landscape shots without people are by far most common (38%), followed by pictures of people hiking, skiing, or paddling through the wilderness (13%). The ordering of these categories recalls my daughters’ photos, landscape sceneries being the most common and images presenting the main activities as the second most common (in our case excavation, for the Instagrammers walking, skiing, or otherwise traversing the landscape). Nature closeups are the third most common category of Instagram photographs, for example closeups of flowers and reindeer bones (10%). These kinds of images are missing from my daughters’ imagery, since it was impossible to take closeups with their cheap disposable cameras (the closest focusing distance is about one meter). Trekking equipment forms another popular theme in the Instagram images (6%), reminiscent of the girls’ imagery of the excavation equipment. The clear difference in the photograph themes is that of reindeer. Instagrammers have posted in the studied categories more representations of dead reindeer, as closeups of reindeer skulls and bones, than images of live ones. Whether this is due to Instagram users simply not encountering reindeer on their travels, or for some other reason, is unknown. In my daughters’ imagery, pictures of reindeer are fourth most common (and most common in Elvi’s photographs), whereas they form only 2% of the studied Instagram images. This is in part due to all my daughters being animal lovers, and the fact that they like reindeer and have encountered them all through their lives at the home of our reindeer herding friend.

Seeing Sápmi or seeing unconquered ‘wilderness’?

An eye-catching trait in both my daughters’ and in the Instagrammers’ images is the dearth of Sámi people or Sámi culture, although Giehtaruohttasa meahce-guovllu lies in the heartland of Sápmi (Figure 2). There is a total lack of Sámi people and culture in the Instagram images. This is quite typical for the popular image of northern Finland, which presents ideals of ‘Lapland’s untouched pristine wilderness’, or makes use of Sámi culture in some tacky or stereotypical way (e.g. Aro, Suomi, and Saraniemi 2018; Koponen, Seitsonen, and Koskinen-Koivisto 2018; Niskala and Ridanpää 2016). Placing emphasis on nature instead of culture has a long tradition in Finnish, and also more widely European, imagery of the north, at least since the early 1900s (e.g. Koponen, Seitsonen, and Koskinen-Koivisto 2018). This appears to propagate characteristic (mis) conceptions of northern wonders, wastelands, and wilderness prevalent since the early modern times (e.g. Andersson Burnett 2010, 2013; Naum 2016; Seitsonen, Koponen, and Herva 2019). This coincides with the common, perpetuated southern misconception that ‘Lapland’ consists mostly of pristine nature, while in fact it is part of the centuries old ancestral cultural landscape and
contact zone of Sámi people (e.g. Magga 2007). However, for an outsiders’ eye the subtle marks left by Sámi reindeer herding, hunting, gathering, and other activities are often practically unseen, even if they are clear to the Sámi themselves (e.g. Tervaniemi and Magga 2019).

This impaired vision of the western ‘tourist gaze’ (Bender 1999; Urry 2002) has a long colonial backdrop, which has affected, and continues to affect, the common perceptions of outsiders of the North as an empty, unconquered, and untamed wilderness and an underutilized resource area open for the taking (e.g. Herva, Varnajot, and Pashkevich 2020; Tervaniemi and Magga 2019). The trekkers’ Instagram imagery conforms closely with this kind of detached stare and perception of the area. Also, Instagrammers’ prevalence of portraying the remains of dead reindeer over living animals further accentuates the sensation of emptiness, danger, and bleakness. They appear to portray this area foremost as a wild, barren outback through which they negotiate their way, awe-inspiring and potentially even dangerous Lapland of experiences, which is conquered and tamed by them and their photographs (Aro, Suomi, and Saraniemi 2018; Herva 2014). It must be remembered that these Instagrammers portray only a certain fraction of the hikers. Differently oriented trekkers, who have for example visited the area annually for decades and formed close ‘väärti’ relations, that is recurring and mutually beneficial interaction networks, with the locals (see Länsman 2004), share their own photographs, experiences and advice on other forums, such as closed Facebook groups. The representations of Sápmi in hikers’ social media imagery and discussions merits a study of its own in the future.

In my daughters’ pictures, past Sámi culture is presented by the remains of the ancient Sámi dwelling that we excavated at Megonjärvi, and its immediate surroundings, a long-used seasonal gieddi campsite (gieddis are past Sámi habitation sites that are typically discernible from their surroundings based on their vegetation enriched by the recurring human and semi-domesticated reindeer activity through the centuries). Then again, living Sámi culture is visible only in two photographs, due to a chance meeting at the heliport. When we arrived at the heliport, we met and chatted for a while with the members of one local Sámi family who were about to leave on the next flight to mark their reindeer calves. In two images this family is seen in the background uploading their equipment into the helicopter. On the other hand, my daughters have encountered Sámi culture elsewhere from an early age through our friends.

All in all, my daughters’ photographs seem to portray an interplay and a tension between at-homeness, based on their previous expedition and excavation experiences, and an amazement when facing the new wonderous mountain sceneries and natural phenomena. Creating a feeling of at-homeness for them appeared to be strongly dependent on the fact that I was already familiar with all the places surrounding us and could guide them across the landscape
and tell them about the different places. On the other hand, there seems to be a general wonderment with the previously unencountered, spatially and visually commanding and dynamic high-elevation mountain sceneries. Many of the landscape images illustrate a powerful sense of perceptual depth and rising elevation, such as that created in Figure 5 by the fast rushing River Bierfejohka in its steep-sided gorge with the low-hanging dark clouds above and snow-covered mountains in the background. People who figure in the images are very much embedded into and dwarfed by the vast mountainous surroundings, and despite the colorful, high-viz work clothes do not appear to be separated from the immersive scenery. This feeling might be amplified by the generally casual, relaxed and natural stance as part of the landscape, or in fact dug into that landscape (Figures 6 and 7). The individual human beings in the pictures intertwine in space through their corporeal entanglement with each other and the surrounding world, and appear to transform the open tundra space and the insides of a crammed wilderness hut into meaningful place through the common shared activities (e.g. Merleau-Ponty 1962; Seamon 1990, 2014).

It seems that the familiar excavation and expedition activities, carried out alongside familiar people, were important for placemaking and becoming acquainted with new surroundings. This highlights the importance of bodily actions for being-in-the-world and placemaking (e.g. Seamon 2013, 2014). Generally, all people in the photographs seem rather relaxed and content with what they are doing. Only in a single image, taken inside the helicopter that is negotiating its way up a narrow valley through the dense clouds in heavy rain and wind, can one sense the tension of necks and shoulders and quiet concentration as people peer through the raindrop spattered, foggy windsheen (Figure 8). The helicopter was for the children a new and completely alien space, and it evoked much stronger feelings of excitement, anxiety, and wonder than anything else during the trip. It was also a space where things were entirely in someone else’s hands, which excluded the possibility of familiarizing and controlling it with their own or their parent’s activities.

Parents generating the feelings of at-homeness and safety for children when facing new situations is a universal theme, that can have meaning and be extended beyond interpreting children’s photographic representations. It is especially prevalent in crises conditions where things are often out of hand for both adults and their children, for instance, during forced immigration. Kirova and Emme (2006) have suggested that photography can offer one approach for interpreting phenomenologically the refugee children’s experience, placemaking and being-in-the-world. The refugee parents, other important adults, and older siblings hold an immense responsibility in forced mobility situations to look after the small, vulnerable children and to cushion them from becoming (even more) traumatized in stressful and painful conditions (e.g. Khawaja et al. 2017; Lewig, Arney, and Salveron 2010). This has been mirrored, for instance, in the discussions
I have had with locals who were children during the Second World War in Sápmi (Koskinen-Koivisto and Seitsonen 2019; Seitsonen and Koskinen-Koivisto 2017b). It appears that their parents and older relatives attempted to maintain an outward sense of control, for instance through familiar activities, to make the children feel at-ease and more at home when facing the new and unexpected (Atem Deng and Marlowe 2013; Khawaja et al. 2017; Lewig, Arney, and Salveron 2010). For the Lapland’s refugees these included for example the various non-places (Augé 1995), such as railroad stations and temporary camps and lodgings that they traversed through during their chaotic evacuation journey from the northern warzone, and encounters with new and unexpected lifeways and food cultures in the Swedish refugee camps and southern Finnish evacuation places (e.g. Lehtola 2015). This seems to have somewhat softened the Sámi children’s experiences and prevented them from becoming excessively traumatized by the distressing events that they were unexpectedly sucked into. In popular culture, the analogous desperate attempts of a parent to shield his innocent child from the evils of a Second World War concentration camp are tragically and strikingly portrayed in the 1997 drama-comedy ‘Life is Beautiful’ (Benigni 1997) by Italian actor Roberto Benigni. It must be always remembered that globally the insecurity of life in the war zones, forced evacuations, and refugee experiences are the harsh reality and burden to millions of parents and their children of all ages while you read this.

Epilogue

Altogether, my daughters’ photographs of our archaeological expedition to northernmost Sápmi seem to portray an interplay and a tension between at-homeness and alienation in a new environment. They appear to have experienced a sense of familiarity and control through the customary and recognizable excavation and expedition activities familiar to them, as well as the presence of and interaction with the trusted people surrounding them. These seem to have been important, practical place-making elements for them. On the other hand, their imagery conveys an awe of encountering a new and dramatic mountainous tundra landscape and an excitement of novel experiences, such as riding in a helicopter for the first time. If I contrast these to my own experiences of working in this area, on the rooftop of Finland, I can recognize the excitement, novelty and wonder of encountering this marvelous landscape that is unique within the Finnish borders.

Most of Finland and Finnish Sápmi is covered by forests (e.g. Risbøl et al. 2020) and the mountainous open Alpine tundra of Giehtaruohttasamehačce-guovllu was a rather unique experience also for myself when I started working there in 2015. I had been visiting the area somewhat earlier, firstly as a small child in the 1970s–80s with my parents, which predated the building of the village at Gilbesjávri in the late-1980s, and occasionally in early 2000s. However, I had a very hazy memory of the earlier visits and was in my childhood
more familiar with the other parts of Sápmi, for example in Gilhttel (Fi. Kittilä) and Anár, which are mostly forested with open fjeld landscapes encountered at higher elevations. My childhood memories from Gilbbesjávri focus on the sensations of the midsummer snow and having snowball fights with my sister and parents, and the breathtaking sheer cliff faces (bákti) of for instance Sáná (Fi. Saana) and Gihcibákti (Fi. Iso-Malla)fjeld. These are basically the same elements of the landscape that made an impression on my older daughters on their first visit to the area and are also emphasized in their photographs from the summer 2020. While browsing through some old photo albums in my parents’ place in the autumn 2020, I came across an old faded photograph of me and my sister sledding down a steep summertime snowbank with plastic bags wearing t-shirts. The joy and wonderment visible in that image reminded me strongly of witnessing my daughters’ awe and delight of matching experience over three decades later (Seitsonen et al. 2021). Looking at this image made me feel a vivid connection to the place through our common shared experiences and longing to revisit it again soon.

In the outsiders’ eyes, especially the mountainous scenery appears to form the *genius loci* (*sensu* Norberg-Schultz 1980) unique to this region. This is apparent in both my children’s and my own childhood experiences and in the public Instagram posts. For instance, the impressive Sáná Fjeld with its towering bákti on the shore of the Lake Gilbbesjávri has long held a special place in the Finnish popular imagination. This is fueled, for instance, by some national romantic ideals and stereotypical imagery in the school curriculum, such as a popular song about the ‘Mighty Saana of Kilpisjärvi’ (see Valtonen 2019). However, it must be recognized that locals have much more nuanced and complex relations to place, to place-bound heritage, and to landscape than visitors to the area. Reindeer herding Sámi families, whose long-term ancestral lands these are, have a particularly intimate knowledge of the lay of the land. Their perceptions are firmly tied to their own and their families’ pasts and imbued with myriad transgenerational meanings and memories. These views escape all attempts at drawing divisions between the cultural and natural landscape and heritage, and instead perceive the scenery as a multifaceted, cognitively-controlled, familiar unity that is inclusive for all the human and non-human actors.

**Note**

1. Our work in the area is part of continuing co-operation initiated by the head of the local herdsmen, reindeer master Juha Tornensis of Giehtaruohttasá bálgus (Käisivarsi reindeer herding cooperative) in 2019. We have for example carried out a counter-mapping (e.g. Schofield 2014) of the locally important heritage under Juha’s guidance around the Lake Gilbbesjávri (Seitsonen 2020–2021; Seitsonen and Viljanmaa 2021).
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