

DAINA PUPKEVIČIŪTĒ

Relationships in the context of crisis:
earth, time and generativity
in the Roya Valley



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UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

Press

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This doctoral thesis was accepted for defending the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnology on December 17, 2025, by the Council of the Institute of Cultural Research, University of Tartu.

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The dissertation will be defended on February 26, 2026, at 12.00 in the Senate Hall of the University of Tartu (Ülikooli 18–204).

English language copy-editor: Shultz Abrahms-Kavunenکو

Summary translation to Estonian: Saara Hanna Mildeberg

CV layout, language editing and translation: Aleksander Slota

Fieldwork for this research has been supported by *Dora+* academic mobility grant by European Regional Development Fund.

Finalization of this research has been supported by a fellowship during October 2024 – May 2025 at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg *Inherit. Heritage in transformation*, at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.



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ISSN 1736-1966 (print)

ISBN 978-9908-57-117-1 (print)

ISSN 2806-2183 (pdf)

ISBN 978-9908-57-118-8 (pdf)

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University of Tartu Press

www.tyk.ee

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to the Institute of Cultural Research of the University of Tartu and my supervisor Aet Annist for allowing me the spacetime to work on this research. Much thanks to my supervisor Saskia Abrahms-Kavunenkeno, for invaluable feedback and encouragement which allowed me to focus and finalize. A bow of gratitude to Sille Vadi and Reet Ruusman – at the Institute of Cultural Research – for their kindness, and Shultz Abrahms-Kavunenkeno for insightful copy-editing work and feedback. I am grateful to Dr. Laur Vallikivi for constructive feedback and helpful insights.

This thesis would not have been possible without the amazing humans who agreed to share their time and, along with it, a fraction of their lives with me: every one of them left a mark in many ways not only on this work, but also in my heart. I kindly thank the courageous people at *Emmaus Roya* for their passionate and world-mending work, for *Le journal du débord* – an amazing data-based community initiative that covers the socioeconomic impacts of the storm – and for letting me take part in their border activism and see the extent of the damage that inhumane border policies do. I thank Michel Broun, editor of *Editions du Cabri* and heritage activist of the Valley of Roya, for exchanges, encouragement and wonderful books; Patricia Balandier, tireless researcher and passionate architectural historian, for helping me see what is in the landscape; dedicated wolf-lover and specialist Gilbert Millischer for generously sharing his love and knowledge of the wolves; Gilbert Cottalorda for the flow and the roof above my head when me and the cats needed it most; activists, artists, farmers, dreamers, shepherds, magicians, yogis, witches and my wonderful friend Magali Gribaudo, through thick and thin. They all make Roya a true valley of dreams.

My doctoral studies started during the pandemic, in 2020, and the online support of my peers and friends was extremely important. I am grateful to my shadow supervisor Artūrs Pokšans; to Renida Baltrušaitytė, Ugnė Starkutė, Kornelija Čepytė and Giedrius Jankauskas – my Anthropos colleagues; Anna Caroline Haubold and the others that were part of our online doctoral support group; my therapist Sharypha Rhyazeva, who did not tire to remind me that love for self must come first, and helped me identify my neurodivergency; Celine Marks for grace; Anni Ansper and Karin Zirk for becoming family; the tireless Saara Mildeberg, soon to be Dr., for endless inspiration and Estonian translation; Giedrė Gott for believing in me more than I do; and the wonderful Aleks Slota for all the love, care, dreaming, grounding and celebrating.

I am immensely grateful to my mother, a fearless travel companion who accompanied me across Europe to reach an impassable storm-ruined mountain valley, and my feline family, Beržas and Sigutė. These two are highly motivational writing buddies and an endless source of emotional support, easing transitions and immersions. It is the dialogues that we three had that made me think more about how we are all part of each other's worlds. Beržas and Sigutė, my co-researchers, teach me that daily practices of (multispecies) care are the foundation for everything else.

I thank the reviewers of my articles for invaluable insights and scholarly discussion that encouraged me to look for more. Many thanks to Beatrice Palmero, editor-in-chief of *Intermelo* journal, for her kind communication and an urgent consultation.

I appreciate the support of *Dora+* academic mobility grant (European Regional Development Fund) which has allowed me to carry out fieldwork in the best conditions possible. Finalization of this research endeavour was inspired and supported by a fellowship during October 2024 – May 2025 at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg *Inherit. Heritage in transformation*, at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Being in such a caring and nurturing academic environment was a gift.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

- I. Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. “La Roya, the Dream: heterotopia and potentialities of a storm.” *Re-Visiones* 13 (2023).
<https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/REVI/article/view/94452/4564456568522>.
- II. Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. “Shaping the Ephemeral in and out of the Field: Methodological Inbetweens as Tools for Disentanglement.” *Visual Ethnography* 14, no. 2 (2025).
<https://www.vejournal.org/index.php/vejournal/article/view/407>.
- III. Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. “Shepherding in France: The Ambiguities of Caring for Nonhuman Animals in the Roya Valley, France.” *Journal of Ecological Anthropology* 26, no. 1. (2025).
<https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jea/vol26/iss1/>.

ABSTRACT

This research is situated in the Roya Valley, France, after storm Alex – which on the 2nd of October 2020 devastated its infrastructure and destabilized its inhabitants. This research employs a historically-informed multispecies, multi-scalar, and interdisciplinary approach to engage this post-disaster context. This dissertation looks at the relationships between humans, nonhuman animals, plants and landscape in the Roya Valley in the context of disaster and climate change.

This research is presented through three articles and an umbrella chapter. Article I discusses how different relationships produce different imaginaries of the valley. Article II engages the interdisciplinary methods that were used. Article III looks into what the ways of caring for nonhuman animals demonstrate about the human inhabitants of the valley, national and international policies that govern relationalities, and activities that come to be defined as care. In addition to providing historical and social context, the overarching chapter examines relationality as care-and-response, and examines the ways in which these pursuits can be seen as sustaining intergenerational interspecies generativity and enacting ways of dwelling within the fragile place. It looks into social position of *paysan.nes* living and working in the Roya Valley and shows how *paysan.nes* in the valley have an especially strong relationship to the landscape, which builds upon generational work and helps in understanding the potential future threats of the changing climate.

This work, grounded in long-term ethnographic fieldwork, builds on research concerning relationships and relationality, the re-evaluation of domestication practices, and interdependence, and combines anthropology, environmental history, and art practice to look at a site of disaster in Europe and more-than-human relationalities that surround it.

1. INTRODUCTION

On the 2nd of October 2020, the Roya Valley in France, bordering Italy (see figures 1–3), experienced a colossal extratropical cyclone, later named storm Alex, and attendant flash flooding. A year after the storm, when I started my research, inhabitants of the villages of the valley, Breil-sur-Roya, Fontan, Saorge, Brigue, and Tende still remembered in detail the day of the storm and the reality they awoke to the next day. Raymonde from Tende, north-most of the valley, told me how the overflowing river ate away at the plots of land that had bordered the river and carried everything it dislodged along with it, blocking and, in many cases, completely destroying bridge after bridge throughout the valley on its way to the Mediterranean.

My husband came, telling me, close [everything], put the rugs [under the doors and windows], the water will enter [the house]. [...] He was coming from the [allotment] behind the [hospital], half of his terrain there had been carried away by then. [...] I changed my shoes, put on a good anorak, and went to look at the river [...]. When I came, the field, the field next to [the river], it wasn't there anymore. [...] There was nothing; there was only a small hut amidst the water. That building was around 50 meters from the river [...]. Much further ahead, the bridge was blocked [...]; it was like a dike. The rain continued, [water] flooded the fields, and it came up to that house, which was maybe 50, or, surely at least 40 meters [from the river]. It was in the middle of the water. It had two entrance steps, but [they were under water], only 5 or 6 cm before it would enter the house. [...] I returned, my husband came back. Come, he said, let's go see the fields; he had another one at the bottom of the village. But we could not get there, because the water was already flowing over the bridge. And the disaster was because every time a bridge broke down, all the dirt came to the next bridge. [Everything] got blocked. I saw the bridge [...] there: the water could not flow under, it was moving in waves, [countercurrent] away from the bridge, moving in waves to the left and the right. That's how it looked like. Well, then we came back. The swimming pool was no longer there.

(Extract from a semi-structured interview with Raymonde)

The night of the storm Sasha was in her home in the southern part of the valley, high above the river. The rain was so hard, she remembers, that she and her then-husband spent the entire night collecting and clearing the rainwater which kept relentlessly entering the house. At some point the light went out, as it did everywhere in the valley. It was only the next morning that Sasha saw what had happened.

All night long we were mopping up the water. [In the morning], tired, we looked down and realized that there were no more houses on the edge of the Roya, that there were houses that had disappeared, that the Roya, the riverbed, had changed. And we told ourselves, shit, there's been a disaster. There's been a disaster. But we had been so focused on ourselves the entire night, to just mop up the water. We saw all of our land, the walls, huge walls, collapse. [...]

It's the house of my great grandfather. It is my heritage. It's my life, it's all of my life. It's where my great grandfather raised cows, it's where my grandfather became a goat herder, it's... it's my place. And, just like this, everything changed.

(Extract from a semi-structured interview with Sasha)



Figure 1. Map of France, red dot in the left bottom corner indicates Roya Valley. Line in lilac marks the border between Italy (left hand side) and France, as it has been since 1947. Source of maps (fig.1–3): www.geoportail.gouv.fr, which allows for the reproduction of its data for non-commercial purposes providing the source will be indicated



Figure 2. Map shows two of the villages of the valley of Roya, Tende to the North and Breil-sur-Roya to the south, yellow line between them – the Roya river. To the west from Tende, the other valleys that were hit by the storm: Vésubie (see St. Martin-Vésubie) and Tinée (see St-Sauveur-sur-Tinée).

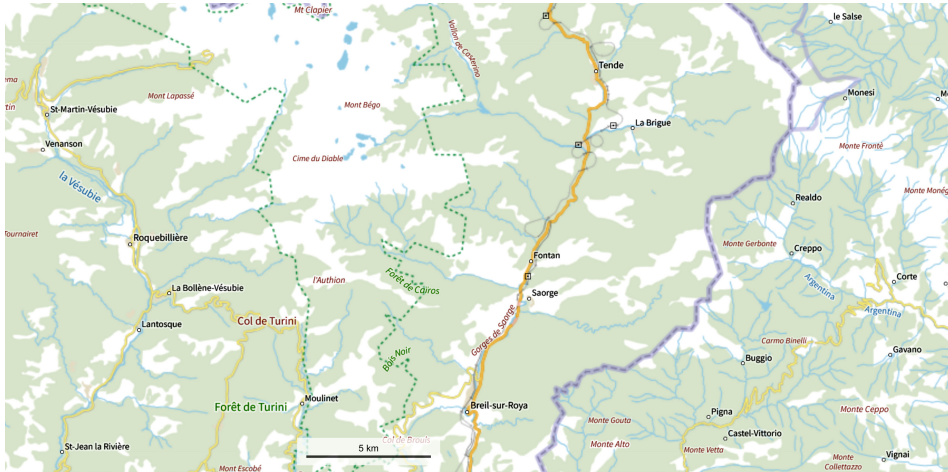


Figure 3. Map shows the Roya Valley (see orange line between Breil-sur-Roya at the bottom of the map and Tende at the top, and beyond, marking the main road that connects the valley to the Liguria region in Italy on the coast of Mediterranean, and to the Piedmont region in the North. Line in lilac marks the border between France and Italy as it has been since 1947.

Everyone who was in the valley that night, and even those who were away, had a story to tell. The stories never ran dry, regardless of the context I would find myself in. They would seep up, time and again, as an unhealed wound that needed attending to. Once some friends, all from Breil-sur-Roya, and I sat on a first-floor terrace having pizza. The friend whose apartment we were at remembered, looking down at the square beneath us, how during the storm the water was just an inch below this very terrace, the house being situated around twenty meters from an artificial lake, fed by the river, that lies in the center of Breil-sur-Roya. The story was told to all of us, but it was mostly addressed to me, as every one of those people had heard it several times before, in addition to having experienced that night for themselves. The person took out their phone and showed me the photos and videos of cars floating in the dark water, lights still blinking due to shorted wires, bumping into each other, anti-theft alarms going. He told me how his upstairs neighbor, an elderly person in a wheelchair, called down to him to ask what was happening throughout the night, and that he reassured her that all was fine and that the water did not seem to be a menace to their house. This was not true, he admitted, because the water level kept rising constantly, and he could measure it in inches from the bottom of his balcony. The square above which we sat and ate the pizza hosts market days. One early morning, when I was shopping for fresh locally grown vegetables, another friend approached me and offered to show the dirt mark on the wall of the church, right across the square from the house, that clearly indicated the level the water had reached. The mark was beyond my reach, high, a visible reminder to everyone who knew what to look for. Visible marks of the storm were everywhere, and invisible ones were carried by everyone.



Photo 1. Le Castel du Roy, a hotel at the edge of the village of Breil-sur-Roya, ravaged by the river; with graffiti added after the storm Alex. Photo by the author.

Tremendous amounts of water surging down the slopes of the Alps caused multiple landslides and ripped deep gullies. These landslides, a mixture of gravel, sand, trees, shrubs and water rushing down from higher altitudes, were strong enough to tear buildings apart. The mixture of water and gravel clawed at and carried off chunks of the road that runs along the river, and unearthed and washed away a part of a cemetery at Saint Dalmas de Tende, carrying away with it the remains of 150 persons¹. It completely destroyed the pool built next to the riverbed in Tende, a hotel (see photo 1), a covered pool and camping facilities in

¹ On September 23, 2025, the town hall of Tende announced on its Facebook page that, after a “process of DNA analysis and identification,” the bodies washed out during Storm Alex had been identified and reburied in a ceremony closed to the public in the cemetery of Tende. The reburial of the remains in the cemetery of Saint-Dalmas de Tende is scheduled to take place at the end of the year, after the completion of the reconstruction.

As rightly noted by the reviewer of this thesis, it does not discuss the Christian landscape and practices related to death. These aspects, especially in the context of generational generativity, inheritance, and heritage, and the complex cross-border history of the valley, would be interesting to address. However, the material to address these questions has not been salient in the data collected. A multidisciplinary research project “La disparition des défunts. Le cimetière de Saint Dalmas de Tende après la tempête Alex”, addressing the loss of the remains and its social significance to the inhabitants of Roya Valley has been initiated by the University of Côte d’Azur in Nice in October 2022 (<https://mshs.univ-cotedazur.fr/recherche/axes-de-recherche/a-disparition-des-defunts-le-cimetiere-de-saint-dalmas-de-tende-apres-la-tempete-alex>, accessed October 7, 2025). At the time of submission of this thesis the results of the research had not yet been published.

Breil-sur-Roya, and many other structures along its banks. All of this debris ended up in the Mediterranean (see photo 2).



Photo 2. A still frame from the drone footage taken for the Italian Riviera24.it², publicly available on Youtube, showing the muddy waters from the Roya colliding with the azure of the Mediterranean in Ventimiglia.

The media circulated images of mushroom-shaped gray waters of the Roya entering the sea, but little was to be seen or heard from the Roya valley on the first day after the storm, because it was totally inaccessible. It was not only the Roya Valley that had been devastated, but also the neighboring valleys of Tinée, Var and Vésubie. 10 people died in the storm, 8 still remain missing – their deaths cannot be confirmed because their remains were never found. Among the missing ones was Paul Giordano, a shepherd, last seen by his brother being swept away in the northernmost part of the Roya Valley. On the first anniversary of the flood, a statue dedicated to him was erected in the hamlet of Viévola, north of Tende. At the time of the dedication of the sculpture, Viévola was still difficult to reach, most of the dirt roads running within and alongside the riverbed.

Since then, a number of research texts regarding the causes and impacts of this event, named storm Alex, have been published. Most of those texts are concerned with the disaster from the point of view of geomorphology (Piton & Liébault 2023), hydrogeomorphology (Melun et al. 2022), hydrology (Pons et al. 2024, Martins et al. 2024), hydrometry (Payrastre et al. 2022), and geography (Visage 2023), amongst others. Only two research projects have been from disciplines

² Available at <https://youtu.be/fWWR3Pqj8GM?feature=shared> and <https://www.riviera24.it/2020/10/ventimiglia-dopo-il-passaggio-della-tempesta-alex-le-immagini-aeree-di-un-lettore-649301/>, accessed on the 2nd May 2025.

other than those broadly defined as earth sciences. One text is interested in the demography and statistics of the valley pre-disaster (Jobert and Petrovic 2022). This study shows the social fragility of the inhabitants in the region. The second article, by political geographer Selin Le Visage, analyzes how the state of emergency in the Roya Valley after the storm was used to justify reconstruction choices. The state of emergency allowed governmental agencies to focus on the technical and material aspects of minimizing vulnerability, disregarding the opportunity to include the active engagement of the local inhabitants in discussing and working towards a more radical transformation of living in a vulnerable place (Visage 2023).

Le Visage identifies this approach as problematic and it has not gone unnoticed by my interlocutors in the field. People involved in environmental activism and activism concerned with the social and cultural revitalization of the valley have said that their recommendations were disregarded. A sentiment similarly expressed concerning the earlier disregarding of protests against and recommendations regarding the construction of the new tunnel of Tende, connecting Piedmont to Liguria and French Riviera, which would have opened the valley to the intensive circulation of heavy cargo trucks³. Many of these activists and people involved in associative structures have backgrounds in history, engineering, sociology and other fields. After the storm they organized and/or engaged in citizen consultations, inquiries of sociological nature, discussions and events of various formats. These efforts were aimed at defining what the citizens, the inhabitants of the valley, would like the future of the Roya Valley to look like. The association Emmaüs Roya initiated a number of meetings and interviews with locals to better understand the before and the after of the storm. This work resulted in two pocket-size journals titled *Le Journal du Débord. Manuel pour comprendre la vallée de la Roya post-tempête Alex*, which argues that the vulnerabilities of the inhabitants of the Roya long preceded the storm. The storm only made them visible and further exacerbated them.

My research, in a way, begins where this work ended – making connections between various temporalities, vulnerabilities and experiences of the landscape. I chose to situate my research predominantly with those who live on the outskirts of the villages but who are also seen to be, and/or want to see themselves as being, at the social margins. Those who are going against the grain, also through their practice: market gardeners, olive farmers, chestnut grove keepers, shepherds,

³ As one of my interlocutors who was a climate activist explained, in spite of the protests, the tunnel was under construction. By the time I finalized this dissertation, the new tunnel had opened. It was inaugurated on the 27th of June 2025 and, the day after, opened to the lightweight motorized vehicles, allowing for alternating passage at designated time windows (information from the press release published in the website of the Ministry of Territorial Planning, Decentralization and Housing; Ministry of Ecological Transition, Biodiversity, Forests, Sea and Fisheries; Ministry of Transport, <https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/presse/inauguration-reouverture-circulation-du-tunnel-routier-du-col-tende-vendredi-27-juin>).

identifying collectively as *paysan.nes*^{4, 5}. They were not made central in any of the research papers I've read, but as I show in my research, their relationships to the landscape, the nonhuman animals and non-animals, and intergenerational time are examples of living with, and understanding (as well as constantly re-evaluating) the personal roles and responsibilities of “living on a damaged planet” (Tsing et al. 2017). The fieldwork for this research project took place from end of June 2021 to the middle of May 2022. Most of the interviews carried out with the farmers took place between the months of October and May, during periods of rest and preparation for the new season (in case of those working with the plants) and lambing season (in case of shepherds). The process of the selection of the participants is addressed in more detail in the Methodology chapter.

⁴ Here and elsewhere in the text, for French, I follow the guide for inclusive writing (Miller 2018). I use *paysan.ne*, employing a dot (instead of median points or periods) between the root and the gendered ending, when writing about peasants in general, and female/masculine form when writing about a specific person. I use the female form *paysanne* for farms (“*paysanne* farm”). For a detailed definition and usage of this term, see footnote no. 5.

⁵ In this text I chose to not translate *paysan.ne* due to the risk that the English term ‘peasant’ would be perceived as derogatory. This is especially the case for those outside of the context of *paysan* movements and unfamiliar with the discussions surrounding the term in peasant and rural studies. The English term farmer, even with additional, role-specific, definitions, such as small-scale farmer, mountain farmer, sheep farmer, ecological farmer, does not convey the politics of the term *paysan.ne* as used by contemporary French *paysannerie* and the research surrounding it.

With the emergence of new *paysan* movements in France in the 1970s, the term *paysan*, formerly somewhat pejorative, was reclaimed. Chaia Heller writes that *paysan.ne* members of the Confederation Paysanne “identify themselves as humanitarian internationalists who struggle to retain the rural ways of life and identities of peasants around the world” (2011, 91). As noticed by Edouard Morena (2014), the definition of the term as well as the understanding of what it means to be a *paysan.ne*, has been constantly evolving but retains its class connotations. The concept was strengthened by transformations within the French political left in the 1980s, and “presented as a symbol of individual freedom, anti-conformism and respect for nature” opposing the “techno-scientific modernity and mass consumerism.” (ibid.) It is important to note that *agriculture paysanne* (peasant agriculture) is a set of values rather than a type of agriculture practice, as defined by FADEAR’s (Network for Peasant Agriculture) Charter of Peasant Agriculture (Gevers et al. 2019). The distinction between *paysan.ne* and farmer (*agriculteur*) is therefore political. *Paysan.nes* align themselves with the anti-capitalist, alterglobalist struggles (Deléage 2005) against oppression. The 8 principles of the *agriculture paysanne* stated in the Charter of Peasant Agriculture are the following: (1) distribution of the means of production and the land to allow as many people as possible to make their living from the profession of paysan; (2) [aim for the] principle of food sovereignty; (3) working with nature, mitigating climate disruption; (4) pursue transparency and the assurance of quality products; (5) aim for the maximum autonomy of farms; (6) live and work with the land; (7) fight against the oppression; (8) always consider long-term and global perspectives. (https://www.agriculturepaysanne.org/IMG/pdf/plaquette_charte_agriculture_paysanne_2025-print.pdf, accessed October 8, 2025)

Further in the text the term worker-peasants will be used, referring to a specific group of workers in the end of 19th century. This refers to a specific time and socioeconomic reality. I will also use “peasant unions” and “peasant organizations” for unions and organizations that define themselves as such.

With this research I aim to contribute to research concerning the social and cultural dimensions and effects of the storm Alex. Social sciences are key to understanding the social dimension of catastrophes and disasters, vulnerability and recovery, and hazards and risks. They are also key to problematizing the concepts that circulate once a disaster strikes. Disaster in anthropology is seen as a socially constructed process, which precedes the singular event (Hoffman and Oliver-Smith, 2020a). It is “the end result of historical processes” (Barrios 2017:151) as well as a social-ecological phenomenon, therefore it needs an approach of convergence: integrating research on society with that on the environment (Hoffman and Oliver-Smith 2020b). Disasters are contingent. They are dependent on “broader global, social, historical and institutional dynamics that influence societies” (Tierney and Oliver-Smith, 2012). In the overview of disaster anthropology, Robertho E. Barrios (2017) shows the input of anthropological perspectives into the understanding not only of what disaster does, but how it has been made through processes of a political and economic nature.

This research project is situated at the intersection of environmental, disaster and more-than-human anthropology. It is my understanding that human situatedness in a disastrous world(s) can only be understood if we take into account human interrelatedness with nonhumans, through generations, over time, and in place that is recognized to be connected to and influenced by global flows.

1.1. Research tasks

The central question that this research project asks is: what are the relationships between humans, nonhuman animals and non-animals in the Roya Valley, in the context of disastrous events and changes, on a local and global scale? And further to this, how do these relationships shape and reshape the valley’s landscape? I am interested in how these relationships connect with or influence the experience of a natural disaster, and the ways that people think about the future.

This research question emerges from my understanding of the climate crisis as a result of cracks and ruptures in the global webs of interspecies relationalities. These ruptures have taken place over centuries, intensifying with colonial practices, and have been justified and reinforced by discourses separating culture and nature, humans and nonhumans. In the Roya Valley, among the people that work (with) the earth – market gardeners, olive farmers, chestnut grove keepers and others – I found a willingness to reconnect and unmake some of these ruptures through the practices of noticing, caring for other species, and site-responsiveness. In order to explore the central research question the thesis recognizes the following objectives:

1. Landscape as multitude: what landscapes and imaginaries coexist in the Roya Valley as heterotopias, how they are produced and who produces them?
2. The historicity of the landscape: how do multitudes of landscapes come to be and how do they relate to time?

3. What landscape is produced by nonhuman agents in the aftermath of what people identify as a catastrophe?
4. How, and for what reasons, do people connect to the Roya Valley – what dimensions of need and aspiration does it correspond to?
5. What does it mean to care for nonhuman others for the inhabitants of the Roya Valley?
6. What can the conflict between caring for domesticated vs wild nonhumans in the Roya Valley help us to understand? How does this conflict relate to human and nonhuman interrelatedness in the broader context of the climate crisis?
7. What political agendas are embedded in discourses related to caring for sheep and wolves in the Roya Valley and France?
8. What can this ethnographic example teach us concerning which methodologies are useful when investigating the unfolding relationships between humans, nonhumans, and abiotic vectors, which are so expansive that they are difficult to capture with the written word alone?

Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 are addressed in the article “La Roya, the Dream: heterotopia and potentialities of a storm”, which is present as article I in this text. In it, I look at the valley through the analytical tool of heterotopia, defined by Foucault as a real place, however one that is “outside of all places” – a place that contests others in a real and mythical way (Foucault and Miskowiec, 1986:24; Vidler, Foucault and Johnston, 2014). I look at several heterotopias: one that is built around the friction between “hippies”, “newcomers” to the valley and the “indigenous”; one founded in pursuits towards feeling entangled, engaged and reconnected to place; and one cultivated by tomato plants, proliferating on a dusty, dry and windy riverbank. These heterotopias show different sets of relationships in and through time and space. Different things are at stake in these relationships. The possibility of different worlds and a multitude of landscapes is coded in the name of the valley – رويَا , pronounced as *roya*, Persian for a dream, as shared by one of my friends in the valley who thought this shows how the valley was connected beyond Europe early in its history⁶. The article is also a contemplation

⁶ The etymological provenance of the hydronym *Roya* (Fr.) / *Roia/Roja* (It.) / *Röia/Ròia* (Royasc, Brigasc, Intermelio, all dialects of Alpine Ligurian) is not to be found in the etymology databases of French, Italian, or Latin, nor in the etymological dictionary of Ligurian (Toso 2015) or in the land registry of the 16th century, the first to classify the hydronyms of the territory of Ventimiglia. These were suggestions by Beatrice Palmero, editor-in-chief of the peer-reviewed journal *Intermellion. Cultura e Territorio*, specializing in the territorial history of Ventimiglia region (Italy), which the Roya Valley has historically been part of, in personal communication. Palmero has shared an entry of *Ròia* by Giulia Petrarco Siccardi (1990, 551) in the toponomastic dictionary. Siccardi refers to the mention of the river in the work of Gaius Plinius Secundus (AD 23/24 – 79, Roman naturalist) as *Rotuba*, from which Siccardi identifies further developments of the name into *Rodoge*, *Rodoie*, *Redoie*, *Rodoze*, *Rotuva*. The way *Ròia* is currently pronounced in Italian, according to Siccardi, is a possible

with the concept of pluriverse (Kothravi et al., 2019; Mignolo, 2018), a world of many coexisting worlds

I address questions 4, 5, 6 and 7 in the article “Between sheep and wolves: the ambiguities of caring for nonhuman animals in the Roya Valley, France”, found in this text as article III. In this article, I discuss how practices of caring for domestic animals (sheep) and wolves reveal the ways that both sheep and wolves are emblematic within the Roya Valley. I investigate what these relationships of care reveal. I show how discourses of care are intertwined with ideas and practices of managing the landscape, and how caring, and the politics of care, are instrumentalized by the state. I explicate three different sets of care relationships: shepherds’ care for sheep, *écologes*’ and the state’s care for wolves, and the state’s care for the shepherds. The conflicting priorities of groups and individuals with different subjects of care and different agendas result in the variegated tensions that play out across the biodiverse landscape of the Roya Valley.

I address question 8 in the article “Shaping the ephemeral in and out of the field: methodological in-betweens as tools for disentanglement”, present in this text as article II. In this article I discuss how and what I define as an in-between practice of research. This research sits between anthropology and art-making, helping me to connect the sensed, the visual, the poetic and ephemeral to the discursive and the tangible in the field. In the article I focus on methodological challenges that I was confronted with during fieldwork, the limitations I perceived in the methods of more traditional ethnography, and how artistic practice helped to meet some of those challenges. It also incorporates how I came to understand my experiences and the data I produced during my time in the Roya through the practice of producing an exhibition. Some of the challenges that I encountered are connected to the difficulties of inquiring into the climate crisis as a hyperobject (Morton 2013), overwhelming and disorienting. I explain how the exhibition helped me to respond to and converse with what I call the *processual* and *experiential* aspects of data. Language – writing up – was limiting, because the data collected was also visual, aural and perceptual. The exhibition was a way to connect the material from the field and convey how a piece of bone, a story about people on the move, acoustic space and fog connect to and convey climate stories.

The aim of this introductory text, an umbrella text for this doctoral thesis project, will be to situate and contextualize the three articles. I will do so via a short environmental history of the Roya Valley, intertwined with the stories of several *paysan.nes* living and working in various places in the valley. I will aim to

result of the loss of -v- in **Rotuva*, followed by epenthesis (addition) of *i* to avoid the vowel hiatus, and softened pronunciation of -o- which is followed by -j-. Siccardi notes that the ancient version of the name reminds Greek *rótanos*.

However, given the complex history of this territory – it has been a place of movement through centuries, I have also considered a possibility that it is a derivative of the Proto-Indo-European root **reyə-* (source The Tower of Babel, accessible here <https://starlingdb.org/>), which most likely is at the origin of the Old French *riou* (also *ru*), meaning a stream, flow (Godefroy 1901, 468); a word still used in Roya Valley as a toponym (ie. *Le Vallon de Riou*).

colocate human and nonhuman relationships, entanglements and interdependencies in and beyond this valley and over time, as local, but highly dependent on the intercontinental flows that bring in new species of insects, plants, viruses and bacteria, hence require new connectivities and relationships. I will focus on farming practices of the *paysan.nes* in the valley, and narrate them alongside of the discourses they are connected to and influenced by, as well as French and European agricultural policies that shape their lives. I will show how *paysan.nes* think about the storm Alex as part of the future challenges and how a specific type of relationship – one based on the understanding of intergenerational inter-species generativity – emerges from the attempts of living in a responsive and responsible way.

1.2. Limitations

Initially, I arrived to the field with a focus on gardens and gardening practices. I was interested in how relations between people and gardens can serve as a lens to understand what kinds of environmental engagements emerge from this way of relating to the landscape. In the field I discovered that people who engage in gardening within villages, garden in much the same way as many urban dwellers in Lithuania. They buy seedlings that ready for planting and in doing so avoid the uncertainty of having issues with viability and the mess that caring for a seedling until it is ready to be planted outside involves. The subjects that I thought might be pertinent, such as seed provenance and saving and gardening for environmental reasons, were, in fact, political subjects. As such, they were of interest to the *paysan.nes* and environmental activists. In order to hear and converse about more-than-human relationships, I looked for interlocutors to whom these questions mattered.

This dissertation focused on relationships that in different ways span from or connect to the worlds of *paysan.nes*. While all I conversed with related to the topics of environment and climate (sometimes as critics of climate change) to some extent, I made an editorial decision to focus on certain aspects and human and nonhuman beings in the valley. Additional limitations related to the age group of the interlocutors of this research are identified in Methodology chapter.

I define this research as part of the field of disaster anthropology, however, the disaster of the storm Alex becomes a foreground and background to this research. It foregrounds my decision to engage in this research, choosing that particular place at that particular time, a post-disaster context, structuring my gaze. It serves as a background in the context of every conversation that takes place. This project does not specifically address the questions of recovery, disaster experience, material aspects of the reconstruction, which are, nevertheless, important vectors in understanding disasters.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTS

In this chapter I will focus on the main concepts of the umbrella text of this dissertation. I have addressed each of the articles separately in order to elucidate the concepts and theoretical frameworks that they use and discuss. This text connects the three articles by addressing what I see as fundamental to this research: relationships, relating, interrelatedness, and site-responsivity. I also briefly discuss the impact of sound-related research on the way I deploy certain concepts, such as attunement.

Storm Alex takes place within the dynamic causal field that constitutes meteorology and weather events in a time of global climate crisis. In 2022 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change included the Mediterranean among the regions assessed for risk and vulnerability to the effects of environmental crisis (Ali et al. 2022, Pörtner, H.-O. et al. 2022). The 2022 report found that all parts of the region are vulnerable and while many of the impacts of environmental change are already visible, there is a high likelihood that they will increase. It is highly likely that storm Alex is just one of many storms to come, both real and metaphorical. While some of the research participants attributed the storm to global climate and environmental changes, others disputed the connection. One of the questions that kept coming up in conversations was the relationship between humans and nature, often viewed as human versus nature (either as opposed to, or at least somewhat separate from). When it comes to the place of people in the Roya Valley, in the world at large, and the human role in creating a disaster, the importance of relationships comes to the fore.

Relationships are one of the fundamental concepts and objects of study in anthropology. As Marilyn Strathern writes: “When anthropologists talk about relations, it is persons who most often come first to mind; that is, beings inevitably enmeshed in a relational world” (2018). In my research, personhood is not limited to humans; the relationships that interest me are those between humans and nonhuman animals, as well as non-animals. I see the landscape of Roya as an emergent and dynamic formation of these ever-changing relational constellations.

Although relationships are one of “anthropology’s principal objects of study” (ibid.), Strathern notes that there is no strict definition of what they are. Relationships are more than connections (Feldman 2011 in Strathern 2018), as even those without direct connections are related through intermediaries. For the purposes of this study, I find that one of the most accurate ways to define relationships is to think of them as mutuality of being, a concept that Marshall Sahlins (2011a, 2011b) has used to define kinship relationships. Sahlins describes mutuality of being as an intersubjective being, “transpersonal practices from sharing to mourning” (2011a, p. 14). Sahlins also adds that “kinsmen [...] take responsibility for and feel the effects of each other’s acts.” (ibid.) The dynamics of assuming responsibility and intersubjectivity are central themes of discussion within articles I and III and will be the subject of discussion later in this text. Specifically, how relations between humans and nonhumans in the Roya Valley are composed

of a dense web of respons(e)-abilities (Haraway 2016, Stengers 2014), relationalities, care, collectivities, and intergenerational interspecies interdependencies. Cultivation that takes place on the slope terraces is in and of itself an intergenerational practice: terraces were built centuries ago and require regular upkeep to hold against the elements. Later in the text I will describe olive and chestnut orchards from the point of view of intergenerational generativity and interspecies interdependence.

In addition to anthropologists, a number of philosophers and others in the humanities and social sciences have been engaged in thinking about the relationships between humans, nonhuman species, objects, and abiotic vectors. In European scholarship the vitality of things was recognized by Meister Eckhart (13th century), who saw the stone as capable of conversation, and later by Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who proposed that things are subjects calling out to us (humans) (Cole 2013). Later, the Heideggerian concept of Dasein, which presents the essence of being human as relational, emerged and was explored by phenomenological anthropologists (Zigon, Throop 2021). To exist in the world is to be in relation to human and nonhuman others, as shown also by philosophers Donna Haraway (2008) and Vinciane Despret (2017). In anthropology, concerns with more-than-human entanglements and relationships between human and non-human animals have been explored by Deborah Bird Rose (2022, 2017, 2011), Thom van Dooren (2019, 2016 [2014]), Matthew Chrulew (2017, 2012, 2011), Marianne Lien (2022, 2018), Jake Kosek (2010), Anna Tsing (2019, 2018), to name but a few whose approaches and research questions have been particularly important in shaping my research focus. Among more recent explorations of relationships and entanglements with non-animals, work on matsutake mushrooms (Tsing 2015, 2012), forests (Kohn 2013, Mathews 2019), coffee rust (Perfecto et al. 2019), and abiotic vectors such as water – in the form of glaciers (Cruikshank 2005, Gagné 2018) and otherwise (Hastrup and Hastrup 2015) – stand out. Some early anthropologists looked closely at how more-than-human entanglements and disentanglements are produced, and what these entanglements in turn produced – which I discuss in more detail in subsection 3.1.1. However, as Molly Mullin observes, early anthropological scholarship tended to look at nonhuman animals only in order to understand human societies (2002). With the ontological turn, that aimed to redefine the agency of other-than-human beings and to reassess earlier anthropocentric approaches that portrayed nonhuman animals only as subjects of/to human intentions (Mullin 2002)⁷, came a new way of understanding these relationships. The agency of nonhuman animals means reconsidering domestication narratives. Research focusing on reevaluation of domestication relationships (see, for example, Lien et al. 2018) partly inspired article III. This dissertation can be seen as a continuation of this anthropological tradition. By offering a unique approach it combines methods in anthropology

⁷ As Paul Nasady (2007) observes, for a long time the accounts of indigenous hunters regarding nonhuman-animals manifesting their agency in choosing to give themselves to the hunter were thought to be metaphors, and interpreted as such. They were not observed as a different way of worlding from the one that is known to the researcher interpreting the story.

and art to look at a site of disaster in Europe and the more-than-human relationships that surround it.

Relationships, relating and interrelatedness bring me to what I consider to be the central category in research on disaster, climate crisis and environmental collapse: care. The notion of care and the particular ways in which care relationships are structured around things, actions, relationships, entities, that people individually and communally care about or care for is a central theme in articles I and III. I borrow the concept of care from feminist scholarship. In it, the ambiguity of care is highlighted. Care is meant to “repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible” (Fisher and Tronto 1990:40), however, in various discourses, it is often mobilized without sufficient attention to the aspects of exploitation and domination (Puig de la Bellacasa 2012) inherent to it. Care as situated practice and politics, as I show in article III, is not a central category in this umbrella text, but it is care – for landscape, place, generations past and future – that structures approaches and responsibilities some of my interlocutors assume, as I will demonstrate below.

One of the main theoretical and methodological questions I had in the field was how to work in a multiscalar, multispecies framework⁸. By multiscalar, I am referring to the landscape that extends over a vast mountainous area, and to how it is differently composed for each of its inhabitants – as I show in article I – while being intertwined with the world at large, as it has been through centuries of constantly changing transcontinental flows. Scale is not only about extended geographies, but also about timescales: the site of my research is one in which things that happened centuries, millennia and eons ago resonate in the present, as they do in all places. In addition to that, this work looks at relational scales between some of the smallest of creatures, such as insects, to the landscape over time and space. Multispecies frames approach humans and nonhumans, not necessarily as allies, but as intimately connected in a variety of ways. I write more about this ethnography as a multi-sited and multitemporal one in subsection 3.1., where I also discuss more-than-human or multi-species ethnography.

In the umbrella chapter I use the concept of site-responsiveness (Hayes 2017) in talking about more-than-human relationships. This is a concept I borrow from music theory, and which informs my practice as a sound and performance artist and educator. Here I feel this concept is particularly useful in understanding the interdependent nature of relationships I am looking into. I also refer to songs of call and response. These songs are found in the musical traditions of many places and cultures, from Mozambique to Lithuania, often as work songs. Maggie Sale writes about call and response in African-American oral tradition as being a “basic model that depends and thrives upon audience performance and improvisation, which work together to ensure that the art will be meaningful or functional to the community” (1992). In this text, further on, it is the notion of “work[ing] together” that I will build upon. My insistence on thinking of relationships in musical terms and concepts is inspired by the concept of *Umwelt*, as proposed by Jakob von

⁸ I use multispecies, more-than-human and nonhumans interchangeably throughout the text.

Uexküll (2001a, 2001b). Von Uexküll explains the interrelatedness of life and the Umwelts of various species via counterpoint. Counterpoint is a technique in music that in various ways combines different melodies to complement, harmonize or contrast. This same technique, according to Von Uexküll, can be identified in various ways species relate to their environments. Counterpoint, as site-responsiveness, are both interesting conceptual tools to think about various multispecies relationalities.

Applying concepts from music theory to analyze the dynamics of multispecies relationships is not a standard approach in the context of the anthropology of disaster or anthropology concerned with multispecies. I find sound and musicality to be useful in expressing the dynamism of the relationships I am writing about. In anthropology the concept of attunement has mostly been employed for those following the work of Tim Ingold. I adopted the term from my musical vocabulary before I became acquainted with the discipline of anthropology. I have previously used it being a sound-artist and composer, specifically when talking about listening to city-scapes. Here I thought of attunement as a method of tuning-in as well as attuning-to. Attunement in music relates to both the attunement of instruments to find a shared pitch and to reproduce a score harmoniously and the attunement of musicians among themselves. Importantly, it also relates to the attunement of performers to the audience (and in this way it relates to how I think about co-dwelling in space and over time). Finding a way to attune – though focused and global attention and awareness techniques – is at the core of Pauline Oliveros’ deep listening practice and sonic awareness theory that she developed from the 1970s onwards (van Gunden 1980). This practice was strongly influenced by, and influential to, feminist practices both then and those that followed⁹. Oliveros makes space for “Returning to where the earthworm also sings, deepest listening is for that which / has not yet sounded” (Oliveros 1993, 38). As a potentiality to hear the unknown and as an invitation to make space to interrelate, to attune is an ethical practice (Bjelica 2022). My use of attunement in texts presented or published during the period of my doctoral research (Pupkevičiūtė 2022, 2023) comes from this school of thought.

In the article I I use attunement as it is defined by Ingold. Here it refers to the sensory experience of, and interaction with, the environment. This was most suitable in my writing about Pierrot who discovered Roya Valley “as having a certain depth, as a world of spheres that overlap, coexist, and feed into each other, whose meaning is “gradually revealed” through “a kind of sensory attunement” (Ingold, 2011 [2000], 212)” (chapter 3 of article I). In this context, attunement was related, more than anything else, to the skills Pierrot acquires in that particular landscape, making him, in his opinion, a true *montagnard* (mountaineer, mountain dweller).

⁹ Currently the concept of *attunement* related to this lineage is found in practices and research that deals with education, psychotherapy, somatic movement, environmental psychology and elsewhere.

3. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this section, I write about and reflect upon the methods I engaged with in order to approach this research project's questions. The fieldwork to collect the main data used to write this dissertation took place between the end of June 2021 to mid-May 2022. An additional 2 week fieldwork visit took place mid-to-end of September in 2023. The interlocutors of the fieldwork were people whose life and activities are based in and around Breil-sur-Roya, Saorge, Tende, la Brigue and Saint-Dalmas-de-Tende in the Roya Valley. Among them: farmers, hunters, educators, activists, architects, retirees etc., of all genders, all adults above the age of 30. In the early stages of the fieldwork (summer-early autumn 2021), the interlocutors were found via a convenience sampling and snowball methods. These sampling methods had many limitations, among which – the age (senior, retired) and geography of the participants. After the revision of data with these limitations in mind and reformulating the initial research focus, I engaged in purposeful sampling, reaching out to people that are in various ways engaged in what I define as “earth practices” in the article I: farmers, gardeners, witches and historians of the valley (article I), shepherds, hunters, wolf specialists (article III), environmental activists and educators.

In the previous chapter I have defined this ethnography as multiscalar and multispecies. Further in this chapter I additionally define it as a multi-sited and multitemporal. My approach to data collection and analysis was also trans-disciplinary via my artistic practice. I expand on it in 3.1.2 and I write about it in detail in the article II.

3.1. Methods

Methods I used to gather material for this research were a combination of participant observation, interviews, and sensory and artistic exploration of various sites throughout the valley. I also collected photographic, video and audio material as part of my mixed ethnographic and artistic research. In my writing about environmental entanglements, movement of plants (tomatoes, article I) and pathogens (present text) I also made use of secondary historical sources (such as research articles) as well as research in the fields of ecology, botanic, paleoecology. In addition, I read materials that were given to me as gifts by the people I met – historical books about the villages of the valley, Breil-sur-Roya (Botton 1996), Saorge and Fontan (Botton and Gaber 2009) and Tende (Ortolani 1994), published by Editions du Cabri, which also qualify as secondary historical sources. They provided me with a much-needed historical view on the valley, as well as insights into what is considered important by those who write about their valley. These historical volumes are the result of many years of collecting and analyzing archival materials from private, municipal and other collections and archives, work carried out by a few local historians and published by a publisher based in the valley.

Interviews I undertook included semi-structured, unstructured, life-stories, in-depth, and informal. The fieldwork resulted in a total of 50 interviews, out of which 34 were recorded. The form an interview took depended on several factors: the previous interactions I'd had, if any, with the research participant, the relationship we had developed and, ultimately, on mutual agreement. For example, one person suggested that they tell me their life story, because they felt that only through this life story of cyclical and complex events would I be able to understand how they live in the valley and how they felt about the disaster that had occurred. Our conversation extended beyond two in-person meetings, each lasting three hours, continuing as an email exchange even after I left the valley. When I returned more than a year later, in September 2023, we simply picked up again where we had left off. Some of the other exchanges took place while doing manual work together with the people I wanted to converse with. In accordance with the availabilities and wishes of the person I was interviewing, conversations took place while cleaning stables, building stone walls, and carrying hay. This was particularly the case for exchanges with shepherds, who at certain periods, such as lambing, have uncapped working hours and numerous daily tasks. In these cases, when working together, I usually managed only to make a few notes to help with writing up my impressions at a later time. In a way, the variety of formats that these exchanges took on reflected the variety of the people I was approaching – variations in lifestyles, needs and experiences. Throughout this thesis I use the following conventions in referring to these exchanges: citations in quotation marks or in a separate paragraph with a bigger indent and smaller font size are quotations from the recorded interviews, which were transcribed from audio recordings. I do not use quotation marks when referring to my notes, including any notes taken after the conversation took place (written down with the memory aid of the brief notes taken down in a notebook or on the phone). All interviews and exchanges took place in French. All quotations from the interviews or French scholarly texts are my own translations, which my strong command of the language allows for¹⁰.

Participant observation allowed me to connect with others and to be responsive (in the sense of co-responsiveness or correspondence as defined by Tim Ingold (2014)) to what was happening in the field. The intensity and degree of immersion varied. Given that among the reasons I chose to conduct the fieldwork in this particular setting was my willingness to help with post-storm repair needs, I was open to engaging people wherever they were. I was as happy to lend a hand

¹⁰ I hold a BA in Lithuanian and Italian philology (2006) and have spent extended periods living and working in Italy and France. It was during this time, while working in the field of film and culture, that I learned French. Since then and until 2019, I've worked as a translator of French, Italian, and English. Additionally, to refresh my knowledge of grammar, I took a French course at the University of Tartu just before my departure to the field. A good command of both French and Italian was essential during both my fieldwork and the phase of writing up, as a significant volume of scholarly articles I used for my research is in one of these languages.

and learn how to rebuild terracing walls as I was to take part in the transhumance¹¹ of sheep. Although the latter had nothing specifically to do with the storm, as it is a seasonal task, it had everything to do with what I came to identify as the core questions of my research. The relationships between people, sheep, and the landscape that emerged during transhumance were complex. They involved the history of the valley, the history of the profession, the political, economic and social construction of what pastoralism was in the Maritime Alps and the role of wolves, ecologists and politicians in defining it. These conversations also raised the question of who belongs where, in relation to wolves as well as to people on the move, and linked to discussions on the agency of nonhumans as well as to contested questions of who has the right and power to make decisions involving land and the environment. In various ways, these exchanges and observations led to my writing article III.

While in the field, I volunteered with an association that works to defend the rights of people on the move. Along with other volunteers and members of the association, I participated in various activities, from planting hedges and rebuilding stone walls to harvesting a field of leeks – a donation from local farmers to support the association’s border activism work. I helped prepare food and drove a van to a car park under a motorway on the outskirts of Ventimiglia (a border town in Italy), where several associations and individuals from France and Italy provide people on the move with a daily meal and, when possible, warmer clothing, medical assistance, legal advice, clean underwear and the like. Quite unexpectedly, these activities and my apparent political disposition facilitated meetings and interviews with people who were more politically active. The political divide over border politics is important in this valley, as important as the question of who is a local, who can be considered as such, and under what conditions. I have addressed these questions in article I, and to some extent in other texts.

Many of those who are, or have been, active in border activism came to the valley in the seventies and eighties as part of a neo-rural wave that sought to reconnect with the earth¹². Many in this wave became *paysan.nes*, specifically shepherds and market gardeners. Some took over the practice from retiring local shepherds, eager to learn about mountain life and herding practices. They were interested in the lore that is interwoven with herding and local life, tightly knitted to the undulation of mountains they are nestled within and the weather cycles they are subject to. In article I, I write more about how people who are defined

¹¹ Transhumance is a type of seasonal pastoralism, where the herds are moved between the pastures situated at, in case of the mountain terrain, different heights. In the case of my fieldsite, in the summer the herds are moved to pastures higher in the mountains and northwards, and descend lower and southwards in autumn and winter.

¹² Many others engaged in border activism have come to this valley precisely because of French border politics and the activist struggle in and around the Roya Valley. This struggle has gained considerable media attention since 2015–2016, when olive farmer Cedric Herrou started hosting people on the move in his garden, helping them to cross the border, and was repeatedly arrested and prosecuted for these actions.

and self-identify as neorurals are constructing a “space apart”, a heterotopia that, among other things, defies national borders.

Online worlds, including social media, were an important source of information before my arrival in the valley. However, few of the inhabitants of the valley maintained a regular presence online, and some had no presence at all. During fieldwork, I connected with only a few people via Facebook, and some of the information relevant to the events in the villages of the valley reached me in this way. I later discovered that quite a lot of exchanges occur in small, closed WhatsApp groups, and much takes place by word of mouth. I expand on other limitations of doing online ethnography in section 4.4.

This ethnography is multi-sited and multitemporal. In this context it is multi-sited because of the high variability of terrain, practices, politics, histories and relations. It is also multi-sited in the sense that it is seen and experienced differently by the different people who inhabit it (see article I). Further to this it is multi-sited in the sense that it is an ethnography that begins in many places but arrives in Roya, and that actors from distant places are involved in the making of the worlds I am looking at (or conversing with), as is the case with tomatoes (see article I), and the insects, fungi, viruses and bacteria (further on in this text) that travel with cultivars native to other continents. It is also multitemporal. Here I refer to the concept of multitemporal ethnography as proposed by Sharon Macdonald (2013. p. 54–55). As Macdonald defines it, multitemporal fieldwork “can be considered a particular type of multi-sited fieldwork, similarly unsettling assumption of boundedness – temporal in this case – by highlighting movement over time.” (p.55) A landscape made up of terraces that were built and maintained by generations that came before, generations that planted and tended the trees on the terraces, and a landscape that continues to produce abundantly for the farmers that tend it, is by default that sort of a multitemporal fieldsite.

James Clifford and George E. Marcus (1986) have argued for writing that acknowledges the limitations of ethnographic accounts, as well as the subjectivity and positionality of the writer. They argued for a style of writing in which the voices of those who have long been represented only as objects of research would have a space to resonate. Working on this research project, I realized that I was missing the nonhuman voice. As a way of rethinking and including the nonhuman and non-animal voice, article I contemplates the heterotopia of tomato plants on the riverbank – and proliferation as a deliberate occupation of territory to create an alternative place.

3.1.1. Ethnography of more-than-human

The text that I am writing is, in some ways, a continuation of the tradition in anthropology that is based on observing and taking note of everything that constitutes the world of the people an anthropologist lives with and whose practices and modes they are discussing in their work. A good example of this approach is Evans-Pritchard, in, for example, his writing about the Nuer. Pritchard explored in detail how the value of grass changes over the course of a year. At the start of

the rainy season, the germinating grass is a good and plentiful meal for cattle. As the rains come, it becomes harder for the cattle to find good grass to graze on, and the water makes a lot of the grass dry and rank – not good for grazing. The Nuer burn it as soon as they can, and new shoots will grow from the burnt vegetation “a few days after being fired” (Evans-Pritchard 2023 [1940], 61). Value is defined in terms of how valuable the grass is as a resource to the cattle, which in turn creates value for humans. Humans and nonhumans are subject to what Evans-Pritchard calls *oecological* conditions:

Nuer are forced into villages for protection against floods and mosquitoes and to engage in horticulture, and are forced out of villages into camps by drought and barrenness of vegetation and to engage in fishing. (p. 63)

This writing implies that the movement is compulsory, there is no choice – humans and animals are subject to the cyclical rhythms of the seasons. What Pritchard is writing about is the interdependence of those who live on and with the land – with the seasons and other forces that affect the lives of humans and nonhumans on the land by influencing yields. Through detailed descriptions of the rising tides in the rivers during the rainy season, the wind, the flatness of the earth, and the peculiar structure of the soils that contribute to Nuerland becoming a swamp, Evans-Pritchard elaborates on how this particular “environmental system <...> directly conditions Nuer life and influences their social structure” (p.55). All of this is the ethnography of co-constituted lives. To separate them would be odd, as it would leave part of the lifeworld unaccounted for and the dataset incomplete.

Writing from the point of view of embeddedness is, in my opinion, essentially what Bronislaw Malinowski’s second volume of *Coral Gardens* (1935) is: linguistic analysis as a meticulous classification of terms for various things and categories related to the agricultural practices of the Trobrianders, through which the entire network of relationships between terms, practices, landscape areas, objects and practitioners is conveyed. The writing shows how a person’s value is defined by their practice and performance as a gardener. In the section *The Social and Cultural Setting of Trobrian Agriculture*, Malinowski notes that there are no specific terms in the Kiriwinian language “corresponding to such concepts as ‘husbandry’, ‘agriculture’ or ‘cultivation’” (Malinowski 1935, p. 118). These terms seem to have been encompassed by the concepts of garden and gardening. The people who garden could mean a group of people who practice agriculture. There is a term that defines someone who is a “good gardener” (*tokwaybagyla*), while just a gardener, farmer or landlubber, i.e. someone who lives on the land (as opposed to a fisherman), is called *tokwabu*. This “good gardener”, admired and so named because of his excellence, is contrasted with the “poor gardener”, “in a broader sense ‘lazy’, ‘indolent person’” (Malinowski 1935, p. 124). Both terms, Malinowski writes, indicate a “moral judgement” of how well or badly a person is doing in the garden: the word for a poor gardener consists of both the word meaning “garden” and a word meaning “to be dead”, “to be tired” (ibid.). The same term is also used as a “generic term for ‘lazy person’, ‘ne’er-do-well”,

‘generally useless individual’” and if used to define a gardener it could be taken as an insult. The practice of gardening, i.e. the practice of cultivation, defines the life of the village, the social structure and the value of people, and therefore permeates the vocabulary.

These are just two examples that show how more-than-human entanglement has been present in both historical and modern anthropology. Anna Grimshaw attributes the inclusion of the environment in anthropological accounts to Haddon and a group of Harvard scientists and their Torres Strait Expedition to Australia (1889–1899) (Grimshaw 2001). Theirs was a fieldwork-based project: the researchers spent nearly eight months conducting tests, interviews, collecting information on local customs and practices, and other first-hand information. As such, the project opened up a new way of seeing and relating to what is still studied in the discipline of anthropology – embedding practice in its contexts: cultural, social and environmental. Hastrup notes that the concept of climate, for example, “seemed to slip away with the advent of social constructionism and postmodern anthropology” (Hastrup 2013, p. 276), only to return “in the wake of new planetary concerns in the 21st century” (ibid.).

What distinguishes my approach from this traditional anthropological lineage is a pursuit of situating and “connectivities that bind us into multi-species communities” (Rose 2009). Connectivity, as explained by Rose (2017), “entails *interdependence*, and brings us into domains of responsibility, accountability, proximity, ethics and community” (495). I make space for plants and their agency (article I), I think about the potency of fog and the world ocean (article II), I discuss the agency of sheep (article III), and I think about the dynamics of landscape in terms of global flows changing local relational constellations over time. In various parts this dissertation consists of, I have attempted to re-evaluate nonhumans, with the aim of seeing them as agents with their own goals, aims, making their own worlds, albeit entangled with human world-making. I believe it is important to do more than this, but I operate within a framework limited by human worlding, my own human body being my measure of scale. I find this to be the greatest limitation to doing a truly more-than-human ethnographic inquiry. As such, this text stands both with its feet in traditional anthropology, and looking at and talking to alternative disciplines and methodological enquiries into how we can really make space for understanding the deep entanglement of us all with the more-than-human.

3.1.2. Methods of/and artistic inquiry

Relationships are the connective tissue making this world and the worlds within it. In article II I write about how the difficulties that I encountered in the field made me turn to my practice as an artist. Practices of reverie¹³ (Maček 2023),

¹³ Maček defines the state of mind in reverie as a state in which the mind is free, meaning not having any specific focus or aim, in a flow (2023, 25).

listening, sound recording, photography and videography, as well as a focus on the sensing body, provided an opportunity to acknowledge things, modes and events outside of the human language-based world. I explain that “While dialogue <...> was a good way to engage with humans, the field invited me to attend to and attune with nonhumans present. The practice of observation fell short of opening to modes of engagement beyond the human.” Perceived lack of modes to engage with the landscape and the non-humans within it as well as the situation of overwhelm I expand on in the article, motivated me to reach out to my practice as an artist. I also write how data, collected via the artistic process, did not lend itself well for the process of writing up, and it was the process of the exhibition making that “helped me *read* the field”(emphasis in the article). In article II I explore discussions relating to artistic methods in the field of anthropology, from the perspective of both artists and anthropologists. In this article I explain how my methods of listening and of sensing through and with the body had already been part of my artistic toolkit prior to my engagement with anthropological practice.

In the exhibition I write about in the article, I explore the experience of the Mediterranean Sea responding to the global changes in climate via the materiality of thick fog on the mountains, and the history of the valley in the form of bovine bones washed up by the storm. In the article, I detail how this work on objects, videos, sounds, and the entirety of the exhibition narrative, has allowed me to better see the motions that connect the history and changes in landscape with the changing climate and with the local and distant bodies experiencing it. This understanding, in its turn, has led me to shape this dissertation into the work that seeks a variety of connectivities: between continents, practices and approaches, to understand and explain the multispecies relationalities in the Roya valley.

Essentially, I note in the article, I see my work in anthropology and art as separate, each of the two practices performing different functions while yet remaining deeply dialogically related. In the article I discuss how I utilized this two-fold practice to turn my gaze to, and to see in as far as it is possible, that which is beyond the human, beyond language and beyond what we perceive as animate. The in-betweenness of these practices provides me with the tools to work on my attunement with that which is around – to be able to adjust “to the pitch of the world” (Davies & Stodulka 2019, 2).

3.2. Ethical considerations, participant data and position

The fieldwork for this research project has been carried out in compliance with The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2017), the Estonian Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2017), and the Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association (2009). I was very concerned with the well-being of the participants of this research, given that the memory of a disaster was relatively recent. Each person, at the beginning of their interview, was informed about my interests and motivations in conducting this research and the research goals, and

gave their oral consent. In some cases, consent is recorded at the beginning of the recording, if the person agreed to have the interview recorded. Some participants preferred the interview to not be recorded and in those cases I took down notes. In such cases, I did my best to transcribe the interview following notes and from memory immediately after the interview ended. On some occasions recording was not possible due to the specific conditions under which the meeting took place. This includes, for example, when transhumance was taking place and I was ahead of the herd of sheep while the shepherd was at the rear, and when I was helping out in the stables, the shepherd giving directions, us working, and discussions happening in amongst our activities. To everyone who agreed to be interviewed, I explained and reminded them (especially if I felt that some question was perceived as difficult) that they could end the interview at any point in the conversation, freely refuse to answer the questions if they didn't feel like answering, or propose a line of inquiry that they deemed to be more important.

As per these agreements, and in order to protect the privacy of my interlocutors, I have used pseudonyms here as well as in the articles that are part of this dissertation. The same pseudonyms are used for the same persons in the text here and in the articles. Roya Valley is a small place and people know each other, hence identifying details, such as the type of sheep the shepherd is working with, might mean that the person could be recognizable. The details that remain within the texts that compose this thesis are therefore present only after careful consideration of what materials can be made public without impacting the people I write about. Additionally, careful consideration has gone into data storage: interviews are stored on a password-protected computer; a copy of the original interview recordings, photos and notes are stored in a password-protected private account on the university cloud and will be deleted upon my graduation; one copy of materials is stored on a personal external hard drive.

During the fieldwork, I was asked several times why I was interested in doing a research project in France and which institutions were funding this research project. In some cases, I had the feeling that this was asked because of my background – a Lithuanian studying in Estonia coming to research the French – which often led to a shrug of the shoulders and some astonishment. On several occasions people were puzzled by my fluent knowledge of both French and Italian, with two even suggesting that I might be a spy (after which they carefully added that they were joking). In most of these cases, I do not think it was a problem with me personally. I interpreted it as a reaction to the inversion of the usual dynamic, that is, that I, a person from a country that was difficult or impossible for some of my fieldwork participants to situate on the map, was being a researcher rather than myself being researched. Historically, the researcher would be one from the center, most often a (white) male, and those researched would be persons in (what historically has been thought of as) the periphery. My previous experience of living in France and Italy and working in intercultural spaces has shown that Lithuania and the Baltic countries are more often than not associated with the Soviet past and with Russia than with Europe. Tjaša Kancler notes that Western Europe needs to have “a pathologic space” of Eastern Europe, a space “still not

quite European” (Gržinić, Kancler, and Rexhepi 2020:28). I feel that some reactions and conversations reflected that kind of stance. However, this remains a side note to the present study.

Eight months into fieldwork, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine started. Being identified with distant Eastern Europe and post-soviet space meant that I was perceived as being very close to Ukraine. I was in shock during the first weeks of the war and it showed. I was asked if I know any Ukrainian people and if I was afraid that Lithuania would be next. In the new situation positionality shifted once again: some people turned to me to talk about the war and shared how they felt about it. Some people in the village showed solidarity with Ukrainians by raising the flag of Ukraine on the stone castle above the town I lived in. During that period, many if not all of the conversations that took place with research participants, as well as friends, ended with an extended exchange regarding the war, Russian culture and the history of the three Baltic countries. I hope and believe that these conversations might have helped in clarifying for some the geopolitical situatedness of the Baltic countries as well as Ukraine.

3.3. Care in the context of COVID-19

My fieldwork began during the second summer of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of my arrival, at the end of June 2021, hygiene regulations were still very strict in the European countries I had to travel through to arrive (Poland, Germany, Austria, Italy), as well as in France itself. In the context of the pandemic, many ethnographic practices went online to ensure the health and safety of both researchers and participants, strengthening the strand of digital ethnography methods. Lucy Johnson (2022) identifies online ethnography as something that should be considered in parallel with multi-sited ethnographies, as defined by George E. Marcus (1995, in Johnson 2022), and discusses it as being crucial for research in and by those in the field of disability research and activism. In the case of this research project, however, I was certain that online ethnography would not be sufficient. One of the reasons, which I had not articulated at the time, but which was later explored in numerous research articles that emerged during the pandemic, was the unequal access to technology that creates a digital divide, a divide that was made visible by the COVID pandemic across the world, including in Europe (Esteban-Navarro et al. 2020; Watts 2020). This divide had only widened with the lockdowns, contributing to the exacerbation of inequalities in access to health, education, employment (Sostero et al. 2020) and so on. From the material I was able to gather online about the situation in the Roya Valley, it seemed that the online presence of local people was scarce, an impression that was confirmed by my experience in the field as I have already mentioned. This is not the case for everyone who lives or stays there, but it is true that many of the people who agreed to take part in this research project either did not have a smartphone or stable internet connection, or chose not to have an online presence, and in some cases both.

Having an online presence was not just a matter of age¹⁴, but was also related to people's activities, political views, and other things, such as their geographical location within the valley. Furthermore, my research interest was not limited to the human inhabitants, as I needed to understand the connections between them and those with whom they co-created the landscape of the Roya Valley. This more than human dimension also required, in my opinion, extra-linguistic engagements, so I felt my physical presence in the field was necessary.

My physical involvement in the field also entailed a concern for the health and safety of those who agreed to contribute to the project, as well as for myself. In the valley, there was a lot of resistance to public measures to limit the spread of the virus. I was told more than once that just after the storm, people worked and ate together without masks because they had another more pressing emergency on their minds and that nobody had caught the virus. So the pressure to wear a mask was, after the height of the pandemic, perceived as a thing of the past – especially in light of the post-storm experiences – and was seen as a demonstration of the biopolitical power of the state. Wearing a mask was a rare occurrence, and some vendors, once we got to know each other, were not shy in making jokes about my insistence on wearing one. As a result, many interviews took place in the open, in places such as a café, often resulting in poor recording quality and, in my view, some reservations about what could be said. In cases where research participants insisted on a home visit, the protocol for wearing masks was mutually agreed upon (e.g. one participant suggested no masks, but sitting at a greater distance and having the windows fully open).

3.4. Sexual harassment

As mentioned above, I was focused on the safety and well-being of research participants and the health and safety measures associated with Coronavirus, and for most of the time I felt safe myself. However, sexual harassment was something I had not accounted for. There were a few encounters wherein I was reminded that I was a young woman first and foremost to the person in front of me, as the person across the table made comments that I found inappropriate.

I will share only a couple of examples. I was invited to visit one of the people who has a selection of historical photos of the valley. I accepted the invitation without thinking, as I had not felt unsafe in any of my previous encounters. During the meeting, I was subjected to the sexualized gaze of an older man and was the subject of some comments that had nothing to do with the nature of our

¹⁴ The lack of young (18–30) local participants is one of the limitations of this research project. This may be related to the fact that at the time of my fieldwork I myself was outside this age group and found it easier to connect with people over 30. I did not meet any participants in the 'youth category' in the areas of my activities and commitments (activism, organic farming, pastoralism, fishing, mountaineering, public participation, cultural activities), nor was I connected to any through the participants in this research.

meeting. After this encounter I stopped all further communication, although I was invited to come back to be shown more, as it was put. However, the body language, the curiosity about my private life and the eyes looking at my body parts made me feel unsafe. There are only about 5,000 people in the four villages of the valley, which meant that by stopping a conversation, I was cutting off potential encounters and exchanges. The situation, however, was too ambiguous and I perceived it as unsafe.

On another occasion, a middle-aged inebriated man I knew approached me in a dark street and leaned in, trying to kiss me without asking for consent. He was one of the people I thought of as a friendly acquaintance, but this very direct and non-consensual gesture in the middle of an empty village street made me lose my trust. I started avoiding him. A month later it was brought to my attention that the same man had attempted to rape one of my acquaintances, and the person who told me this was unwilling to share this information with the people who should have been involved in dealing with the situation, as this man lived and worked in the valley under their supervision. I thought for a long time about whether I could or should intervene and report this, and whether I would thereby be overstepping the boundaries of my role. However, when, during a social occasion, I noticed the same individual being very tactile with a young female who had just arrived in the valley and was therefore unaware of anything that had happened before, I resolved to report the earlier incident to those responsible. My explanation, which I hoped would lead to the perpetrator being held accountable, resulted in a series of events and exchanges that left me as the sole party in disclosing the attempted rape and the other disturbing behaviour of this man towards women. This also led to threats to me from the person who had been the victim of the attempted rape. This situation had a big impact on my mental health, sense of safety, and choice of socializing patterns afterwards, as well as on my ability to return to fieldwork materials in a timely manner. No less impactful was the news that one of my friends in the field had been raped during the days I was traveling home from fieldwork. Given that the incident took place in the same social circle as the previous ones, I felt responsible, even though I knew there was nothing I could have done.

These events have influenced both my work and my well-being in the field. Even though they led me to look for a way to partially retreat from the field while remaining within it, as I write about in article II, overall these events made and continue to make a significant impact on me. I feel that it would have been beneficial to have read about similar experiences before undertaking my fieldwork. So I am writing this in the hope that it will be useful to others preparing to enter the field. All in all, I feel that the ethical framework that anthropologists follow to ensure the welfare of the people they meet in the field should also be extended to the welfare of the researchers who go into the field and are in some ways more vulnerable, because of their unfamiliarity with local dynamics, as well as more generally depending on the body they have.

4. PAYSANNE PRACTICES AND ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF ROYA VALLEY

The first interviews for this research project took place in the scorching heat of Mediterranean summer in the village of Breil-sur-Roya, my base for the duration of my fieldwork. These were the most dramatic ones. My interlocutors were sharing their grief, fear, and pain, focusing strongly on the material consequences of the storm: the volume of water that the river had carried, the cars floating in the main village square, the destruction of human-built structures and infrastructure connecting the valley to the coast, and expanding out to the response, support and lack of it, and responsibilities of first responders, municipal workers, and the state. The experiences of that night left a lasting impression in their memories. It was these dramatic experiences that received the most attention from the media. This likely contributed to the rapid response from the state, and resulted in relatively quick reconstruction of the valley's infrastructure.

Later I sought interlocutors outside of the village centers, and started conversing with shepherds, farmers, beekeepers, *maraîchèr.es*¹⁵, or market gardeners, and temporary farm workers. All of them defined themselves as belonging to the class of *paysan.nes*: they are engaged in small scale agricultural activities, these being their main source of revenue, and all are members of the *Confédération paysanne* labor union¹⁶. Their stories tended to be less about the storm itself. People were discussing things beyond the experience of the one storm, and beyond just one valley, thinking about the distant past and the uncertain future that this storm provided a glimpse of. Conversations branched out towards community, embeddedness, more-than-human relationships, political systems and the climate. People discussed their responsibilities in the face of the uncertain futures intimated by the intense changes they observed on their land and in the valley. Reconstructing infrastructure was very important to them, as most valley farmers sell their products in the village markets and in the cities of the French Riviera. But in these conversations I heard many concerns regarding the ways in which the infrastructure was being rebuilt. Some¹⁷ expressed that they thought these infrastructural projects were being constructed too rapidly, led by a sense of

¹⁵ *Maraîchage* is a horticultural or agricultural practice aimed at cultivating mostly vegetables, but also fruit and berries, with the aim of selling them. In the Roya Valley, the *maraîchèr.es* are focused on selling locally, minimizing the distance of displacement, and thus the carbon footprint, of their production. In this text I will mostly use the English language term market gardening to describe this activity.

¹⁶ Edouard Morena (2014) notes that *Confédération paysanne* unified a heterogenous group of people. However, two aspects were key, first: "shared status as victims of the neo-corporatist framework's productivist orientation. Secondly <...> 'peasants' were presented as being *inherently* anti-productivist."

¹⁷ Apart from the market gardeners and others gravitating towards earth-based practices, in my encounters, similar concerns were expressed by people engaged in environmental activism locally, or people with specific skills, such as architecture and planning.

urgency, without sufficient environmental impact evaluations having been undertaken. With a few exceptions, these were people labeled as *néoruraux* – *neorurales* (or *néo-ruraux*, *néo-rurales*), or neo-rurals¹⁸. During fieldwork, I first heard the term used by a person who identified as a local in the valley. Neorurals use the term to define themselves in contexts where they need to identify themselves as separate or different from those who define themselves as locals *de souche* (wherein *souche* means stock, descent, strain, *de souche* – of origin), as in persons who have been in the valley for several generations. Without exception, at least during my fieldwork, it was long-term locals who held the highest municipal positions in all of the valley’s villages and, as holders of those positions, had it in their power to withhold or facilitate access to certain things, such as land acquisitions¹⁹.

Locals²⁰ tend to use the term *néoruraux*, as well as *hippies* and, more recently, *pioupiou*, to define those who came to the valley in different waves in the 1970s, 1980s, and in the 2000s, in a broader move to return to the land, often becoming first generation farmers and shepherds. Historically, *pioupiou* was used to define young, inexperienced soldiers. The online dictionary *La Langue Française* indicates that metonymically used it means a young chick and is an onomatopoeia imitating the chirps of young chickens. The person who first explained this term to me told me that it is used for all non-locals by birth, regardless of their occupation – be it small-scale agriculture, arts, activism, or social work, and to describe those sharing articulated alternative values such as sustainable dwelling, social justice and environmentally responsible practice. The tone in which this person cited the term implied that it had been used in a derogatory manner.

In article I, I write about the definitions of locals and neorurals, how they come together in groups and how people’s self-identification as part of one or the other group contributes to the construction of different heterotopias within the valley. In article III, I describe how amongst these different groups care is structured differently with regards to sheep, or domesticated animals, and wolves, or wild nonhuman animals. I write how those working the land acknowledge being part of the “contact zone” (Pratt 2007, 6), and how this being and belonging differs from understandings of territories as bounded and divided between those belonging to humans, and those allowed for the nonhuman animals. I engage the relationships between those who are part of what I called the node of “tethered to earth practices”, or practices “that require manual labour, soil, and learning a language of plants, nonhuman animals and abiotic vectors” (p.4 of article no. I), have with the land they live and work on, with the generations that came before them and with futurities. In the text that follows I will expand on the neorurals

¹⁸ Only one of the shepherds I talked with had been born and raised in the Roya Valley.

¹⁹ In 2024, an article by Madeleine Sallustio and Benjamin Dubertrand, concerning the power relationships unfavorable to neorurals in Ariège and the Massif Central was published which gives a deeper insight into the dynamics I just briefly articulate in my article.

²⁰ Or the inhabitants that have their great grandparents buried in the cemeteries of the valley. I have gone more in detail about this in the article I.

and the relationships those I spoke with have with the landscape of Roya. Through the ethnographic example of practices of *paysan.nes*, I will attempt to tell a brief environmental history of the valley. With an eye to the history of rural exodus I will look into national and regional demographic shifts and how they affected the current landscape, environmentally and socially. I will give more context related to what it means to be a small farmer, a market gardener, and a *paysan.ne* in Roya Valley, contextualizing this position in relation to state and European politics of land and agriculture. I will additionally situate the ecological situation of the cultures and cultivation practices in this valley within the context of global flows of merchandise, cultures and pest species.

4.1. The landscape: rural exodus

The landscape²¹ of the Roya Valley as well as that of its transversal valleys, such as Carleva, Maglia, Bendola, Cairos (all of these named after the rivers traversing them) and others, is highly complex. From first impressions it seems to correspond to something that one could define as *wilderness*: mountain ranges surrounding the valleys and framing the sky in austere grandeur (see photo 3). It is especially so in late autumn/winter, when most of the habitations (with the exception of Saorge and individual houses higher up on the slopes) within the villages at the bottom of the valleys see very little of the low-rising sun. However, on closer inspection most of the landscape that is not covered by forest can be perceived as being strongly cultured or anthropized, consisting of terraces, structured and fortified by stone walls of variable height (see photo 4). Many of these terraces hide under the thick of the forest: abandoned and unkempt, they have become overgrown with shrubs, and, gradually, trees. In most cases, however, it is still easy to make out the shapes of the terraces when moving through the landscape.

This dual face of the landscape, framed as remote wilderness in tourist guides even though almost all aspects of it are highly cultivated, is among the things I discuss in more detail in article III. The imagined border between the cultured and wild landscape is based on individual relational cartographies. It differs in relation to how the landscape is experienced. The inhabitants of the villages, having a more urban lifestyle, imagine the cultivated and cultured as clearly bounded by the fences. The *paysan.nes* experience this landscape as one of overlaps and entanglements. Not only do different people see and experience this landscape differently. They have also strongly and actively shaped it through time, the best example of the anthropic impact being the terracing of the slopes.

²¹ In the European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000) landscape is defined as follows: “The landscape is part of the land, as perceived by local people and visitors, which evolves through time as a result of being acted upon by natural forces and human beings.” <https://www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/the-european-landscape-convention>



Photo 3. Mangiabo, view from Breil-sur-Roya, with a scarce cover of snow, February 2022. Photo by the author.



Photo 4. The chapel of Sainte-Croix, Saorge, the valley of Bendola, April 2022, surrounded by terraces, part of them covered by pines and shrubs, with some olive trees (see bottom left corner). Photo by the author.

According to ecologists and paleo-ecologists Médail and Diadema (2006), the plains and relatively accessible mid-height slopes in the Roya Valley, as well as those of the neighboring valleys of Tinée, Vésubie and Var were burnt and shaped into terraces starting from the neolithic period (between around 5000 and 2500 BC). Later, with the Roman conquest around 120 BC, these areas became more densely settled: first the main valleys, and later the transversal ones, resulting in profound modifications of the landscape. Until around 1850 the valleys were heavily populated, and agricultural practices extended up to altitudes of around 1900 meters above sea level (Gabouriaux 1984 in Médail and Diadema 2006) or even higher (Cossa 1980 in Médail and Diadema 2006). Germaine Veyret-Verner (1963), a French geographer of the Alps and Alpine development, writes that until the mid 19th century the lifestyle in the Alps was one of subsistence agriculture and seasonal migration. Veyret-Verner uses the term autarky to define this economical stage and characterizes the period of Alpine economy until the mid-1800s by “isolation, autarky (craftsmanship, small local industries), subsistence agriculture, rural democracy, (and) demographic surfeit that caused both massive land-clearing and, at the same time, strong seasonal or definitive migration” (p.584). It is during this phase, or rather by the end of it, that the peak of demographic growth in the Alps was reached. For the Roya Valley the mid 19th century was a period of great political change, and this was the main transformative force behind the socioeconomic situation of the valley. In 1860 the County of Nice, until then part of the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, was annexed by France. With this political rearrangement of borders via the treaty of Turin and attendant referendums, the central part of the valley with the villages of Fontan, Saorge (It. Saorgio) and Breil-sur-Roya (It. Breglio) becomes French (Sanguin 1983).

From the middle of the 19th century railways and hydroelectric power had a huge impact on the economies of the Alpine territories of France, transforming them from the earlier stage of autarky-based economy. Railway-introduced competition contributed in part to the disruption of the local economy and precipitated rural emigration (Veyret-Verner 1963, 585), while also bringing the first tourists to the valley. At the same time, the “discovery” of hydroelectric power brought paper mills, electro-chemical, and electrometallurgical production into the valleys. Alongside these transformations, a class of worker-peasants emerged. The inhabitants of the lateral valleys moved into the villages and towns within the valley centers which offered greater employment possibilities. The dynamic in the Roya Valley was somewhat distinct. The riviera of Nice, situated along the Mediterranean coast between the cities of Cannes and Menton, saw a constant growth from the 1880s, in strong contrast with the inland territories of the region, which include the Roya Valley. With the growth of tourism, the cities grew, opening possibilities to find employment in resort services. This contributed towards the abandonment of agricultural activities in the valleys: inhabitants were moving to the coast (Sanguin 1983) to seek employment in various sectors of the urban economy. Around the same time, the works to build a railway line connecting Cuneo (in Italy) with the coastal cities of Nice (France) and Ventimiglia (Italy) began. The construction of this railway line took many years of French – Italian

negotiations. Between 1882 and 1889 Italy constructed the first part of the line, connecting Cuneo (Italy) and Vievola (currently France), via an 8 km long tunnel under the Col de Tende (Guiter 1976). The construction of the section Vievola – Ventimiglia and the branch Breil – Nice started only in 1906, once Franco-Italian relations had improved, Jean Guiter notes (*ibid.*) In 1914 the railway line between Ventimiglia and Airole opened. However, given the war, the section connecting Airole and Breil-sur-Roya and continuing on to Saint Dalmas-de-Tende only opened in 1928, writes local architect Patricia Balandier (2020). In exchanges with some of the members of the association running the *Ecomusée du train des Merveilles* (En. Ecomuseum of the Train of Marvels)²², all of them – history *aficionados* involved in collecting stories, photos and artifacts of local life – described how many male inhabitants of the Roya Valley worked on the construction of the railway. Hence not only the expansion of tourism in the French riviera, but also the construction of the railway line, as well as the First world war, absorbed many of the workers from the valleys.

Médail and Diadema identify a rural exodus from Roya as well as from the neighboring valleys that interest this research starting in 1914, and intensifying after 1945 (both dates coinciding with the two world wars). An additional factor in the rural exodus in the 1960s could also have been agricultural laws aimed at supporting the development of middle-sized farms (Boinon 2003). The state introduced an SMI – surface minimum of installation. Farmers who had less than SMI were encouraged to re-qualify or retire. In many places where this restructuring took place, a strong bourgeoisie class, “consisting of merchants and “manufacturers” (Chevalier 1993: 177) remained. It is difficult, however, to identify to what extent this policy impacted small and big landowners in the Roya Valley, as I have not found research focused on this particular aspect of local history. To give a global perspective, these policies resonate with the policies promoted by the United Nations through Millennium Development Goals of the 2000s aimed at what is defined as poor countries. The stated aim of these policies is defined as the eradication of hunger through the strategy of reducing small-holder farms and the number of farmers engaged in food production (Heller 2013). A likely not coincidental consequence of these policies being, just as in France in the 1960s, that smallholders are forced to seek employment in multinational-run industrial sectors.

The abandonment of cultivation practices on the terraces and lessened trans-humance led to partial reforestation of the landscape. A demographic increase, albeit minor, is seen since the 1990s, according to Médail and Diadema, or since

²² The railway line between Cuneo and Ventimiglia is affectionately called “the train of Marvels” in both Italian and French. Once I overheard a tourist guide explaining this title by the fact that the line runs close to the Valley of Marvels (*La vallée des Merveilles*), part of the National Park of Mercantour territory, partly situated in the Roya Valley. In Italian texts the provenance of the title is attributed to the, exceptional for its time, engineering of the railway line: long galleries sculpted within the mountains and the exceptional views from the train situated, at some places of the line, high above the bottom of the valley.

the 2000s (Le Vot et al. 2024), however, “most of the population did not participate in an agricultural activity in 2020” (ibid.). Ultimately, the move away from the rural territories of the country has never been followed by an equal repopulating move back to the land.

4.2. *Paysanne* practices in changing climate

We all knew about climate change 40 years ago, says Adèle, while we clamber up and down between two terraces of her terrain, carrying firewood remaining on the higher terrace from the previous winter down to a shed on the lower terrace. We are making space: she is expecting a truckload of firewood to be coming in the next day. Hopefully, the truck will make it up the steep slope with the morning ice, I think to myself. The understanding of what this global climate crisis might mean has led people like her to “change everything” and look for alternative ways of living, Adèle explains, and adds, “but it’s still all shit.”

She has been living in this house, high on the south-facing slope of a mountain, not that far from the Italian border, for decades. It is a low-impact habitation. The water in her tap comes from a mountain stream. The toilet is a so-called dry toilet (*toilettes sèches*), far away from the house, at the edge of the property. That is the best way available to provide sanitary toilets to the habitations outside of the villages: mixed with wood shavings and composted, human waste can be used as “humanure”, though I do not know if Adèle does that. Using water and flushing would be both a waste, given that this particular part of the valley is facing an increasing shortage of water, and a complication, because coming up with a solution to treat blackwater in every single habitation like this one would be extremely expensive, and would require additional space and extensive works. Adèle heats her stone house with firewood, and cooks on a gas stove. Stone is the local construction material, and most older houses, as well as shepherd sheds at higher altitudes, are constructed from stone. She and her husband, who died some years ago, were shepherds and cared for a flock of sheep. Before they both retired, they used to have everything they needed – including milk, meat, grease – from their flock and their garden. We did subsistence farming, Adèle explains, as we watch a couple of Eurasian blue tits enjoy a ball made out of grease and cereals. She is very fond of birds, she notes. With a sigh, Adèle acknowledges that she once used to make just such balls to feed the birds. Nowadays she must resort to buying them in the shop. I see how this weighs on her.

The pursuit of a different lifestyle, independence, and a lifestyle that some of those I met in the valley defined as autarky²³ led many people here. However, Adèle was the only person who identified the climate crisis as her main motivator

²³ My fieldwork participants defined autarky (*autarcie* (Fr.), from *autarkeia* (Gr.), wherein *autos* means self, *arkein* – suffice) as self-sufficiency, (partial) independence from the state and global economic systems. This form of economic system can be limited to individuals, but also extended to communities and states.

in thinking about transitioning to an alternative to urban lifestyle. Adèle is among those that arrived in the Roya Valley in the 1970s²⁴. She said that she learned most of what she knew about the mountains, herding practices and mountain legends from the earlier generation of shepherds with whom, she feels, her values aligned. Before becoming a shepherd, she used to live on the French coast. The landscapes she first came to know were Casterino and the surrounding mountain ranges that are now part of Mercantour National Park – a landscape where she and her husband used to herd their *brigasque* sheep. Many of the people who arrived in the valley at around that time, led by aims of self-sufficient living, lived communally. The newcomers did not receive a warm welcome from the locals and the municipal employees. Frank and Sara recalled, as I write in the article I, how during that time the mayor of one of the villages threatened to exterminate the “hippie community” with a flamethrower. This tense relationship could partly have been connected to the class differences that I mentioned earlier – with the villages populated by mostly bourgeois merchants. In part it might have been connected to the political tradition of the specific village in which this conflict happened. The village had been known locally for its sympathies with the fascist movement in Italy, my interlocutors noticed, explaining that this had been one of the more obvious, in their opinion, reasons for the tensions.

This context is important in situating the practices I will be writing about further: paysanne practices here, in Roya, as well as relationships that paysannes have with the nonhuman others, including the landscape, are not mainstream practices or the habitual way of relating with the other. Through memory and adaptations and, as I will write in further subchapters, choosing to understand their position as one that is interdependent and intergenerational, they are countering the practices that have for a long time been supported by the state and European policies. In both local and national context their practices stand out as an alternative.

4.2.1. Memory of rain

Louise lives on the same mountain slope as Adèle, albeit lower down, cultivating seeds and seedlings in a light-structure greenhouse and on several terraces of her land. The greenhouse resulted from communal work – friends helping, Louise explained the first time I visited, on the open days of a number of farms, organized by a local association of market gardeners and farmers. When I come back the second time, for a prearranged interview, Louise is still making her morning coffee. We go down the slope from her house to the greenhouse, and as she opens the door to the greenhouse, she greets the plants aloud. She says she always greets

²⁴ Daniel Jacobi and D. Pauthex in 1981 looked briefly into the process of newcomers of urban origin taking up the shepherding practices of the “poor small-holders who have abandoned agricultural [activities]” (43), noting that the newcomers are ready to spend several “hard years” indebted and hardly making ends meet. The *néoruraux*, the authors notice, are led by “utopian” ideas “to devise a new society” (ibid.)

them in this way when she has guests visiting. Louise explains that to work well with the plants here one needs to have a certain serenity and calm. While we talk, she is grafting tomato and aubergine seedlings. Louise aims to develop a variety that would be better adapted to the ever-drier seasons in the valley. Louise is the second generation of her family to live in this valley. She has lived here for most of her life, except for when she went away to travel and to study. Hers is a forty-year relationship with this landscape. Louise is passionate about the valley – there’s no place else she would want to live. I ask if she has noticed any kinds of slow changes from what used to be habitual for her. Louise recalls how weather events used to be highly regular. She talks about the afternoon rains that Jacques, an octogenarian from Breil-sur-Roya, had also told me about. Louise explains that daily afternoon rains in August used to come due to the influence of the Mediterranean, and they were as regular as a watch. “You’d know that the rain would start at 16, and it would end at 18.” Most rain would fall on the mountains of Mercantour, Louise nods with her head, indicating the mountains to the west of where we are.

Precipitation is the primary water source for everything and everyone living in the valley, and ever-smaller amounts of rainfall and snow are things that most people, regardless of their occupation, talk about often. On one occasion I met Sara and Frank who are market gardeners (for more details see article I), as they were visiting the village for a wedding. Frank asked how I’d been, and I marveled loudly at how the mountaintops above their *terrain*, or plots of land they work, were finally white. Frank then explained that the volume of snow that we were now seeing was extremely low, and that they would need it to be three times as much to have enough water in the streams, as in previous times. We used to have three meters of snow at this point in the year, Frank sighed.

Louise is very frank about what the lessened precipitation means to them – people like her, living off the earth, cultivating and caring for plants and non-human animals. It is not so much in what she says, as it is in how worried and tired she sounds when she says it. The water and weather patterns have become messy and this means an increasing risk to their practices and survival:

[N]o, [the water pattern] is really upside down and without any regularity, it’s really, it’s all messy, and above all, the precipitation is not what it is supposed to be. That’s important for us, it’s what makes it possible to get through the summer. There has to be an accumulation of snow in the mountains and, above all, accumulation of snow in the valleys that will melt slowly all summer long. It’s been almost 10 years since we’ve seen anything like cumulative snowfalls.

(Extract from the semi-structured interview)

The water on Louise’s *terrain* used to come from a source on the slope. But, as Maeve, a *maraiçhere* from a neighboring valley explained when I visited her, the source had not been viable for some time. The day I visited Maeve, her partner was at Louise’s with some friends from the valley, meaning mostly other market gardeners and shepherds living in the vicinity, to install pipes in a stream, starting

way further and higher up the mountain, and leading all the way back to Louise's property. After our exchange, Maeve took me to see the stream which was used by the *marâcher.es* she and her partner took over from. It is as low as she can remember, she said, worried, as we watched the water sluggishly filtering through the rock bed. People said that storm Alex might have had an impact, she shared, but it looks more and more like the inevitable result of lack of snow cover. The part of the valley in which Maeve and her husband live and cultivate their vegetable gardens is a rare find of flat terrain, surrounded by mountains thick with woods. The sun returns late to this part of Roya, and it suffers less from the strong heatwaves, yet still, even here water scarcity seems to be a bleak reality to come.

Returning to Louise at her table in the greenhouse, she anxiously admits "that [lesser precipitation is the reason] for the source on which we are [reliant], nobody had even seen this source drying up." With reference to "nobody" she expands on the generations before her, reminding us both that the valley we are conversing in used to belong to Italy. I barely have time to take in Louise's concerns and respond, when she continues to explain how beautiful the valleys used to be in winter: "everything frozen, ice cascading like that [waves a hand to show the volume], but these are my childhood sightings, it's all over now. It's like "the olden days", it's terrible to experience this [change] in such a short time." For Louise, the timeframe in which immense change has been experienced is extremely small, less than a generation. The seasonality that ensures survival is being disrupted, and that does not go unnoticed. The valley starving for water cannot ensure generativity, neither for human generations and "intergenerational heritages" (Rose, van Dooren and Chrulew 2017, 9), nor for generations of other species, animal and nonanimal.

Louise recounts how she feels that she remembers things similar to those that people of the earlier generations remember, and has the sensitivity to notice small things: "we do not see such and such plants appearing anymore <...>, there is one less presence." This brings me to the notion of a thing as "a slow event" (Stanley Eveling in Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004), which Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett uses to think of intangible heritage. The appearance and disappearance of any one plant is an event in that it mobilizes a number of relational responses within the ecosystem. I propose that if and when a person is observant enough to notice these events, the observation produces a relational response in them, too. It is a sensitivity that can be developed and learned, as Kate Brown is learning to guess the approximate level of radiation from observing landscape patches in the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone (Brown, 2019), and the more one engages in it, the more events one notices.

Louise's world – a web of life-sustaining relationships, as I define it in the article III, consists of multiplicities. She observes and therefore notices rhythms, as well as rhythms breaking:

It used to be crazy; just after the last snow, there would be so much joy, so much singing, it was such a pleasure, [hearing] the birds. Then there's another phenomenon, which, I believe, is related to the drought, although things change also because of the presence of wolves, but wild animals [come to] our gardens. You see, the wild boars, roe deer, and deer are becoming more and more present, which is really linked to the drought problem. They do not have anything to eat in the forest while we are creating open islands with magnificent dandelions, so they are bound to do everything they can to come and eat in the garden. I used to always see them [coming] in the autumn, but not in other seasons. They had a rhythm. They really had a rhythm, they came at such and such a time, and now we are their islands where they can find food, which they must be struggling to do with the drought. There are fewer and fewer mushrooms in the forests, even though, I think, wild boar is an animal that eats everything. I do not know to what extent [this is happening], [but] it's not just a matter of [pressures of] hunters or whatever; it is really also linked to climate change that animals move differently and that we, by our ability to move water and all that, create spaces in which they can find food.

(Extract from the semi-structured interview)

Sensitivity to notice that animals such as boars and deer approach the terrains of humans because of a lack of food in the forests of the mountainsides demonstrates a pursuit of understanding and empathizing with others, human and nonhuman alike. I consider that this empathizing, this pursuit of understanding the motivations, experiences and suffering of others, comes from considering nonhuman others “not as passive bodies but rather as thinking subjects inhabiting their own worlds of action and meaning.” (Rose 2022, 55). For Deborah Bird Rose, the ability to recognize and interpret the meaning of the actions of others and to appreciate the worlds of others is a part of practices of caring that Maria Puig de la Bellacasa defines as thick care, and builds in relation to Donna Haraway's proposal that “nothing comes without its world” (ibid.)

The world of Louise is one of caring, one which allows for or is conducive to feeling “affected by another” (van Dooren 2014, 219). This world includes the seeds and cultivars she is developing, cultivating and caring for, a number of nonhuman animals who graze on her terrain when in need, mushrooms in the woods, and a variety of wild plants, such as hyssop (*hysope* F., *Hyssopus officinalis* L.) and summer savory (*sariette* F., *Satureja hortensis* L.), once numerous in the mountains and somewhat taken for granted by those who do not recognize or notice them. With concern, Louise says that the two plants, endemic to *garrigue* (F.) – a scrubland or scrub biome specific to the limestone soil territories in this valley and also elsewhere in southern France – are failing to bloom or bloom less voluminously than they did before. She notices this because she used to collect the seeds, she explains, and now there's nothing to collect. Through this disappearance, Louise highlights for me the fragility of the ecosystem she is a part of:

These are plants that grow in dry areas, but that does not mean that a plant that lives in a dry area does not want water. It needs water in one period and in another – no? And so it lives on surfaces with very little water in the soil. As a result, when you live in areas with very little water in the soil, and the soil dries out enormously and collapses, the plants cannot stand it any longer. So when the soil cannot take [the drought] anymore, the plants cannot take it anymore, erosion sets in, and the mountains come down, and then [if] you have the storm Alex on top of that, then everything moves. It's so destabilized, everything is so destabilized on so many different scales, I even think that there are areas that have collapsed to such an extent that it's not just because there was so much water at the time [of the storm], it's because it's been destabilized for a very long time, it looks like it's been destabilized for 15–20 years by a climate that no longer works.

(Extract from the semi-structured interview)

Louise has noticed that these plants no longer bloom and for her, it immediately connects to storm Alex as an example demonstrating that the earth's system is disarranged and damaged. Such knowledge relies on the building blocks of all healthy and long-lasting relationships: attention, time, and care.

4.2.2. Adaptations: life and work on arid terraces

Ramona's parcels are not that far from Louise's. As I approach, a horse comes over the meadow to greet me, observant but calm. Then, a dog. When I climb to the house to look for Ramona, a cat comes to brush around me. I pass by the chicken coops and find Ramona's assistant digging the soil and clearing out the weeds to start a new season. While I wait, I give him a hand. The soil is arid and hard, there is plenty of dust, and clearing the terrain requires much energy. It is early spring. The sun is heavy, but the wind chills the open skin. Ramona approaches, still on the phone, solving problems that small businesses have so many of. When she finishes the conversation, we settle ourselves at a distance from the assistant, on the edge of the terrace, which will become a strawberry bed later in the season. Ramona tells me about her previous years in the valley. She arrived here just after her university studies. For nine years, she lived on a sheep farm, which she and a collective of other people took over from the farmers who were moving elsewhere – to a more accessible farm in the neighboring region. The handover happened over several months – usually it takes more than a year, during which the new owners learn the various aspects of running the specific farm throughout the seasons. In this small region, there are plenty of variables. No two farms run the same. And no two farms find themselves with the same elevation, exposure, or humidity situation. So, as Maeve explained, having gone to an agricultural school will not necessarily provide one with the skills and understandings needed to run a farm in the specific conditions of this mountain area. The first cheeses they produced, Ramona said, were made by looking at the notes they took while observing the farmers they took over from. Over time, she and the others in the collective learned different aspects of their trade – from the

specificity of working with the shepherds' dogs to fermentation – both by doing and via attending specific courses. Having taken over a traditional mountain pastoralism practice, they were interested in the valorization of the mountains (Blackstock et al. 2025). Ramona talks about how the collective project ended, how they left the farm, and how she wanted to continue working with the land but, instead of raising sheep, focus on raising hens, selling eggs, and developing a market gardening practice. Thus, her current occupation. What I hear in her story is the repetition of similar themes from those who came during the 1970s. Learning to live in a collective together, and then dissolving into individual farmsteads. This is the same experience that Sara and Frank, who are market gardeners from the earlier generation, shared with me, and it is one that Adèle told me about. Many of the market gardeners who spoke to me shared their need for a specific intensity of sharing and togetherness: one that is part of being with others, humans and nonhumans, working with others and *with* the land, as opposed to working the land. Such intensity resulted in a strong emotional bond with the place and feelings of belonging: as much to the community of humans as to the undulations of the Alps.

Ramona's parcels are on an arid south-facing slope in the north-eastern part of the valley, and, like Louise, she is very aware of the changing weather patterns and the winters that do not bring enough snow anymore, resulting in a lack of water in spring and summer and extended droughts. There is also the wind, she notes: "Before, I did not pay so much attention [to it], but [now] there is a lot of wind. So when there is little precipitation, wind accelerates the drought." Cultivating in the circumstances they are in means taking a considerable risk. However, Ramona has been aware of this since the beginning:

From the outset, not because we had thought we would one day lack water, but because we were, since the start, aiming to reduce water and protect the Earth, or, at the very least, protect what we have [here], we try to plant as much vegetation as possible and only work the soil when we are going to plant or to cultivate. At least we are trying to work in this mindset. We use water-saving irrigation equipment where we can. It is challenging to do micro-irrigation when [cultivating] in an open field, but we try. But there is also always this moment of panic, where we go, oh god, the river is low, the mountains are bare, there is no snow. But we are doing the best we can under the circumstances, and panic is useless and will not bring water. If there is no more water, the market gardening [activity] will not be possible. You cannot grow tomatoes without water.

(Extract from the semi-structured interview)

What she tries to do on her farm, Ramona explains, is cultivate cultures that fit the conditions of the mountains. So, instead of cultivating a water-needy monoculture of tomatoes or salad, she has decided to diversify. Ramona and her assistants cultivate fruits, vegetables, and berries, such as artichokes, rhubarb, blueberries, and others, that thrive in drier climates. Ramona notes, however, that if worst comes to worst, while they are in this business, they will have to grow

vegetables only for their personal use and to use their machines to transport water from elsewhere. Ramona explains that the water could be transported to the coops of the egg-laying hens. She is composed and very matter-of-fact while explaining this, although we are discussing disturbing things that are of a high likelihood and quite possibly in a not-that-distant future. Ramona adds that, overall, the approach they have on her farm is one based on adaptations. This is the foundation of their relating to their practice, because being able to adapt is what is required by the very terrain of the mountains:

From one year to the next, I would not say that the farm operates the same way. We have never done that. Never, ever. [...] Because you see where things are going wrong, you learn from your experience and you know that if you stick to it... In fact, in the mountains, I am not sure if it is the same elsewhere, it would be a good question, but [here] the mountains push you into that kind of dynamic. You cannot stay dormant in the mountains. From one day to the next, the weather, the climate and the population, all change. There are so many elements that make you remain dynamic.

(Extract from the semi-structured interview)

Constant adaptation and transformation of practice is required of those who are prepared to respond to the dynamism required by the very nature of living in this challenging landscape if they wish to keep the practice viable and survive in an environment of intense change. Ramona, like Louise, is very aware of the changes brought about by global warming. Her strategies of adaptation, as well as the understanding that they are required, make me think of the call-and-response type of traditional songs that are sung in many places: there is a phrase, and there is a response to the phrase, both of which influence what comes next, creating a powerful back and forth in which both the caller and the responder(s) have their agency, but need to be mindful of each other, attuned to each other, and wait to take turns. Such a practice requires deep interconnectedness, deep listening²⁵, shared knowledge of what the song is about, and the motivation to make the song possible. I believe it leads us back to the term of *correspondence* as proposed by Tim Ingold, where he defines it as “living attentionally with others” (2014: 389)²⁶. Both the caller and the responder are invested in supporting the structure that allows the song to happen. Both understand that there is a requirement for the other to respond in order to continue, and both assume that response-ability (van Dooren & Rose, 2016; Lien, 2022; Haraway, 2007). It is important to note that the practice of correspondence and co-responsiveness – a multi- or bilateral commitment to responding – always has its challenges. For market gardeners and for others in the Roya Valley who wish to work ethically and at a local scale, the

²⁵ Pauline Oliveros practice of deep listening, if simplified to the extreme, is listening to everything, all the time. Here I use the term rather as a figure of speech, not in the methodological sense.

²⁶ Tim Ingold deploys this term in the discussion regarding the practices of being in the field.

landscape itself presents a challenge to living in a way that could be termed site-responsive (Hayes 2017).

4.3. National and European policies structuring life of *paysan.nes* in Roya

André de Réparaz has defined terraces as the “field of the poor” (1990, 23), describing in detail how most of the time terraces were constructed and planted with a number of crops, some of which disturbed the others, to make the best of the little land available. Adèle, Louise, and Ramona live and work on terraced slopes. Decades ago, each village family owned some land up on the mountain slopes, where they cultivated grain and vegetables and prepared food for the winter. Some lived in their mountain chalets during the entire summer and came back to the village only during the cold seasons. Most of those terrains are now abandoned, although, especially since the pandemic, many have been bought by urbanites looking to establish a second – holiday – residence. In most cases, the inheritors of many of these land patches have never returned to live in the valley after their parents or grandparents left during one of the waves of rural exodus. Some retain the ownership of the parcels without any knowledge of their existence, Ayo tells me. He adds that the slope we’re talking on used to be a vineyard belonging to the families of the village: once, each family made their own wine. Ayo co-owns the farm with Ramona and is building a foundation for a new chicken coop while we speak. Ayo explains that their terrain consists of a number of little parcels that they, over time, bought from the inheritors that they managed to trace down. The parcels are generally distributed between multiple inheritors, and subdivided into such small plots, that owners, if found, sometimes don’t see the point of bothering to sell, given that the monetary value is very low. Several meters from us an uncultivated territory begins, stone walls crumbling but terraced structures still somewhat visible beneath the shrubs and the grass.

Ayo specializes in breadmaking, and due to his specific status of farmer-baker (*paysan.ne-boulangèr.e*) is required to grow a part of the grain he uses for bread-making himself. In this valley with steep slopes so characteristic of the Alpine horizon, the most challenging part of this requirement is to find enough flat land to produce the grain, Ayo explains. Prior to the storm Alex, around 30% of the grain Ayo used in baking would be grown by him. As if the lack of flat land were not enough, the storm carried away his combine harvester, so in 2021 he could not harvest the grain he had sown the previous season. When we talked at the start of 2022, Ayo was still waiting for the new harvester to be delivered, after a second year in a row with no harvest of his own.

The cadastral maps accessible on geoportail.gouv.fr provide users with the tools to measure the total surface area of each parcel. Among the parcels on the slopes Louise, Ramona and Ayo work and live on there are some as small as 177.7m², or barely 0.017 ha. A lot of work is needed to piece together enough parcels to make a farm viable both from the point of view of yields and access to

subsidies. This adds to the fact that the land on the terraces is considered to be poor: “poor soils, steep slopes <...>, a constant, despite the terracing, threat of erosion, poor accessibility,” André de Réparaz (1990) writes, discussing small-scale traditional Mediterranean agriculture. Small plots of land and various difficulties in accessing them – both in terms of physical access due to the steep slopes and access to acquisition, as well as poor soil and drought are among the factors that complicate the practice and life of almost all *maraîcher.es* and horticulturists I met in this valley.

Control of the scale of farms has been among the regulatory measures of the French state since the 1960s²⁷. By promoting middle-size installations, although ensuring that the land left by the small farmers would not go into the hands of the biggest farmers, the state contributed to the rural exodus. One of the goals of this policy was to increase productivity per hectare via mechanization of labor as well as the application of agricultural biotechnologies (genetic modification and/or the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides). The surpluses produced by industrial food production led to a drop in food prices, affecting the smallest of food producers the most. Michel Débatisse sees the French agricultural policies of the 1960s as being in accordance with broader European agricultural policies that favored support for large-scale, industrial agriculture (Débatisse 1963 in Heller 2013). As a response, as well as with the aim of improving the rights of farm workers and remuneration for agricultural work, Young Farmers Union (Boinon 2003) and other peasant movements (Heller 2013) such as *Confédération paysanne*, the union that all of the shepherds and market gardeners I met take part in, emerged. The goals defined by *Confédération paysanne* were strongly influenced by their exchanges with nongovernmental peasant organizations in the Global South. *Confédération paysanne* aimed to counter the EU and French policies that they see as having led to increased mechanization and “postscarcity surpluses” (Heller 2013, 294). It sought to position peasants as the stewards of local knowledge and guardians of the ecosystem and to resist the pressures to abandon traditional practices, such as seed saving.

Peasant unions criticized many of the efficiency-based proposals of the European agricultural policy, called the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), launched in 1962 by the European Commission. Among the aims that the CAP policymakers defined, were those of ensuring the availability of food supplies and access – via reasonable prices – to foods for consumers; market stabilization; “a fair standard of living for farmers” and “increase agricultural productivity”, as is defined in Article 39 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union.²⁸ This policy,

²⁷ It has to additionally be contextualized in the framework of Les Trente Glorieuses, or the thirty glorious (years) after World War II, defined as the period of “accelerated modernization” and the implementation of the Marshall Plan. “Part of this plan was to design a European industrialized agricultural sector ready to overproduce, export, and dominate agricultural economies in the Global South” (McMichael 1995:xiii and Vanden Ban 1999 in Heller 2013).

²⁸ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:agricultural_policy, accessed on the 30th of May 2025

despite its stated aim of ensuring “a fair” living standard for European farmers²⁹, mostly favored large scale industrial farming³⁰ because the subsidies were linked to the size of the farm, calculated per hectare. In the Roya Valley this distribution of subsidies was brought to my attention by the shepherds, notably by Charlie and Zoé, whom I have introduced in the article III. In different contexts and different situations they both noted that the more land they have access to (some of it is owned, but most is rented), the bigger the subsidy they have the right to ask for. The subsidy they talked about is part of the EC CAP tools of support for farmers. However, the criteria by which the amount of subsidies is calculated, depends not only on the number of hectares, but, pertinently in the case of the mountain territories, also on the “quality”, the word Zoé used, of the land. Zoé explained there are many criteria (and “better land is subsidized better”), including subventions for the maintenance of the mountain landscape, meaning herding in the Alpine meadows of various altitudes to prevent reforestation.

Subsidies for market gardening practices are also calculated depending on many different criteria. In the list of aid available in 2023, the Alpes-Maritimes department identifies groups of aided activities (cultivation of fresh vegetables or small red fruit for farms between 0,5 and 3 Ha, cultivation of hops, cultivation of hemp, cultivation of pulses, coupled with activities of herbivore breeding or a contract with a breeder), with each subsidy calculated by the hectare³¹. It is important to note that France, with the highest volume of agricultural land in the European Union and therefore the biggest CAP subvention beneficiary, is a particular case in the EU. The subvention scheme which favors the biggest farms has been criticized for quite some time, and in pursuit of better support for small farmers, which would include the majority of *paysanne* farms in Roya, the European Commission devised a scheme to facilitate support for small farmers, including easier administrative loads connected to the complex application procedures that many shepherds were dissatisfied with. The scheme, titled Small Farmers Scheme (SFS), was introduced in 2014. It did not get rid of the per-hectare payments, but was proposed as an easily accessible option to the small-holders to whom a lump sum of 1250 euro/farm/year would be sufficient, and to save also time and expense to the national agencies in administering the payment (Lécole et al. 2022). Although 14 member states of the European Union adopted the scheme, France

²⁹ Regardless of the subsidized schemes, farmers income in EU was still 53%–64% below the average in the period between 2007–2013. Source: Ministère de l’Agriculture et de la Souveraineté alimentaire. “Presentation document of the CAP, its historical role and its implementation in the EU and in France.” Accessed June 3, 2025.

³⁰ In the CAP performance summary for 2014–2020 it has been noticed that “20% of CAP beneficiaries receiv[e] 80% of payments”. https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/cmef/cap-performance-2014-20_en, accessed on the 5th of June, 2025.

³¹ Les services de l’État dans les Alpes-Maritimes. “Aides couplées végétales.” Accessed June 2, 2025. <https://www.alpes-maritimes.gouv.fr/index.php/Actions-de-l-Etat/Agriculture-eau-foret-et-espaces-naturels/Agriculture/Aides-de-la-PAC/Aides-couplees-vegetales>

did not, possibly because “the lump-sum payment would have only allowed enrollment by the smallest of the small farms, mostly part-time or retired farmers” (ibid., p. 2). The farmers who opt for this payment cannot apply for other forms of support, such as basic income support for sustainability, eco-schemes, complementary income support for young farmers or coupled income support³², and this is possibly among the reasons why France has not adopted the SFS.

Currently, the renewed proposal from the EC regarding the SFS is to raise the payments to 2500 eur/farm/year, as well as to exempt small farmers from “certain environmental rules” all the while rewarding “eco-friendly farming.”³³

The struggle and discussion regarding subventions and access to them should be seen in the context of numerous fights for French farmers’ and *paysan.nes*’ labour rights. The unions, including *Confédération paysanne*, have fought for years to attain, among other things, social security and health insurance schemes compatible with the lifestyle of *paysan.nes*; retirement schemes that would take into account the smaller income of farmers and would provide them with guarantees in old age; support schemes for female farmers, including the possibility of paid maternity leave and the right to be considered a laborer, not just the wife of a farmer which had meant no clear retirement prospects as there was no attendant employment history. Some of the achievements in these fields have lessened overall precarity, however, it remains quite marked and is especially obvious when the average income of farmers and *paysan.nes* is compared to the average income across Europe. All of the above has, over the last three decades especially, resulted in disappearance of smaller farms. As shown by the reports published by the French ministry of agriculture³⁴, small farms are disappearing. The number of small farms in the communes that are part of the Roya Valley, Breil-sur-Roya, Fontan, Saorge, la Brigue and Tende decreased from the total of 289 in 1988 to 76 in 2010³⁵.

Additionally, climate change is introducing new challenges to agricultural practices, regardless of the scale of the farm. Along with it, there is a new ongoing struggle led by peasant unionists to negotiate, on the national and European levels, forms and formats of funds that would insure against and remunerate for the losses that result from weather events related to climate change. Losses connected to changing climate are something that many of the *marâcher.es* I talked with are

³² “Payments for Small Farmers – European Commission,” May 22, 2025. Accessed June 2. https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/income-support/additional-schemes/payments-small-farmers_en

³³ European Commission – European Commission. “Commission Simplifies Common Agricultural Policy to Support Farmers and Enhance Competitiveness.” Accessed June 3, 2025. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_1205

³⁴ <https://agreste.agriculture.gouv.fr/agreste-web/methodon/S-ESEA2023/methodon/>, accessed on November 20, 2025.

³⁵ According to the information collected by association *Terre de liens*, visualized in the online map <https://territoiresfertiles.fr/widgets/tcl-municipales-carte-evolution-fermes>, accessed on November 20, 2025.

experiencing more and more often. Losses are also experienced by the shepherds whose herds depend on mountain streams for water and on regular precipitation for grass.

4.4. Yann's olive grove: precarity, autarky and interdependence

The subject of subsidies makes it clear that the ideal of autarky which led many neorurals to this valley and the lived realities they experience are not necessarily seamlessly congruent. Neorurals are in a highly interdependent relationship with the nonhumans they cultivate or work with, climatic shifts, and precipitation, as well as with state, national and international political and policy shifts, as well as flows of capital.

Yann's olive grove and house are situated on a very steep slope, with a beautiful south and southwestern exposure. Between the village center and Yann's terrain is a 30–40 minute walk along a trail edging a cliff and following the river, broad enough only for humans, donkeys and mules. There is no way to access it with any vehicles – motorized or not: the main road of the valley is on the opposite side of the river, and the only connection between the trail that leads to Yann's terrain and the road on the other side of the river is a footbridge swinging in the wind high above the river. The footbridge is locked, and there is a sign on both sides of the river that signals that it is for private access only. Yann explains that he had to have the footbridge built years ago to facilitate access. The storm had compromised the integrity of the rocks onto which the footbridge is anchored, and the repairs needed were expensive. Yann had asked for help from the local governance bodies, but given that it is a private construction, they refused their support, even though, as Yann notes, the foundation of the road rests on the structure of his bridge, which is anchored to the bedrock. Given that the storm had washed away an embankment beneath, which Yann had constructed at the same time as the footbridge, the entire structure is now endangered. If the footbridge goes, Yann is sure that the road built just above it will follow. The bridge needs to be fortified with a special type of concrete on both ends, but that is an expensive operation, given the inaccessibility of the terrain. Yann's livelihood depends on him solving this problem. Yann makes a living selling eggs from his organic-fed chickens and from his olive production – olive paste and oil – in the organic shops in Nice.

Yann's house, one he built with the help of friends, is several terraces above the trail. On each of the terraces, there are several well-tended olive trees. Claudio Panella (2020) writes that olive trees started populating the slopes of the Roya Valley and other valleys of *Ponente Ligure* (the Ligurian Riviera) in the XV century. The Roya Valley is divided between France and Italy: the south of the valley, with the town of Ventimiglia on the coast of the Mediterranean, hamlets of Porra and Trucco, villages of Airole, Olivetta San Michele, and the hamlet of Fanghetto, are Italian. Olive groves surround all these Italian villages and hamlets.

The French border is north from Olivetta San Michele. Mediterranean influence on the French side of the border reaches the hamlet of Libre, the villages of Pienne Haute and Breil-sur-Roya, although the latter to a lesser extent, and, further to the north, Saorge, which has excellent southern exposition. Between Libre and Saorge, olive groves cover all the slopes with eastern, southern and southwestern exposure, and some that receive less sun. An apparent difference between the two countries' territories is the number of terraces and olive trees that look cared for, as is the case in the Italian villages, and those that do not, being a habitual sight on the French side of the valley. The abandonment is visible in the terraces, marked by crumbling stone walls and long grasses forming undergrowth beneath the olive trees. As soon as no more scything is carried out the undergrowth changes in composition (Boillat et al. 2004), and the unpruned olive trees branch out, which, according to olive farmers, leads to less fruit.

Yann and his then-partner bought the terrain with the plan of raising goats. However, given that their ways parted before they started the farm, Yann decided to start with what he had – olive trees on the terraces he had bought.

I had olive trees, but [to work with] olive trees is a real financial nightmare. The income was between 400 and 600 euros per month, with all the work that entails, it was a bit of a bummer. Now, [when I have] chickens, it's better. But I used to get by, because I had goats, ewes, geese, chickens, rabbits, a garden and olive trees to make oil. I bought only flour, salt and coffee. At some point I had beehives, but it did not go well – the bees were attacking me [laughs], so I stopped, although that would have been a good income.

(Extract from a semi-structured interview)

Working with olives in the mountains is not only “a financial nightmare,” but it is also a lot of physical work. As I was shown and taught by Gastoun, an olive farmer from the hamlet of Libre, the olive harvest is a slow process. Trees are harvested one after the other and one might take an entire day to harvest well. Directed by Gastoun, early in the morning, I was told to spread a dense green plastic mesh on the terrace. The mesh is used to facilitate the collection of the olives that, upon combing the branches, cover the ground beneath and around the tree. The method defined as ancestral by Gastoun, was pole-beating the olive trees, aiming at the branches covered with olives and abstaining from hurting the tree's main branches. It is a human-power and time-intensive process, which requires being attentive to the tree as well as treading carefully on the ground. As soon as olives are crushed, oxidation processes start, and if the harvest is to be transported to the mill in a week or more, crushed olives will have gone bad by then. To facilitate and speed up the process, many of those who produce the olive oil and olive paste not only for their own use but also for sale use an electric comb powered by a small compressor. Gastoun uses the comb to reach the branches that are too high to beat efficiently with the stick. The plastic mesh, at the end of the combing, is covered in leaves and olives. It is then raised from two sides evenly to move the olives to the center of the mesh. The leaves are combed out manually,

and the olives are then poured into plastic harvest boxes, each measuring 23 liters, all the same shape and made in a way that allows for the storing of the boxes one above the other until and during transportation. The remaining olives that fall between the long stretches of mesh and beyond it are raked manually, collected, and poured into the same crates. They can be stored in a cool, dark place for a couple of weeks until there is a volume sufficient to bring them to the olive mill. Gastoun uses the mill in Trucco, across the border with Italy³⁶. In Libre, as in most villages surrounded by olive groves, there used to be a fully functioning olive mill. The structure is still visible at one of the turns of the road leading from the main road of the valley up to Libre. The mill might have been abandoned before the Second World War or earlier, around the same time as most of the surrounding terraces. The structure is covered with vegetation, but one can still see the old mill and the stone canals that used to channel the oil at different production stages.

Yann's terrain, as most terrains in the southern part of the valley, is not accessible to work with any regular agricultural machinery. The terrain is fragile and erodes quickly, the terraces are narrow, and the structures that hold them together – manually built stone walls, which require regular maintenance – are at risk of damage. Therefore, the only machinery that Yann uses in certain cases are smallish petrol or diesel-run trackbarrows. These machines make carrying things a little easier, but are expensive and require a supply of diesel or petrol. In Yann's case that also means carrying the supply of diesel over the footbridge, and then using the cable barrow to get it up to the terrace on which he's built a shed for all the appliances and tools. For many years, before he got his trackbarrow, he would transport all of those olives down his terraces and over the footbridge to reach his car on his back. But these last years, Yann says, he really feels his back, and is not what he used to be, and I see how the cable cart and diesel trackbarrow are a necessity for him to survive and to continue his egg and olive oil business.

It takes Yann around 3 months to harvest 5 tons of olives from his grove of 600 trees, extending over only nearly 3 hectares. He notes that, in comparison, mechanized plantations (on more even land) collect this many olives in a day. And yet, Yann says, there is only so much he can charge for the oil, to keep the price somewhat competitive. And that means that he earns very little in comparison with the work and the time he puts in. "The olive tree is really "L'albero della fame," as the old folks used to say. The tree of hunger, as in, one would die of hunger living off of olives. I didn't believe it. In fact, it is a good supplementary crop. But you cannot live off of it. I've tried for 20 years," Yann explains, with a sad smile.

Yann admits that when he moved to the valley, he had not seen how such small-scale farms, like his own, functioned. If he had, he admits he would have been frightened and thought twice about his decision, but at the time he decided

³⁶ The only one in the French part of the valley is the one in Breil-sur-Roya, La CUMA Oléicole, an agricultural cooperative that grants the members of the cooperative affordable access to (often pricy) tools for both harvest of olives and oil and olive paste production.

to start as an olive farmer, everything he did was “a bit of a scramble.” Now, for the 20 years he has lived and worked here, he is glad that at the very least he does not have a mortgage to pay anymore, but his revenue is still tiny. As Yann talks, his teenage kids and their grandma, Yann’s mother, make *crêpes* from the dough that remains from the previous day. At the same time, he finishes making the *tourte*³⁷ – a traditional dish of the valley, that has many variations and is well known in both Provence and Liguria. It is two thin layers of fine wheat flour and olive oil dough, with a layer of Swiss chard with garlic, onion, rice, and salt between them. He rolls the fine sheets of dough seemingly effortlessly and makes several trays of the *tourte*. The vegetables Yann uses for his *tourte* he grew on the terraces beneath the house. While the *tourte* is baking in the oven, we weed and water those relatively small gardens. The earth is so dry that my nostrils fill with dust with each uprooted weed. When we finish, Yann opens the water tap to irrigate the plots.

Food-making is yet another labour-intensive task for a single parent who lives partly off-grid, but Yann is used to doing it all himself, he says. He would like to carry on as “the old folks” a bit of an idealized and romanticized version of an independent life of a *paysan*. However, he is a father of teenage children, which also adds a variety of responsibilities, including financial ones. Yann is thus dependent on many things in his practice. From the intercontinental fossil fuel flows to market prices dictated by large-scale olive oil producers, from the mountain terrain to the limitations of his physical body, he is inter- and co-dependent.

Let us come back to Sara and Frank for a moment. Once the interview we had agreed on was over, these organic market gardeners from the north of the valley invited me to stay for lunch and to chat some more, because the conversation was easy and seemed to branch out effortlessly. While we talked in their kitchen/living room, the scant winter light slowly shifting outside their window, Frank was making a lamb stew from a lamb grown by the local sheep farmers, he explained. They made a bowl of salad with beetroots and greens and cooked potatoes, all grown in their gardens – part of the range of products they offer to the local market. Sara and Frank talked about the dependencies of small-scale agriculture farms – those that occur naturally (weather and changing climate, pests, and proximity of wild animals) and those that are part of dependencies on the global flows of energy, such as fossil fuels, goods, and mechanization. Sara passionately shared her latest read: “Reprendre la terre aux machines,” or “Taking the Earth back from the machines,” with the subtitle “A Manifesto for Peasant and Food Autonomy.” The manifesto invites people to notice how technology industries and models of industrial and commercial food production are consolidating and

³⁷ In the bakeries of the valley there are 4 types of *tourtes* available: with squash and Swiss chard, with spinach and rice, with potatoes and with tomatoes. It is thought as part of the cultural heritage of the valley. A good source for the recipes, giving a general understanding of the amount of time that needs to be dedicated to make the *tourte* is an interview on archive.org with Louise Giordano, an elderly local of Breil-sur-Roya, by Danielle Musset, accessible here: https://archive.org/details/4581_SLG146

“confiscating” the know-how of food production, making people everywhere dependent on global food chains and making those who cultivate foods dependent on mechanical solutions and, therefore, fossil fuels. Sara was sharing how she is very aware of those interconnectivities with and dependencies on capitalist structures, which urge smallholders to up their production in order to be at least somewhat competitive with products issuing from large-scale, highly industrialized farms, which rely on mechanisation but also the cheap labor of migrant workers. Sara also shared how she and Frank have, throughout the years of their practice, added a tractor to their tools, which they use for certain aspects of their work. Their land next to a small river is long and relatively flat. Other than that, Sara noted that, instead of buying machinery, they try to borrow both machines and tools from other market gardeners based in their part of the valley. They also organize days of collective work when there is a need to plant a higher number of plants, such as when they are planting potatoes. These are their ways to limit their dependencies on mechanical solutions, which they see as leading not only to dependencies on agri-industrial enterprises, but also to a lack of the positive interdependence that communal practices sustain.

4.5. Roya and intergenerationality

During the interview, Yann several times referred to the intergenerational effort that had resulted in the terrain he is working and living on, the terrain which feeds him:

[T]he subsoil here, it's been since the Lignes, at the very least, since the first farmers who lived here, they've taken stones, they've built walls, they've brought in earth, you know? Yeah, so the terraces were built between the end of the Neolithic, the Bronze Age, roughly these first occupations here, maybe a bit later, maybe in the Iron Age. And up until the 19th century, they built and built, they brought the soil [to the terraces] from where there was some, up the rivers. And these terraces are small areas of land where you could grow crops. And before that, the olive trees here date back to XV or end of XVI centuries. Until then it was too cold here. There were olive trees at the coast [of Mediterranean]. <...> This is great soil for grapes: it's sand and silt. And the olive trees here were planted in the end 15th / 16th centuries, there's not one of these trees that I've planted myself.

Yann's livelihood depends on these trees that populate the terraces built centuries ago. Under ideal conditions, many people told me that olive trees can live well for five centuries, outliving the person who planted them by hundreds of years. The yields that Yann collects now are the result of intergenerational generativity. This concept is central to the work of Rose (2011, 2022), Rose, van Dooren and Chrulow (2017), and others in extinction studies. This intergenerational generativity spans across species in such a way that all actions result in response, as in those previously mentioned songs of call and response.

I had seen Claire several times in the villages, mostly among the market gardeners, during the market days, fairs, and similar events. I contacted her in early spring, when work with the chestnuts is long over, and the summer season of her work as a mountain guide has not yet started. Claire met me at the edge of what looked like a forest, starting right behind her neighbors' house. It would have been hard for me to find her house on that slope with trees spreading all around us. It took me some time during that steep climb to notice that the shade we were in was all from aged chestnut trees, a thick canopy of light green leaves covering us from intense sunlight. On our way up, we crossed a bubbly little brook. While we sat in the chestnut shade on Claire's tiny terrace drinking tea, she told me that the chestnut grove, expanding between Saint Dalmas de Tende and Tende, the northernmost village of the valley, had been abandoned for over 70 years. She bought this land a little over 10 years ago, and in recent years she has worked to develop her ecological chestnut cream production. Just as in the case of olive oil production in this valley, artisanal chestnut cream production is mostly manual, and time and physical-labor intensive. When Claire speaks, she is like that brook we crossed on our way up – resolute and joyous. Claire admitted to me that she fell in love with this place as soon as she saw it: “*Voilà*, it was love at first sight for the place which had nothing to do with what [I] had planned.” She explained that she seeks joy in her activities, and part of this joy comes from living with a sense of gratitude:

[W]hen I look after the chestnut trees and harvest the chestnuts, I'm very grateful to the previous generations, because here there are trees that are a hundred years old, there are walls that have been built. In short it is a landscape that is completely man-made and so I am very grateful to bend down and pick up tons of chestnuts because of an enormous amount of work they've put in. So, in fact my idea is to bring these chestnut trees back to life a bit. I tell to myself, OK, there's still a lot of work done by past generations [...], they planted trees, they built walls, it's an enormous amount of work that goes into it. In fact, the amount of time it takes for a tree to bear fruit and all that [shows that] they didn't just think about themselves, they thought about their children too, you know? And for me it's also a lesson to say, OK, they've put in an enormous amount of work, I'm here today, and what am I giving to future generations, you know? I don't necessarily think of my children, I think that there are others who will come after, and we get the best here, so what do I want to leave? And in my mind I want to leave something that's not just these chestnut trees, because that's a bit of a distortion of nature, I want there to be as much room as possible for nature inside [of the grove] as well, at the same time, when I'm planning, I have this aim of working towards the abundance of life, you know? So here's my idea: I take the organic matter that grows a little naturally, plus these chestnut trees, and I move it around and pile it up in places where it won't tilt and where I can also grow things to feed myself, and at the same time I say to myself, well, it also feeds the chestnut trees, it also feeds the other small trees that I leave, it also feeds all the microorganisms that are inside, and so it also brings a form of diversity.

(Extract from a semi-structured interview)

Claire takes what she sees as the gift of previous generations – healthy chestnut trees – that have long inhabited the land that she now walks and works on, and she meets this with gratitude and responsibility. The chestnut grove shapes her outlook and makes her responsible for life. Her present is rooted firmly in the soil made by the labour and care of those that came before her, and she chooses to continue labouring and caring in a way that leads to abundance and diversity across species and kingdoms, from trees to microorganisms. She cares for the well-being of generations to come as much as she cares for microbial life. Although it sounds poetic, it is an approach rooted in knowledge of ecological interconnectivities and interdependencies. Claire was born and raised in the city and studied biology and geology at university. These interests led her to the valley. As a result, she is well-equipped to understand that the key to the stability of any agricultural activity in the context of climate change is biodiversity (Dardonville et al. 2022; Mijatović et al. 2012). She defines intensive agricultural practices as predatory, whilst seeing her own activities as an alternative. As she told me: “It opens up a whole new field of possibilities than the one we’ve entered into over the past 2,000 years, with increasingly intensive and predatory agriculture.” She shares how she is learning to graft trees – not from the books, but through grafting with a friend. She talks about burying ashes from her stove as being an ancient practice of some indigenous groups in South America and how she tries to apply this knowledge to her terrain. She shares how demotivated she feels when learning things from a book and how she needs the communal practices of co-working and co-learning to learn and sustain her eagerness and curiosity. Collectivities past and present are what she needs to thrive, and Claire says she has found them in the valley. Claire is very conscientious about the challenges that might come her way in the not-so-distant future as part of the impacts of climate change. In refusing the notion of her practice being climate or environmental activism, she works on diversifying and multiplying those she is interdependent with on the terrain she is tending and beyond.

Interdependencies in this valley, as elsewhere around this planet, are complex. Interdependencies – intergenerational and interspecies – span not only through time but across continents, as shown by Tsing et al. (2020). Year by year, human hands restart and renew the work done by many hands, decades and centuries earlier. While some interdependencies are life-sustaining, such as the one between chestnuts and their keepers or between the generations who constructed the terraces and those who now tend the olive trees, others are not. However, in order to start thinking of the latter, I had to discover something that was not there, not visible to my eye, something lacking.

4.6. Generations and global connectivity

Grape vines (*Vitis vinifera*) were not active within the field of my attention when I arrived in the valley because they simply were not there, at least not in the way one would imagine grape vines existing in France and Italy – vineyards covering the terraced slopes. In the heat of August, in front of the restaurant at the railway station, small blue grapes were drying away, nibbled by the birds.

Much later, in December, during one of the small breaks we took to stretch our backs while collecting olives, I expressed to Gastoun my admiration for the beautiful slopes, covered with seemingly well-tended terraces, a small way from us at the edge of the villages, then in vibrant sunlight. Gastoun sighed and, gesturing to the slopes on our left, facing south and southeast, told me how years ago there used to be vineyards there, how he vividly recalls them. I asked why there are none anymore – the exposure is excellent, and the Mediterranean climate keeps the temperatures mild. He replied that mildew killed them about three decades ago, making viticulture impossible in the region. It is the cold humidity, you see, he tried to explain, which comes with the fogs and mists from the sea.

Towards the end of November 2021, I participated in a workshop to learn the techniques of stone terracing. During this workshop, I learned some stone masonry techniques and heard of an association that had started reconstructing an ancient vineyard in the village of la Brigue, as our workshop took place on one of the terraces of this former and soon-to-be-restored vineyard. These terraces are across the river from the village center, with full southern exposure. They climb high and, due to their former abandonment, since the 1960s (according to the leaflets of the association), were in disarray at the time of our workshop. Chiseling away at stones, I wondered how many years it would take to reconstruct all of the terraces on the slope. Building stone walls in what is defined as the traditional way is a complex and laborious activity. The wall has an outer and an inner layer, each constructed following specific rules according to which the stones are fitted and, if needed – shaped with a chisel and sledgehammer. Space between the layers is filled with a mixture of gravel and soil, which allows the slow release of the surplus of water in cases of heavy rain so that excess water does not burst the wall open. The process is entirely manual and therefore slow. The association hopes that the reconstruction of these terraces and the plantation of vines will involve various generations of villagers of different provenances and result in a collective experimentation. There is a hope to revive “olden days” – when each family grew vines and produced their wine.

In a very detailed early study of vineyards of the Alps, which analyses vineyard production in Northern and Southern regions, Raoul Blanchard (1930) mentions Roya valley once, among the places that cultivate vines, accounting for the harvest in Breil-sur-Roya, Saorge, and Fontan, in the south of the valley. He writes that the production volume is relatively small, and that there are no types of vines indicated as being of exceptional quality for winemaking. Vineyards have declined in the region since 1927–1928 (Minvielle 2006). Among the reasons might have been the general decline of farming activities in the Roya Valley. After

World War I, there was an increase in construction work both in the valley and on the coast (Botton and Gaber 2009), and many locals invested their energy in other activities than agriculture. A similar dynamic of rural exodus (Médail & Diadema 2006) was observed again in the years of economic recovery after World War II. So, among the reasons for the abandonment of the vines in Brigue might have been that there was simply nobody to tend them. However, there have been other reasons over the years and centuries before. In the 1890s, there was what Botton (1996) defines as *crise phylloxérique* (Fr.), or phylloxera crisis, which decimated the vineyards surrounding Breil-sur-Roya and elsewhere. The new vineyards later were “reconstituted thanks to American grape varieties grafted with French plants” (p. 198). In Botton’s accounts, mentioned in a subchapter as just one of the minor changes in the valley, the appearance of grape phylloxera (*Daktulosphaira vitifoliae* (Fitch 1855), microscopic, aphid-like sap-feeding insects, in France earlier identified as *Phylloxera vastatrix* (Planchon 1868), came along with or perhaps even brought about what we could define as an epochal shift.

Roberto A. Pantaleoni et al. (2012) connects the arrival of the first live insects of the Grape phylloxera to Sardinia – an island which had been relatively safe from alien species until then – and to elsewhere in Europe to the faster commutations afforded by the introduction of steam ships. Not only did it contribute to faster global exchange but also to the increased survival and spread of various insect species that were transported across the ocean. The first cases of phylloxera in France were documented in summer 1866 in a vineyard in Rhône, South of France (Gale 2011). They were likely introduced by scientists who had shipped infested vine specimens from North America. In the span of just a few decades, phylloxera spread to over 90% of French regions that grow vines (Powell 2008, 97) and to other regions of Europe. In France, phylloxera caused the collapse of a significant part of the wine industry, and it is mostly the economic damage that is traced in scholarly accounts of the proliferation of phylloxera. In this context, accounts such as Garriers (1989, 50 in Gale 2011) stand out, wherein it is noticed that the loss of vines transforms the landscape itself as the landscape “takes on an unfamiliar aspect, made up of empty and desolate space.” The impact of the change in the landscape was great and resonated strongly. However, the memory of such a transformation, which has been defined as devastation (Gale 2011), has not registered much in the living memory of the locals I met in the Roya Valley and it does not make up any part of the narratives I came across.

The mildew that Gastoun told me about is also known as downy mildew and, like phylloxera, is of North American origin. It is *Plasmopara viticola*, an oomycete, a pathogenic fungus-like organism, introduced soon after the introduction of phylloxera in the 1870s with wild *Vitis vinifera* species. This import resulted from attempts to find species to graft to domesticated vines that would form hybrid phylloxera-resistant species (Fontaine et al. 2021). Just like in the case of phylloxera, the downy mildew disease spread through all the European countries that were producing wine, and, according to gene sequencing data, it is from Europe that it later reached Australia, Northeast China, and South Africa and, as a tertiary import from Australia, even Argentina, all from “only one of the

five native North American lineages” (ibid., 2155). To this day, both phylloxera and downy mildew continue to affect grape vines and, therefore, the regions that produce wine. The additional stressors, however, that have had a substantial impact on the cultivation of vines across the entirety of Southern France and elsewhere along the same longitude – and so most certainly the terraces that are being freshly reconstructed in la Brigue – are the increasing summer temperatures and frequent drought, increased unpredictability of weather patterns, and an increased frequency of hailstorms in May and June. The survival of the plant – any plant at that – as well as the quality of the wine produced from the yield depends on many factors, and climate change provides a multiplicity of extra stressors (Leeuwen van et al. 2024).

Let’s come back to Claire. Writing about her gratitude to the former generations for the chestnut grove, I used the adjective “healthy” to define it. Like many plants in different places in the world, the sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) has suffered from the epidemics that go together with global trade, which facilitates the spread of pathogens across oceans. For example, *Cryphonectria parasitica*, commonly known as the chestnut blight fungus, is native to Eastern Asia and caused epidemics among chestnut species local to both North America and Europe once it was introduced (Mlinarec et al., 2018). “Proceedings of the American Chestnut Symposium” of 1978 show that the problem of chestnut blight was transcontinental. Researchers from Italy, France, and various states of the USA were all working on measures to control the disease (see, for example, Grente & Berthelay-Sauret 1978a), identifying the situation concerning other chestnut diseases (Mittempergher 1978; Grente & Berthelay-Sauret 1978b), developing disease-resistant species (Jaynes 1978), etc. Chestnut blight was first observed in 1938 near Genoa, Italy, while in France, the disease was reported for the first time in 1956 (Turchetti & Maresi 2000). In his field report in the “Feral Atlas” (Mathews 2020), Andrew Mathews follows the histories of *Cryphonectria parasitica*, as well as *Phytophthora cambivora* and *Phytophthora cinnamoni*, both of these latter fungi causing ink disease in chestnuts, through the ruins of former chestnut groves from above Lucca, Italy, back to China, Japan or elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Ink disease was first reported a century earlier than the blight, in 1838, in Portugal, but in just 30 years reached the port of Livorno, writes Mathews, following the documents. It was likely introduced via live cultivars of Chinese (*Castanea mollissima*) or Japanese chestnut (*Castanea crenata*), like the blight in the United States. These diseases decimated Italian chestnut orchards, their volume declining “from around 800,000 hectares in 1800, to only 200,000 hectares in 2000, with the vast majority abandoned or used for firewood or timber.” (ibid.) Similarly to the story above, the one wherein attempts to stop phylloxera resulted in the introduction of downy mildew fungus, in the story of chestnut diseases the second epidemic, caused by *Cryphonectria parasitica*, was a result of efforts to fight the earlier disease by introducing Japanese chestnut cultivars. Like Garriers, Mathews notes the transformation of a landscape that is changed by pathogen devastation and he identifies that those ruins have a power to haunt. In this context of the easy global spread of pathogens and of haunting landscapes of loss,

continuing health of the grove is the thing I wish for Claire and her project of sustaining the grove for generations to come. Maybe in time, she will become the elder who is able to pass on the social-ecological memory (Barthel et al. 2010) of the grove she is tending, as knowledge tried by both time and her experimentation.

Interdependencies in the Roya Valley are intergenerational, interspecies, as well as intercontinental. A landscape of olive groves opens before us the history of anthropic forces transforming and adapting the landscape for human use and profit. While these forces construct, import, and build, they also destroy: each intervention into the specific biome interrupts a previous ecological community. Not only every intervention, but also every significant motion brings about a new set of relationships. Some of them seem entirely benign or at least do not give reason to be alarmed. Such is the landscape in which, after the storm Alex, tomatoes proliferated, creating their heterotopia, as I write about in the article I. However, sometimes, as we see with the example of phylloxera and mildew, new introductions undo relationships that preceded the new shift, whatever form the shift has taken. At the same time, Roya Valley has been a contested territory throughout most of its history, a road of salt connecting land to water, a territory between various kingdoms and countries, a land ravaged by plagues and wars. Some of the shifts I would call terraforming – long-term transformation of the slopes through the construction of terraces is essentially a terraforming practice. Some are less visible, tangible or imposing, however, each shift means the shifting of relational landscapes in which everything and everyone is interdependent with everyone and everything else.

5. CONCLUSION

The aim of this text was to situate and contextualize the three research articles that are part of this doctoral thesis by providing an overview of the environmental history of Roya Valley, colocating local multispecies relationships knit between generations as interdependent with the global geographies. I situate the practices of Roya Valley peasants in the landscape of an arid, complicated and nutrient-poor agricultural terrain, through shifts of an economic, political and environmental nature over the last century. Doing so I contextualize their response in the aftermath of the disaster. As I write in the beginning of chapter 4, the interviews with village dwellers who are not engaged in agricultural practices and those with peasants were markedly different. While village dwellers focused on the storm, peasants tried to narrate it within the context of changes they had noticed in precipitation patterns, non-human-animal behavior, plant coverage, and in relation to the intergenerational labour. The temporality that preoccupied these *paysan.nes* extended centuries back as well as on towards the future. The differences in ways of relating to the storm Alex were also due to the different social and economic backgrounds of those who identify as locals and those who identify as neorurals. Most of *paysan.nes* interlocutors self-defined and were defined by others in the valley as neorurals. Neorurals, especially those of earlier generations, came to the valley drawn by ideas of autonomy, autarky and independence, as well as pursuits of connectivity through the earthen practices, as I have also discussed in the article I. Regardless of which generation they belonged to, in the sense of arrival to the valley, the interlocutors *paysan.nes* of this research were all aware of the climate crisis as one of their main challenges and of storm Alex being one of the ways in which the global crisis manifested itself. They identified their practices as a response to the challenges of global climate change. I identify their practice as site-responsive, and their ways of relating as practices of call-and-response. Finally, I seek to convey their situatedness and interrelatedness not only through time and generations, but also in the national, international and global contexts of political and economic forces and the dynamic flow of pathogens.

As I show, relating responsibly and responsively between humans, nonhumans and non-animals starts from noticing the other. And maybe even before that, it starts with the willingness to notice the details of the worlds of others, worlds that intersect and expand each other, and are in many different ways interdependent, as I also discuss in the article III. Once one's world becomes spacious enough to include microbial lives – like those fungi and viruses that were moved across oceans transforming local ecological relations, non-animal and nonhuman lives, we can think of relating as a call and response. In the case of this study, it is a form of relating that is conducive to understanding that dwelling in a landscape is a form of dwelling-with, and as such requires a relationship based on mutuality and constant adjustment. In the songs of call and response, this process means listening attentively to the call, and constantly adjusting the response. Such dwelling, I find, leads to understanding one's response-ability towards the

maintenance of our shared worlds and is conducive to assuming responsibilities for how one impacts the world(s).

I also show that this interrelated dwelling-with, which includes communal practices, more-than-human togetherness in the contact zone, and gratitude for the generations that shaped the present, makes the *paysan.nes* I met live and act in ways that, as they see it, honor past practices, which they build upon or collect the yields of through ways of practicing that are responsive to present challenges and that will, hopefully, continue to yield fecundity for generations to come. I define their practices as intergenerational interspecies generativity, which is co-responsive and mutualistic. I am aware that these practices could also be defined in terms of resilience, however, I am highly critical of the way this concept is deployed in the context of disaster mitigation, as has been shown in detail by Barrios (2016). It is a concept that often reflects neoliberal agendas, and is sometimes implanted into the fields of disaster and climate research to turn the gaze away from the real culprits of disasters. These include but are in no way limited to governments that fail to understand that there are no possibilities for unlimited growth on a limited planet, or municipalities that sell land for housing construction even when the land is not stable. In a way, talking of resilience in the aftermath of a disaster shifts all the responsibility towards those that are the victims of disasters. This is an aspect which, I think, would be important to look into in more detail in the future studies that will continue to follow the aftermath of the storm Alex, and other events like it, and its impacts on human and more-than-human life in the valley.

To finalize, this research has several implications. (1) In terms of methodology, it shows how artistic practice and artistic research methods can enrich and expand ethnographic fieldwork data, as well as contribute to a more diversified dissemination of research via an art exhibition. (2) This research shows that *paysan.nes* are the experts of the landscape they live and work in and with, from ecological and historical point of view. From the point of view of practice and policy implications, they should be more often made part of decision-making structures and practices when it comes to creating policies for territorial adaptations in relation to climate change, addressing present and future challenges associated with it not only locally, but also internationally. (3) Theoretical concepts and approaches that were used in this research come from across anthropological subfields (disaster, environmental, more-than-human anthropology), and outside of anthropology (music theory), and shows how interdisciplinary approaches can be useful in shaping a fitting tool for a specific site or situation. (4) From the point of view of the discipline of disaster anthropology, disaster is a result of long term social, economic and political processes that with time exacerbate vulnerabilities that are readily there. This research provides more evidence in support of this approach.

5.1. Findings synthesis across articles I-III

In the article I, “La Roya, the Dream: heterotopia and potentialities of a storm” I have looked at the Roya Valley through the analytical tool of heterotopia. According to Foucault, heterotopia is a real place, but it is “outside of all places”(Foucault and Miskowiec, 1986:24; Vidler, Foucault and Johnston, 2014). In a variety of ways, it is a place that contests other places. In the article I identified three heterotopias that I see in Roya Valley, all three coexisting, real places, existing for those who make and maintain them. Those heterotopias function as a pluriverse (Kothravi et al., 2019; Mignolo, 2018) and it is a pluriverse where there is space for non-human worlding, as I propose with the heterotopia created by tomato plants. Each heterotopia has different ways of relating, and different beings in relationship in very different scales of time and space: newly arrived *paysan.nes* meet locals *de souche*, while tomatoes travel from across the ocean torn out by invaders, escape botanical gardens to dwell in the gardens and end up on the shore of a mountain river. In this article I show the landscape as a multitude containing many imaginaries and a number of ways to connect with the landscape.

In the article II, “Shaping the ephemeral in and out of the field: methodological in-betweens as tools for disentanglement”, I focused on methodological interdisciplinarity. I connected my fieldwork experience and an art exhibition that I made upon my return from the field to talk about my “in-between” practice, as I define it. I discussed how an interdisciplinary approach has helped make sense of the overwhelming topics of disaster, climate change, and migration. I went into detail about the methods I was deploying and the works that I produced in the exhibition, connecting environmental history, anthropology, and artistic practice. I demonstrated how the construction of a visual narrative helped articulate the unworded and extralingual – experiential and sensorial aspects, both of which abound when we work with complex and emotional topics and have challenging fieldwork experiences.

In the article III, “Shepherding in France: the Ambiguities of Caring for Nonhuman Animals in the Roya Valley, France”, I addressed the questions of what does it mean to care for nonhuman others in the Roya Valley; what does the conflict between caring for domesticated versus wild nonhuman animals help us see, how does this conflict relate to human and nonhuman interrelatedness in the context of climate crisis, and what political agendas show up in discourses related to sheep and wolves. I identify care practices that I give as examples – shepherds’ care for sheep, *écologes*’ and state care for wolves – as ambivalent and irreconcilable. Irreconcilable are also the politics that back either care for sheep or of wolves, revolving around distinct discourses of nativity and rarity, and reflecting broader topics and issues of sociopolitical and economic kind. I also show how state and international policies translate into care and how care practices I see are for that and other reasons I show, is limited as well as limiting.

6. SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES

I. Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. “La Roya, the Dream: heterotopia and potentialities of a storm.” *Re-Visiones* 13 (2023).

<https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/REVI/article/view/94452/4564456568522>.

In this article I define three types of heterotopias that I have identified as forming part of the social making of the Roya valley in the Mediterranean Alps. I look at spatial and temporal transformations and reverberations of events past, observing the various entanglements that emerge in the territory over time. Foucauldian heterotopia is a real place “outside of all places” (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986, 24) where incompatible things are juxtaposed, and different times overlap and coexist. It is arranged as a space that is contrasted with that which remains outside of it.

The first heterotopia I identify is that of frictions between the inhabitants that are called “hippies” and those that fall into the category of “indigenous” (both categories are emic). The definition of “hippies” is extended to “neorurals” (an emic term, defining various people that arrived in the valley in several waves, one in the 1970s, a couple of smaller ones over the last couple of decades, and one which coincided with the pandemic), most of whom are in various ways living according to an ecotopian and anti-capitalist vision. “Indigenous” are considered those that, in contrast to the “hippies”, have been in the Roya for several generations, many of whom hold most of the municipal jobs in the villages and towns making the valley. Although the tensions are still tangible, in some cases – such as pastoral practices which involve learning by doing from the earlier generations of shepherds – nodes of relationality have emerged over time. In this heterotopia time and earth are essential – cyclical and festive times as well as earth practices (re)connect both humans and nonhumans.

I call the second heterotopia one of entanglement and attunement. It is a heterotopia which hosts spaces of entanglement through joint work of reconstruction after a storm that devastated the Roya valley. Shared work, shared efforts and shared time witnessing the changes in the post-storm landscapes create a space shared among those invested in the work. Entanglements go beyond those between humans and the spaces they make together, also extending to the realm of spirits, ghosts and myths. Such is the case of one of the participants in the research who shared his experience of certain places of the valley as being places of power, places that have been important in his connecting to the valley.

The third heterotopia I identify as such is one that I call “time on hold and things that are not”. It is the heterotopia of tomato plants that have proliferated on the shores of the river Roya in the summer following the storm. Tomato plants are invisible “things that are not”, as the gaze of the villagers is dominated by absence – of things that once were and are no more, such as gardens, orchards, and constructions within and nearby the riverbed. Foucault does not consider the

possibility of a heterotopia that would be made by nonhumans. However, considering that plants are sensing future-oriented beings that collaborate, compete, are capable of defense and healing, I propose that out there, on an arid riverbed, they were making a place outside of all places. As such, it is a reverberation of *Invasion worlds* (Tsing et al., 2020) which are “world-ripping” (ibid.) and, at the same time, result in new cohabitations and entanglements.

II. Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. “Shaping the Ephemeral in and out of the Field: Methodological Inbetweens as Tools for Disentanglement.” *Visual Ethnography* 14, no. 2 (2025).

<https://www.vejjournal.org/index.php/vejjournal/article/view/407>.

In this article I address how my art practice helped unveil complex relationships and entanglements that emerged while doing ethnographic fieldwork and outside of it, when I felt ethnographic methods or my skill as a young researcher were insufficient. Analyzing the content of an exhibition I made nine months after my return from the field, as well as processes behind the works in it, from the phase of data collection to the phase of installation, I talk about approaching complexities and emotions, states of reverie, as well as sense-making practices.

The article opens with the presentation of the site of research – the site of a recent disaster in the Roya valley in France, just over the border from Italy – that had been known to me before the disaster. Witnessing the change in the landscape, the pain of people who had experienced the disaster, traces of histories of territorial separations, and the grief of humans that try to enter France and are pushed out to wander in a limbo of illegality and violence, made me feel incapable of absorbing, responding, analyzing and understanding what is the field and what is my role within it. As a response to this feeling, I retreated from data collection for a while to explore and experience the landscape via artistic methods. Experience, as affect and emotions, however, was hardly translatable in writing, therefore I asked myself how am I to work (methodologically and otherwise) with the materials that I brought back from the field to justly represent the complexity of entangled worlds I experienced or was enmeshed with(in). My solution to this question was an art exhibition that included a variety of materials – sounds collected, photographs and videos of clouds and mist done on the mountaintops, a fragment of bone found on the riverbed, reflections of the testimonies of people on the move and a growing kombucha SCOBY.

In the article, I take into account discussions concerning the engagement of artistic methods in anthropology and vice versa, and co-respond with them. I describe the steps from the fieldwork to the exhibition. I describe the state of reverie (Maček 2023), which allows the mind to flow freely, which was induced, in my case, by experiences within cloud and fog, which I found grounding. This state allowed for a connection of water droplets, water as a physical matter the mist consists of, to the hyperobject (Morton 2013) of climate crisis. This narrative – of water in the mist connecting to the evaporation of the world oceans due to

climate disruptions – needed to have a story of people on the move incorporated into it. Stories of migration are an important part of this valley, as they are part of the stories that started unfolding with colonial expansions. These stories are expanding over scales of time and space, as I show in the article, and are part of stories and life-cycles that overlap and collide, co-constituting, just as SCOBY in kombucha, an entangled landscape.

III. Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. “Shepherding in France: The Ambiguities of Caring for Nonhuman Animals in the Roya Valley, France.” *Journal of Ecological Anthropology* 26, no. 1. (2025).

<https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jea/vol26/iss1/>.

In this text I look at the care relationships that humans – shepherds, villagers, and others – have towards sheep, wolves, and the landscape of the Roya Valley in the Maritime Alps. Through an ethnography of connection (Ogden et al. 2013) I look into how human lives intersect with the lives of farmed nonhuman animals – sheep, with the wild nonhuman animals – wolves, the landscape in which these encounters take place, and state regulation. I discuss the contradictory nature of care relationships (Tronto 1998) in the relational nexus of human-sheep, wherein the shepherds mean they “care” for their sheep. However, the daily practice of animal husbandry – even transhumant farming in the mountains – means exerting control upon the bodies of the sheep, denying them the possibility to care for their young, the slaughtering the lambs, etc.

I further discuss caring and cultivation notions in a landscape that I identify as a “contact zone” (Pratt 2007, 6) which most often coincides with the edges of settlements. It is in these zones and in situations of contact that different relations to the nonhuman emerge. Some others, in particular those that are involved in organic farming, climate activism and some persons involved in animal husbandry, question the latter approach and are aiming to live bearing in mind and responding to the co-constituted and co-dependent nature of life.

Further I write about the landscape of the Roya Valley and its complex status between wilderness and not. It is shaped by human activity, which is particularly visible in the terracing of the slopes. It is also altered by nonhuman animals, plants and the climate, which co-produce the landscape in various ways. Those humans that do now acknowledge their part in a multispecies enmeshment choose to identify clear borders between that which they define as cultured and wild landscape(s). Whereas transgressions of these borders are allowed for human animals, they are not tolerated from the part of most nonhuman ones. Wild animals that descend towards human habitations in search of food because of both drought and the threat of wolves, are treated as a nuisance and not seen as in need of care. And even in cases where they are, such as in the case of hunters feeding the deer (a practice they introduced in order to have some game to hunt, as was explained by a hunter from a local hunting association), the care is utilitarian (the deer are deemed the hunters’ property).

Care towards wolves in this valley but also elsewhere in France is a source of conflict. A species protected under the Bern convention across Europe, the wolf has returned to France in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the almost 50 years since it has returned from local extinction, the transhumant shepherds that work in mountain pastures have begun losing their animals, in particular sheep, to the growing number of wolves. Many feel that the state prioritizes wolves above its human subjects, which the state is expected to care for. Policy makers are deemed incapable of coming up with adequate measures because they are remote, not part of this territory, and not in the know of it. The anger, which might seem directed towards the wolves, I note, is also connected to the years of precarity of herding practices. Care (from the part of the state) is political, or rather politically and economically contingent.

I close the article with a summing up of care modes that I present in the article: managing, regulating, controlling, and invite us to reevaluate how we, human animals, care for whom.

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SUMMARY

This research project is situated in the Roya Valley, France, in the aftermath of storm Alex, that struck in 2020, a disaster which has had a lasting impact on the inhabitants of the valley and beyond. I explore relationships between humans, nonhuman animals, and landscapes in the Roya Valley, and focus on how interspecies and intergenerational interrelatedness contribute to perceptions of disaster and climate change. I employ a multi-sited and multitemporal ethnographic approach, using a variety of methods including participant observation, interviews, sensory ethnography, and artistic practices, alongside historical and environmental analysis, to look into diverse multispecies practices of care, adaptation, and relationality and to explore how vulnerabilities in the region both predated the disaster and were exacerbated by it. Employing, among other concepts, Marilyn Strathern's definition of relationships, Marshall Sahlins' concept of mutuality of being, the Foucauldian concept of heterotopia, and the concept of care as defined by Puig de la Bellacasa, I posit that personhood extends beyond human actors to encompass a diverse array of nonhuman participants in the landscape.

The three articles that constitute the body of the thesis examine the valley through three different lenses, exploring complementary topics that together elucidate an environmental history and present of the Roya Valley. In article I, I explore how heterotopias maintained by the inhabitants of the valley show different sets of relationships in and through space and time, and speak to a coexistence of multiple worlds, linking to the concept of pluriverse. In it I explore the tensions and frictions between the "hippies", "newcomers" to the valley, and those "indigenous"; the attraction that the valley has on those seeking connectivity and enmeshment; and the possibility of a plant heterotopia. I further explore the question of more-than-human relationships within the valley in article III, which focuses on care practices for sheep and wolves. I show how the practices and discourses they are founded upon connect to local and national politics and propagate particular understandings of what it means to care for the environment, how the politics of care are instrumentalized by the state, and how diverging discourses of care, including those that define what is worth caring for, contribute to social frictions. These two articles mostly focus on the practices of peasants, a class I define in detail in the introductory article to the broader text, which is strongly focused on conveying the social and environmental history of the valley and in which practices of *paysan.nes* serve as a significant context. Article II, in contrast, is focused on methodological considerations when working in the field of environmental and climate anthropology. In order to address the complexity of researching within the climate crisis and the complications attendant to being in an emotionally charged, post-disaster context, I detail how I turned to the methods of my artistic practice for guidance and support. I detail how these methods helped me to ground myself in the sometimes overwhelming situation of the field, while the process of creating an exhibition based on and

with some of the materials I collected in the field helped me to coherently narrate the interdependent nature of climate disaster.

Taken as a whole, this work shows how emergent and dynamic relationships in the Roya Valley are characterized by a web of respons(e)-abilities, care, and interspecies interdependencies, which contribute to both personal and collective experiences of disaster. As the discussion unfolds, I emphasize the significance of interrelational practices of attunement and responsiveness in attending to increasingly inevitable environmental challenges. I aim throughout to enhance understandings of the intricate relational constellations that define human experience in a changing world, and to highlight the transformative potentials of reimagining more-than-human relationships. Though this study I propose that natural disasters should be approached in a holistic manner, that includes attention to: the environmental history of the specific landscape, practices of land use and construction, the politics surrounding and defining those practices, the impact of local and global flows on the advent of disaster, and understandings of human and more-than-human interrelatedness, mutualities and response-abilities.

KOKKUVÕTE

Suhted kriisi kontekstis: maa, aeg ja generatiivsus Roya Orus

See uurimisprojekt keskendub Roya orule Prantsusmaal pärast seda 2020. aastal tabanud tormi Alex, mis mõjutas oru ja selle ümbruskaudseid elanikke püsivalt. Uurin Roya oru inimeste, mitte-inim-loomade ja maastike suhteid ning keskendun sellele, kuidas liikide- ja põlvkondadevaheline vastastikseos aitab kaasa katastroofide ja kliimamuutuste tajumisele. Rakendan selleks mitmepaikset ja multitemporaalset etnograafilist lähenemist ja erinevaid meetodeid, sealhulgas osalusvaatlust, intervjuud, sensoorset etnograafiat ja loomingulisi praktikaid koos ajaloolise ja keskkonnaanalüüsiga. Nende kaudu uurin erinevaid mitmeliigilisi hoole, kohanemise ja seotuse praktikaid, ja seda, kuidas piirkonna haavatavused nii eelnesid katastroofile kui süvenesid selle tõttu. Toetudes muuhulgas Marilyn Stratherni sotsiaalsete suhete definitsioonile, Marshall Sahlini arusaamale olemise vastastikkusest, Foucault' heterotoopia mõistele ja Puig de la Bellacasa hooleteooriale, väidan, et isiksus ei ole ainult inimtegutsejatel, vaid laial hulgal maastiku mitte-inim osalejatest.

Väitekirja põhiosa moodustavad kolm artiklit käsitlevad orgu kolmest eri perspektiivist, keskendudes teemadele, mis üksteist täiendades selgitavad Roya oru keskkonnaajalugu ja -olevikku. Esimeses artiklis uurin, kuidas oru elanike ülal peetavad heterotoopiad viitavad erinevatele aja ning ruumiga piiritletud, kuid ka aja- ja ruumiülestele suhetele, ning annavad tunnistust erinevate maailmade koos eksisteerimisest, mis seostub pluriversumi kontseptsiooniga. Sealjuures uurin pingeid ja hõõrdumisi "hipide", oru "uustulnukate" ja "põliselanike" vahel; oru veetlust neile, kes otsivad ühendust ja lõimumist, ning taimede heterotoopia võimalikkust. Enam-kui-inimsuhete küsimust orus lahkan lähemalt kolmandas artiklis, mis keskendub lammaste ja huntidega seonduvatele hoolepraktikatele. Näitan, kuidas praktikad ja diskursused, mille need põhinevad, on seotud kohaliku ja riikliku poliitikaga ja levitavad teatud arusaamu sellest, mida tähendab keskkonnahool; kuidas riik hoolepoliitikat instrumentaliseerib, ja kuidas erinevad hoolediskursused, sealhulgas need, mis sätestavad, mis väärib hoolt, panustavad ühiskondlikesse pingetesse. Need kaks artiklit tegelevad peamiselt talupidajate praktikatega. Talupidajad on klass, mille defineerin oru ühiskondlikule ja keskkonnaajaloole keskenduvas katusepeatükis, kus talupidajate praktikad on oluliseks kontekstiks. Teises artiklis seevastu keskendun metodoloogilistele kaalutlustele keskkonna- ja kliimaantropoloogia valdkonnas töötamisel. Kliimakriisi keskmes uurimistöõ läbiviimise keerukuse ja katastroofijärgses emotsionaalselt laetud keskkonnas viibimisega seotud raskuste käsitlemiseks kirjeldan üksikasjalikult, kuidas leidsin juhatus ja tuge oma kunstipraktika meetoditest, ning kuidas need aitasid mul vahel väljal tekkinud üle jõu käivates olukordades ennast maandada, samas kui välitöödel ja nende käigus kogutud materjalidel põhineva näituse loomine aitas mul luua sidusa narratiivi kliimakatastroofi mitmiksoõltuvast loomusest.

Tervikuna näitab see töö, kuidas Roya orus tekkivad ja dünaamilised suhted koonduvad võrgustikku, mis koosneb *vastu*-tusest, hoolest ja liikidevahelistest vastastiksõltuvustest, mis mõjutavad nii isiklikke kui kollektiivseid katastroofi-kogemusi. Arutelu käigus rõhutan üha vältimatute keskkonnaprobleemidega tegelemise puhul omavahel seotud kohanemis- ja reageerimispraktikate olulisust. Minu läbiv eesmärk on parandada arusaamist muutivas maailmas inimkogemust defineerivatest keerukatest asjaolude kokkusattumustest ning tuua esile enamkui-inimsuhete ümbermõtestamise transformatiivset potentsiaali. See uurimistöö on ettepanek läheneda loodusõnnetustele holistlikult, pöörates tähelepanu konkreetse maastiku keskkonnaajaloole; maakasutuse ja -ehituse tavadele, neid praktikaid ümbritsevatele ja defineerivale poliitikale; katastroofi tekkel seda mõjutavatele kohalike ja globaalsete voogudele ning arusaamadele inimeste ja enamkui-inimeste vastastikseostele, nende vahelistele ühisosadele ja *vastu*-tusele.

PUBLICATIONS

PUBLICATIONS

PUBLISHED IN PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS

Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. "Sintonía, o reconocer lo que no parece extraordinario." *Estudios Posthumanos* 7 (2025).

<https://www.estudiosposthumanos.com.ar/2025-materialismos>.

Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. "Shaping the Ephemeral in and out of the Field: Methodological Inbetweens as Tools for Disentanglement." *Visual Ethnography* 14, no. 2 (2025). <https://www.vejjournal.org/index.php/vejjournal/article/view/407>

Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. "Shepherding in France: The Ambiguities of Caring for Nonhuman Animals in the Roya Valley, France." *Journal of Ecological Anthropology* 26, no. 1 (2025).

<https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jea/vol26/iss1/1/>.

Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. "La Roya, the Dream: Heterotopia and Potentialities of a Storm." *Re-Visiones* 13 (2023).

<http://www.re-visiones.net/index.php/RE-VISIONES/article/view/533>

SPECIFIC RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS IN PEER REVIEWED BOOKS

Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. "Attunement, or to Recognise the Unspectacular." In *State of the Art – Elements for Critical Thinking and Doing*, edited by Erich Berger, Mari Keski-Korsu, Marietta Radomska, and Line Thastum. Bioart Society, 2023.

ARTICLES IN OTHER JOURNALS AND NEWSPAPERS

Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. "A Cloud Has a Shadow." *As a Journal* 3 (2022).

<https://asajournal.lt/articles/a-cloud-has-a-shadow/>.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. "Ants in the Death World: an invitation to think the invisible others." 8th International Animal Futures Conference: Animal Advocacy Against the Grain? Traditions and Transformations in and around the Movement. Tallinn and online, June 17 2023.

<https://loomus.ee/conference-programme/>.

Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. "RE:constructing: relationships after the storm". Annual Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK Conference 2023: An Unwell World? Anthropology in a Speculative Mode. London and online, April 11, 2023. <https://theasa.org/conferences/asa2023/programme#12889>.

Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. "Listening to Landscapes." 17th EASA Biennial Conference: Transformation, Hope and the Commons, Queens University Belfast, 27 2022. <https://easaonline.org/easa-conference/easa2022/easa2022-programme/#11448.66256>.

Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. "Love. Or things I do with strong emotions." Annual Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK Conference 2021: Responsibility. Online, April 2, 2021. <https://nomadit.co.uk/conference/asa2021/p/10254>.

- Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. “Green is not a colour.” The 5th Open Fields Conference: Ecodata. October 10, 2020. Online and Riga. <https://festival2020.rixc.org/>.
- Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. “Learning togetherness and caring (while the planet burns).” Extraction: Tracing the Veins. Co-Hosted by Massey University Political Ecology Research Centre (PERC) and Wageningen University Centre for Space, Place and Society (CSPS). Online, July 2020. <https://perc.ac.nz/wordpress/futures-and-post-extractive-imaginaries/>.
- Pupkevičiūtė, Daina. “Sustainable Practices in Environmental Activism.” Political Ecologies of the Far Right. Human Ecology Division of Lund University. Lund, November 16, 2019. <https://thezetkincollective.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/pefr-programme-final-corrections-14-november.pdf>

INTERVIEWS RELATED TO RESEARCH ACTIVITIES (POPULAR SCIENCE)

- “Muzika nykstančiai planetai: studijoje su Daina Dieva.” NARA. September 4, 2024. <https://nara.lt/lt/articles-lt/daina-dieva>
- “Homo Cultus. There and Back. How do Humans, Non-Human Animals and Landscape Experience Climate Crisis in the Alps? A Talk with Daina Pupkevičiūtė.” Lithuanian Radio and Television. 14 July, 2023. <https://www.lrt.lt/radioteka/irasas/2000285017/homo-cultus-ten-ir-atgal-kaip-zmones-zverys-ir-krastovaizdis-isgyvena-klimato-krize-alpese-pokalbis-su-daina-pupkeviciute?season=%2Fradioteka%2Flaida%2Fhomo-cultus-ten-ir-atgal%2F2023>.

SELECT RESEARCH PROJECTS

2024 Feb – 2025 June

Without Restrictions. Applied research project with the aim to train and include young people with mobility disabilities in Latvia and Lithuania into the processes of researching experience of (lack of) inclusion and participation through (failed) accessible infrastructural solutions. Main method: photo-voice. Project run with Tavs Atbalsts NGO (LV), funded by Erasmus+.

Role: researcher, coordinator (Lithuanian actions), outreach strategist, publication editor.

2023 Sept – 2024 Feb

Strengthening inclusivity in work environment: case study of the experience of LGBTQIA+ persons in the work environment of a major Lithuanian company. Goals: identifying open and hidden discrimination practices and proposing a strategy to address the issues identified. Methods: quantitative (anonymous questionnaires) and qualitative (interviews).

Role: researcher.

2023

Advocacy: a public letter to the Lithuanian Art Museum regarding the plans to exhibit collectors' items of unclear origin as an exhibition of "Art from East Asia, New Guinea and Aborigines of Australia", explaining the need for a decolonial perspective in preparing, communicating and exhibiting such items, and requesting to follow the guidelines in international museology of renouncing the practice of exhibiting artifacts of ritualistic origin without the consent of the people these artifacts belong to.

Role: initiator, researcher, writer, communicator.

2022

Research for a documentary film "The Rich Also Cry" (development stage, production company "Just a Moment"). Goal: evaluating the spread and various impacts of soap opera watching in the population of early independence in Lithuania. Methods: focus groups and individual interviews.

Role: researcher.

2021–present

Designing and conducting research to evaluate possible impacts and outcomes of visual communication methods used in high school education. Commissioned by MO museum of modern art. Methods: quantitative and qualitative.

Role: researcher.

2020

Advocacy: a public letter to the National Education Agency requesting a revision of geography schoolbooks which had eurocentric, racist and xenophobic representations of people of non-European origin.

Role: co-author with the colleagues of Anthropolos.

2019–present

Designing and carrying out anthropology workshops for various age groups:

- "*Anthropology as a Monstrous Practice*" and "Freakish body: the changing views on the (non)normativity and the body in circus in XX–XXI age", workshops for youth (15–17) as part of summer school. Commissioned by Sapiegu Rumai (Vilnius CAC), 2025.
- "*Krasnūcha (city district) as a character*" and "Senses and research: walk around *Krasnūcha*": urban anthropology workshops for people of various age, based on artistic and sensory practices. Commissioned by Vilnius Museum, 2024.
- "Food system and climate crisis" (designed for high school children between 10 and 18 years old; various adaptations have been designed and led for adult groups; 20+ workshops); initially (2019–2020) funded by Lithuanian Consumers Institute project aimed at food waste reduction, later commissioned by various schools and festivals; still running (on request).

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS (artistic practice and research work)

- 2024 *Culture Moves Europe* mobility grant, funded by the *European Union* and *Goethe-Institut*, for the artistic research project on ecocide in Ukraine
- 2023 *Lithuanian Culture Council* mobility grant for a residency period in *Maaajaam* art residency
- 2021 *Dora Pluss* doctoral dissertation fieldwork mobility grantee (funded by *European Regional Development Fund* and *Estonian Government*)
- 2020 *Lithuanian Culture Council* grant for sound research and installation *betyles erdves (silence-less spaces)*
- 2018 *Nordic Culture Point* artist mobility grant to perform in *Paikkari Performance Art Festival* Finland
- 2018 *Nordic Culture Point* artist mobility grant to perform in Stockholm R1 art space
- 2016 *Lithuanian Culture Council* grant for development and production of performance project *Liquid Presence* for the Bristol Biennial 2016
- 2015 *Nordic Culture Point* artist mobility grant to participate in *Nordic Summer University Symposium* in Tallinn, Estonia
- 2015 *Vilnius Academy of Arts* grant for the mobility and performance in Leipzig, Germany
- 2015 *Lithuanian Culture Council* grant for the production of performance *Blank: a Provocation for 3 Rolls of Paper and a Performer* in Leipzig, Germany
- 2014 *Kaunas Municipality* grant for performance/exchange in London, UK
- 2014 *Vilnius Academy of Arts* grant for performances to be presented in DE and UK
- 2014 Educational grant from the *Lithuanian Ministry of Culture* to participate in IPA workshops, Istanbul
- 2013 Young artists' project grant from *Kaunas Municipality* to organize performance art workshops and lectures in the framework of the International Performance Art Festival CREATurE Live Art
- 2012 Young artists' project grant from *Kaunas Municipality* for performance art workshops for young artists in the framework of the International Performance Art Festival CREATurE Live Art
- 2008 *French Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports* grant for youth projects – grant for short documentary film *Us, Others*

MEMBERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- 2021–present member of European Association of Social Anthropologists
- 2016 granted the artist status by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania

ELULOOKIRJELDUS

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Email: dainapupkeviciute@yahoo.com

Teadlasprofiilid veebis:
https://www.etis.ee/CV/Daina_Pupkeviit/eng
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3668-1090>

HARIDUS

- 2020–praegu Etnoloogia doktorant, Tartu Ülikool
2019 Sotsiaalanthropoloogia magistrikraad (MSc), Vytautas Magnuse Ülikool
2010 Kvalifikatsioon audiovisuaalsetes tehnoloogiates, Scuola APM di Saluzzo
2006 Bakalaureus leedu filoloogias ja võõrkeeles (itaalia keel), Vilniuse Ülikool

VALITUD TÖÖKOGEMUS

- 2019–praegu Teadur, Applied Anthropology Organization Anthropos
2015–praegu Juhataja, Performance Art Organization, MTÜ
2011–praegu Kunstnik, kuraator, teadur, kirjanik ja õppejõud kunstipõhises uurimistöös, heli- ja visuaalkunstis
2024–2025 Teadur (fellow), *in:herit.heritage in transformation*, BMBF rahastatud Käte Hamburger Kolleg, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
2022–2024 Nooremteadur, Institute of Cultural Research, University of Tartu
2022–2023 Abilektor, kursus Communicating Science doktorantidele, University of Tartu
2018–2022 Kuraator ja korraldaja, Matters. Platform for Industrial Culture, osa projektist Kaunas 2022
2016 Lektor, kursus Management for Young Artists magistriõppe tudengitele, Vilnius Academy of Arts
2014–2015 Producersent, Lithuanian Pavilion, Venice Biennial
2013–2015 Koordinaator, Nida Art Colony, Vilnius Academy of Arts
2011–2018 Kuraator ja kaaskorraldaja, International Performance Art Festival CREATurE Live Art
2010–2015 Vabakutseline operaator (DOP), monteerija ja filmiproductsendi assistent

PUBLIKATSIOONID

AVALDATUD TEADUSARTIKLID RETSENSEERITUD AJAKIRJADES

Pupkevičiūtē, Daina. "Sintonía, o reconocer lo que no parece extraordinario." *Estudios Posthumanos* 7 (2025).

<https://www.estudiosposthumanos.com.ar/2025-materialismos>.

Pupkevičiūtē, Daina. "Shaping the Ephemeral in and out of the Field: Methodological Inbetweens as Tools for Disentanglement." *Visual Ethnography* 14, no. 2 (2025).

<https://www.vejournal.org/index.php/vejournal/article/view/407>

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<https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jea/vol26/iss1/1/>.

Pupkevičiūtē, D. (2023). La Roya, the Dream: Heterotopia and Potentialities of a Storm. *Re-Visiones*, 13.

<http://www.re-visiones.net/index.php/RE-VISIONES/article/view/533>

TEADUSPUBLIKATSIOONID RETSENSEERITUD RAAMATUTES

Pupkevičiūtē, D. (2023). Attunement, or to Recognise the Unspectacular. In E. Berger, M. Keski-Korsu, M. Radomska & L. Thastum (toim.), *State of the Art – Elements for Critical Thinking and Doing*. Bioart Society.

ARTIKLID MUUDES VÄLJAANNETES (AJAKIRJAD, AJALEHED)

Pupkevičiūtē, D. (2022). A Cloud Has a Shadow. *As a Journal*, 3.

<https://asajournal.lt/articles/a-cloud-has-a-shadow/>.

KONVERENTSIETTEKANDED

Pupkevičiūtē, D. (17. juuni 2023). Ants in the Death World: an invitation to think the invisible others. 8th International Animal Futures Conference: *Animal Advocacy Against the Grain? Traditions and Transformations in and around the Movement*. Tallinn ja veebis. <https://loomus.ee/conference-programme/>.

Pupkevičiūtē, D. (11. aprill 2023). RE:constructing: relationships after the storm. *Annual Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK Conference 2023: An Unwell World? Anthropology in a Speculative Mode*. London ja veebis. <https://theasa.org/conferences/asa2023/programme#12889>.

Pupkevičiūtē, D. (27. juuli 2022). Listening to Landscapes. *17th EASA Biennial Conference: Transformation, Hope and the Commons*. Queens University Belfast. <https://easaonline.org/easa-conference/easa2022/easa2022-programme/#11448.66256>.

Pupkevičiūtē, D. (2. aprill 2021). Love. Or things I do with strong emotions. *Annual Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK Conference 2021: Responsibility*. Veebis. <https://nomadit.co.uk/conference/asa2021/p/10254>.

Pupkevičiūtė, D. (10. oktoober 2020). Green is not a colour. *The 5th Open Fields Conference: Ecodata*. Veebis ja Riia. <https://festival2020.rixc.org/>.

Pupkevičiūtė, D. (juuli 2020). Learning togetherness and caring (while the planet burns). *Extraction: Tracing the Veins*. Massey University Political Ecology Research Centre (PERC) ja Wageningen University Centre for Space, Place and Society (CSPS). Veebis. <https://perc.ac.nz/wordpress/futures-and-post-extractive-imaginaries/>

Pupkevičiūtė, D. (16. november 2019). Sustainable Practices in Environmental Activism. *Political Ecologies of the Far Right*. Human Ecology Division, Lund University. Lund.

<https://thezetkincollective.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/pefr-programme-final-corrections-14-november.pdf>

POPULAARTEADUSLIKUD INTERVJUUD TEADUSTEgevuse TEEMADEL

Muzika nykstančiai planetai: studijoje su Daina Dieva. (4. september 2024). *NARA*. <https://nara.lt/lt/articles-lt/daina-dieva>

Homo Cultus. There and Back. How do Humans, Non-Human Animals and Landscape Experience Climate Crisis in the Alps? A Talk with Daina Pupkevičiūtė. (14. juuli 2023). *Lithuanian Radio and Television*.

<https://www.lrt.lt/radioteka/irasas/2000285017/homo-cultus-ten-ir-atgal-kaip-zmones-zverys-ir-krastovaizdis-iskyvena-klimato-krize-alpese-pokalbis-su-daina-pupkeviciute?season=%2Fradioteka%2Flaida%2Fhomo-cultus-ten-ir-atgal%2F2023>.

VALI UURIMISPROGREKTID

2024 veebruar–2025 juuni

Without Restrictions. Rakendusuringu projekt, mille eesmärk on kaasata ja koolitada noori liikumispuudega inimesi Lätis ja Leedus, et nad saaksid osaleda (eba)ligipääsetavate infrastruktuurilahenduste kaudu kogetud kaasatuse ja osaluse (puudumise) uurimises. Peamine meetod: photo-voice. Projekti viib läbi MTÜ Tavs Atbalsts (LV), rahastab Erasmus+.

Roll: teadur, koordinaator (Leedu tegevused), sidustrateeg, publikatsiooni toimetaja.

2023 september–2024 veebruar

Strengthening inclusivity in work environment. Uuring juhtiva Leedu ettevõtte LGBTQIA+ töötajate kogemuse kohta töökeskkonnas. Eesmärk: kaardistada avalikud ja varjatud diskrimineerimispraktikad ning pakkuda strateegia nende probleemide lahendamiseks. Meetodid: kvantitatiivne (anonüümsed küsimustikud) ja kvalitatiivne (intervjuud).

Roll: teadur.

2023

Kaitsetegevus: avalik pöördumine Leedu Kunstimuseumi poole seoses kavaga eksponeerida ebaselge päritoluga kolleksionääri esemeid näitusel “Art from East Asia, New Guinea and Aborigines of Australia”. Kirjas selgitati dekoloniaalse perspektiivi vajadust selliste esemete ettevalmistamisel, kommukeerimisel ja eksponeerimisel ning paluti järgida rahvusvahelise museoloogia juhiseid loobuda rituaalse päritoluga esemete eksponeerimisest ilma nendele kuuluvate rahvaste nõusolekuta.

Roll: algataja, teadur, autor, kommunikaator.

2022

Uuring dokumentaalfilmi *The Rich Also Cry* jaoks (arendusfaas, tootja Just a Moment). Eesmärk: hinnata seebiooperite vaatamise levikut ja erinevaid mõjusid Leedu taasiseseisvumise algusaastate elanikkonnas. Meetodid: fookusgrupid ja individuaalsed intervjuud.

Roll: teadur.

2021–praegu

Uuringu kavandamine ja läbiviimine, et hinnata gümnaasiumihariduses kasutatavate visuaalse kommunikatsiooni meetodite võimalikke mõjusid ja tulemusi. Tellija: MO kaasaegse kunsti muuseum. Meetodid: kvantitatiivne ja kvalitatiivne.

Roll: teadur.

2020

Kaitsetegevus: avalik pöördumine Riikliku Haridusagentuuri poole geograafia-õpikute sisu muutmiseks, kuna neis esines eurotsentrilisi, rassistlikke ja ksenofoobseid kujutusi mitte-Euroopa päritolu inimeste kohta.

Roll: kaastautor koos Anthropos kolleegidega.

2019–praegu

Antropoloogiätöötubade kavandamine ja läbiviimine eri vanuserühmadele:

- *Anthropology as a Monstrous Practice* ja *Freakish body: the changing views on the (non)normativity and the body in circus in XX–XXI age* – töötoad noortele (15–17) suvekooli raames. Tellija: Sapiegu Rumai (Vilnius CAC), 2025.
- *Krasnūcha (city district) as a character* ja *Senses and research: walk around Krasnūcha* – linnantropoloogia töötoad eri vanuses osalejatele, põhinevad kunstilistel ja sensorsetel praktikatel. Tellija: Vilniuse Muuseum, 2024.
- *Food system and climate crisis* – töötuba gümnaasiumiõpilastele (vanuses 10–18); erinevate kohandustega täiskasvanud osalejatele (20+ töötuba). Alguses (2019–2020) rahastas Leedu Tarbijainstituudi projekt toidujäätmete vähendamiseks, hiljem tellisid erinevad koolid ja festivalid; jätkub tänaseni (tellimus-põhiselt).

TOETUSED JA STIPENDIUMID (kunstiline praktika ja uurimistöö)

- 2024 Culture Moves Europe mobility grant (funded by the European Union and Goethe-Institut) kunstilise uurimisprojekti jaoks ökotsiidi teemal Ukrainas.
- 2023 Lithuanian Culture Council mobility grant residentuuriperioodiks Maajaama kunstiresidentuuris.
- 2021 Dora Pluss doctoral dissertation fieldwork mobility grantee (funded by European Regional Development Fund and Estonian Government).
- 2020 Lithuanian Culture Council grant heliuurimuse ja installatsiooni *betyles erdves (silence-less spaces)* jaoks.
- 2018 Nordic Culture Point artist mobility grant osalemiseks Paikkari Performance Art Festivalil, Soome.
- 2018 Nordic Culture Point artist mobility grant esinemiseks Stockholmi R1 kunstiruumis.
- 2016 Lithuanian Culture Council grant etendusprojekti *Liquid Presence* loomiseks ja esitamiseks Bristol Biennial 2016 raames.
- 2015 Nordic Culture Point artist mobility grant osalemiseks Nordic Summer University sümposiumil Tallinnas, Eestis.
- 2015 Vilnius Academy of Arts grant mobiilsuseks ja esinemiseks Leipzigis, Saksamaal.
- 2015 Lithuanian Culture Council grant etenduse *Blank: a Provocation for 3 Rolls of Paper and a Performer* loomiseks ja esitamiseks Leipzigis, Saksamaal.
- 2014 Kaunas Municipality grant esinemiseks/vahetuseks Londonis, Ühendkuningriigis.
- 2014 Vilnius Academy of Arts grant etenduste esitamiseks Saksamaal ja Ühendkuningriigis.
- 2014 Educational grant from the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture osalemiseks IPA töötubades Istanbulis.
- 2013 Young artists' project grant from Kaunas Municipality performance'i töötubade ja loengute korraldamiseks rahvusvahelise performance'i festivali *CREATurE Live Art* raames.
- 2012 Young artists' project grant from Kaunas Municipality performance'i töötubade korraldamiseks rahvusvahelise performance'i festivali *CREATurE Live Art* raames.
- 2008 French Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sports grant for youth projects – lühidokumentaalfilmi *Us, Others* tootmiseks.

KUULUVUS ERIALAÜHINGUTESSE

- 2021–praegu Liige, *European Association of Social Anthropologists*.
- 2016 Kunstniku staatus omistatud *Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania* poolt.

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