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LIVING WITH MOSQUITOES

ABSTRACT

This paper joins the debate on multispecies encounters in tourism by focusing on a hitherto overlooked animal: the mosquito. Drawing from feminist new materialist literature, it works towards a post-anthropocentric approach to exploring the narratives performed around the mosquito–tourist encounter and to casting a transformative narrative – living with mosquitoes – that recognises tourists and mosquitoes as fellow travellers. We use a memory-work method to generate our empirical materials, complemented by media materials. Our analysis details, via two thematised stories, the trans-corporeal nature of the mosquito–tourist encounter and the complexity of ethical relations – discussed in terms of violence and care – involved in it. The study enriches understanding of multispecies encounters and multispecies ethics in tourism.

Keywords: multispecies encounters, mosquitoes, new materialism, narrative, ethics

INTRODUCTION

If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito.
- Dalai Lama

A few years ago, when trekking in a national park in British Columbia, the first author saw the above saying on a plaque attached to a bench. It threw her into childhood memories from when she was camping in northern Norway with her family; she remembered how her mom kept the whole family awake during the night while trying to kill a mosquito. Mosquitoes certainly made a difference to their familial travel experiences, and they continue to do so while she travels in various places for various purposes today. In this paper, we join the debate on multispecies encounters in tourism by employing mosquito-related stories of our travels as our primary empirical material. In casting our narrative, it is the ethical message implied in the Dalai Lama's words that drives us most. With the help of a tiny mosquito, we seek to make a difference in the currently rather limited and human-motivated narrative of multispecies encounters in tourism. We use 'mosquito' as a catch-all term for various types of mosquitoes that do not transmit diseases and that are common especially in Northern Europe.

There has been a surge of interest in exploring multispecies encounters across the social sciences (e.g. Haraway, 2016; Lorimer, 2015), and tourism studies are no exception. To illustrate, in the CABI Leisure Tourism database, a search for the keywords 'animals' and 'tourism' produces a total of 6470 results. To date, most of these studies have concentrated on exploring large animals, such as whales, tigers, elephants, penguins, or polar bears (Duffy, 2014; Khanom & Buckley, 2015; Rodger et al., 2009; Ziegler et al. 2018; Yudina & Grimwood, 2016), animals that produce tourist experiences, like mules or sledge dogs (Cousquer & Allison, 2012; Granås, 2018; Haanpää, Salmela, Garcia-Rosell & Äijälä, 2019; Lindberg & Dorte, 2016), or pets accompanying tourists in their travels (Carr, 2017). The growing centralisation of animals in tourism studies is valuable, no doubt, as it unsettles the predominant practice of theorising tourism encounters merely as a human phenomenon (Gren & Huijbens, 2012, p. 156).

However, the narrative produced by this body of work merits critical reflection. It appears to concentrate on ‘flagship species’ – animals conceived of as charismatic by human standards (Lorimer, 2015) – or those that are beneficial for humans in an economic or social sense. In particular, the existing literature is problematically, yet perhaps not intentionally, reifying the hierarchy between big organisms and smaller, more delicate forms of life (Hird, 2009; Johnson, 2015; Lemelin, 2007, 2009, 2012; Raffles, 2011; Young-Sook, Lawton & Weaver, 2012). Animals that are tiny, however, have recently entered tourism studies. Lemelin’s (2007, 2009, 2012) seminal work on human–insect interactions highlights the significant role of insects in tourism and recreation, discussing for instance the ways colourful butterflies and dragonflies attract visitors and inspire the creation of collections. Benali and Ren (2019), for their part, break ground by including tiny pests in tourism studies, placing a focus on the modest and often overlooked stories of everyday encounters with lice in volunteer tourism.

We continue these important openings by exploring mosquitoes. To date, these tiny creatures are either excluded from, or narrowly written into, tourism studies, even though they play an inevitable part in the ways in which many touristic areas are experienced, known, and represented. The few tourism studies that do recognise the presence of mosquitoes include, for instance, an ethnography on tourists sleeping in Lappish nature (Rantala & Valtonen, 2014), which points to the way mosquitoes prevent people from sleeping (p. 23), and a study on a conservation area in Northern Australia (Ryan, Hughes & Chirgwin, 2000) that discusses how walkers are encouraged to use body-covering clothes and insect repellent to cope with mosquitoes (p. 152). Another contribution mentions itchy mosquito bites as one of the troubles that hypersensitise tourists’ experience (Jensen, 2016, p. 241; see also Richter, 2003, p. 343 for mosquito-borne diseases).

As these examples suggest, the narrative prevalent in tourism casts mosquitoes as non-attractive, annoying, and troublesome creatures to be avoided – or killed – without much ethical thought. This style of narration is troublesome from an ethical perspective. During the last few years, research on animal ethics in tourism has been gaining attention (e.g. Fennell, 2012; Haanpää et al., 2019; Shani & Pizam, 2008; Yudina & Grimwood, 2016). This body of work has employed ethical frameworks, ranging from animal welfare and rights to environmental ethics and organic approaches (Cui & Xu, 2019; Fennell, 2013; Lemelin, 2009; Shani & Pizam, 2008), to explore mainly the ethical dimensions of the usage of animals in the tourism industry for instrumental purposes, such as in wildlife-based tourism (Fennell, 2012; Hughes, 2001). In these forms of tourism, multispecies relations involve unequal power dynamics as non-human animals become subject to human values and desires (Haanpää et al., 2019, p. 9), even though their agency in shaping the tourism phenomenon is recognised (Granås, 2018; Notzke, 2019).

In our study, we employ a relational and contextual view of ethics (cf. Cui & Xu, 2019) and extend the scope of interest in multispecies relations to the mosquito – the hitherto overlooked ‘tiny animal other’. We envision a narrative (Grimwood, Stinson & King, 2019) that repositions mosquitoes as fellow earthborn creatures with which tourists share their travels, whether they like it or not. Such an endeavour is important, since tourism narratives have significant ‘worldmaking’ power (Grimwood, et al., 2019; Hollinshead, 2009; Tucker & Shelton, 2018). This is evidenced in Carr and Broon’s (2018) recent book on animal welfare and tourism. It argues that actions taken by the tourism industry, such as the removal of those animals defined as ‘pests’ (for example, mice, cockroaches, rats, and flies – and, we might add, mosquitoes) from the holiday experience, reinforce the identification of these animals as “unwanted vermin to be destroyed”, both in the minds of tourists and society in general (Carr

& Broom, 2018, p. 59; see also Fennell, 2012, p. 11). Therefore, there is a need for crafting new kinds of stories – stories of making kin (Haraway, 2016) – in both tourism theory and practice. These are stories that might be troubling and are definitely inharmonious.

To this end, we work towards a post-anthropocentric approach that recognises tourists and mosquitoes as fellow travellers. Such an approach combines narrative research (Grimwood, et al., 2019; Tucker & Shelton, 2018) with feminist new materialist literature (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Barad, 2003, 2007; Haraway, 2016) and relational and contextual ethics (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Zylinska, 2014) to explore the mosquito–tourist encounter. Since the encounter is intimately corporeal, we employ trans-corporeality (Alaimo, 2008) as our core concept, along with ethics. Our relational and contextual view on ethics considers both violence and care as crucial elements in the formation of ethical relations between tourists and mosquitoes – relations being inevitably ‘messy’. To generate empirical materials, we have applied a feminist memory-work method (Onyx & Small, 2001) by crafting stories of our memories with mosquitoes in different touristic contexts. Such a method highlights the re-working of memories through sharing, discussing, and theorising about them collectively instead of concentrating on individual biographies. We complement this material with mosquito-related media texts and online materials generated by tourists and the tourism industry.

Our analysis details, via two thematised and synthesised stories, ‘trekking during räkkä time’ and ‘the hut’, the trans-corporeal nature of mosquito–tourist encounters and the complexity of ethical relations involved in them. These stories propose the ethical significance of learning to live-with mosquitoes instead of engaging in normalised acts of killing. Altogether, our study extends the current understanding of multispecies encounters in tourism by adding these particular, tiny creatures to the research agenda – creatures commonly conceived of as unattractive while simultaneously being a significant part of common worlding with human tourists. Importantly, our study enriches theoretical and empirical explorations of multispecies ethics by suggesting a relational and contextual framework that sheds light on the messiness of ethics taking place in this common worlding. Finally, the post-anthropocentric approach we suggest opens up one possible path for addressing – and narrating – multispecies relations in their complexity in tourism contexts. Such an approach recognises the necessity of appreciating the relatedness of all earthly creatures and unsettling the human interest as first and primary when tourism is theorised, narrated, and practised.

LIVING WITH MOSQUITOES

Theorising multispecies encounters with feminist new materialism

We set out to theorise mosquito–tourist encounters with the help of feminist new materialist literature. This diverse strand of research emerged as a response to the linguistic turn that long dominated feminist theorising. Feminist new materialism aims to bring the material into feminist theory and practice, seeking a better balance between the ‘discursive’ and the ‘material’ (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008). Central in this way of thinking is that matter, whatever form it takes, is recognised as ‘an active participant in the world’s becoming’ (Barad, 2003, p. 803), entangled with other earthly creatures. It is through co-constitutive intra-action within cultural–material processes that the world comes into being (Barad, 2003, 2007). Importantly, feminist new materialism forcefully challenges the masculinist, human-centric, and dichotomist onto-epistemology that privileges *humans* over other creatures and maintains fantasies of mastery, control, and rationality (Frost, 2016; Zylinska, 2014). Instead, it

recognises the uncertain, entangled, messy, and relational character of the common worlding of earthly creatures. The current earthly crisis demands that we learn to appreciate such a complex and collective way of inhabiting this earth and develop novel ways to explore it (Haraway, 2016).

Inspired by this literature, we work towards an approach that we call post-anthropocentric. Post-anthropocentric, to us, denotes an approach to research that decentres the human as the master of the earth and recognises instead the agency of multiple others, the way all earthly creatures entangle and live together. We practice common worlding with mosquitoes, and this shared existence brings all of us earthly travellers *in*, instead of pushing either mosquitoes or humans to the margins. As relatedness with other life forms – those familiar and unfamiliar to us – is a necessity of living, relationality forms the basis of ethics in our post-anthropocentric approach. While acknowledging that our research is necessarily human driven (as we cannot escape our own humanness; see e.g. Tsing, 2015), we assert that mosquitoes are not mere ‘research objects’ to us; rather, they are fellow creatures with which we do research. The flow across bodies that make kin, not kind (Haraway, 2016) forms the type of post-anthropocentric perspective on multispecies relations from which we write – even if this kin-making might occur somewhat reluctantly for some of the bodies taking part.

The notion of trans-corporeality – thinking “across bodies” (Alaimo, 2008, p. 238) – enables us to explore the particularities of the mosquito–tourist encounter. It accords equal ethico-onto-epistemological (Barad, 2007) importance to the thin, long-legged, two-winged body of an insect typically six to 12 millimetres in length as to a human body. The human body is conceived of as mediated by continual relations with bodies of different kinds, intermeshed within what is called ‘nature’ or ‘environment’, being ultimately inseparable from them (Alaimo, 2008, p. 238). Therefore, trans-corporeality casts bodies as active, open, dynamic, and permeable – not as fixed or passive entities bounded by the skin (Abram, 1996, p. 46-7). As trans-corporeality invites thinking across, not only between, bodies (Alaimo, 2008, p. 238), it suggests a post-anthropocentric account of multispecies relations: with the entanglement of bodies that do not look alike, mosquitoes become “fleshy beings, with their own needs, claims, and actions” instead of being conceived of as part of the ‘environment’ available for human use (Alaimo, 2008, p. 238) or as a background for human actions in the world. Mosquitoes, then, can de-centralise the human tourist (cf. Benali & Ren, 2019). Yet, trans-corporeality invites us to think even beyond this.

The fleshy becoming-with of mosquito and human bodies is full of details and complexities: mosquitoes find the skin through polyphonic messaging of the human body, sensing its carbon dioxide, moisture, lactic acid, body heat, and movement (Salmela, 2019). This discovery of human skin and blood is always intra-active (Barad, 2007): the human body responds to that of the mosquito, perhaps hearing the mosquito’s hum resulting from the high frequency of its wingbeats before sensing its attack on the skin, affecting the flight route of the mosquito with bodily movements. Furthermore, the materiality of the weather – air humidity, light, and wind – further condition the encounter, holding material agency and being situated in space-time together with these two bodies. When and if the mosquito then lands on human skin, another level of entanglement occurs: penetration. Entering the body of the human, the mosquito–human encounter meshes worlds. When a female mosquito lands on the body, she searches for blood vessels and penetrates the skin with her long, beak-like, sharp, sucking mouthparts. She collects about three milligrams of blood per bite, and her weight can be doubled after a meal. If the mosquito survives the penetration and leaves the literal “contact zone” (Alaimo, 2008, p. 238), the common worlding creates new lives: human

blood enables the female mosquito to lay eggs. For the human, the encounter leaves tiny, itchy traces on the skin: fleshy souvenirs. The encounter between two different bodies brings ethics to the fore.

How are we to respond to others, if we are *made* of them – they being, literally and following the words of Darwin, under our skin (Moore & Desmond, 2004, p. 375 quoted in Morton, 2010, p. 119)? There are no simple answers to this question, and no normative account of ethics that would help us in finding them (Zylinska, 2014, p. 21; see also Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 6). Instead, ethics must be considered as being constantly *made* in the everyday, situated, and embodied practices of responsiveness that require acting under a moral obligation of responsibility (cf. Zylinska, 2014, p. 16). This makes ethics always relational. Puig de la Bellacasa describes ethics as a hands-on, ongoing process of recreating relations (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 6): ethics is dynamic, changing, and situated. Ethics is response-ability (Haraway, 2016). Furthermore, the quest for response-ability – “to take up the unasked-for obligations of having met” (Haraway, 2016, p. 130) – demands going further than writing-with: “(t)hey – we – are here to live and die with, not just think and write with” (Haraway, 2016, p. 124).

To live-and-die-with is identifiable in our relations with mosquitoes. A determined quest for the source of life’s continuity – blood – takes place in this common worlding, forming a contact zone for situated ethics on, in, and in close proximity with human skin. Violence confronts its disruptive companion: care. Zylinska notes how “(a)n ethical theory that embeds violence into its framework – rather than just sweeping it aside in a fantasy gesture of moral purification – promises to address the question of co-emergence and co-dependency in all its complexity” (Zylinska, 2014, p. 99). Violence, and its inevitability, is thus a constitutive element of ethics. Puig de la Bellacasa, for her part, underlines the “accent on care as vital in interweaving a web of life, expressing a key theme in feminist ethics, an emphasis on interconnection and interdependency...” (2017, p. 4). Yet, this should not lead us to think of ethics and care as harmonic, blended, and soft: care is “not about fusion; it can be about the right distance” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 5). What does keeping the ‘right distance’ mean in our common worlding with mosquitoes? Could the ‘right distance’ mean the minimisation of violence (Zylinska, 2014, p. 98-99) against the ‘tiny troubles’ by staying distant? Or does it mean taking steps closer, towards mosquitoes, as ethical subjects?

Additionally, instead of merely taking the nonhuman ‘into account’ in our exploration of ethics – which would require settling for a situation where human agency would direct the flow of relationality (Hird & Roberts, 2014, p.111) – we emphasize taking an active part in the common worlding. Accordingly, we ought not consider our responsibility as something which makes us responsible ‘for’, but instead become response-able-with (Despret, 2004; Haraway, 2016; see also Kinnunen & Valtonen, 2017). The response-ability present in the common worlding materialises in the question posed by Johnson when working with laboratory lobsters: “how ought we live with creatures whose bodies, forms, and functions are alien to our own?” (Johnson, 2015, p. 296). How indeed? We approach this question, and its complexity, by next presenting our methodological choices in more detail.

Narrative methodology

Narratives and narration work in our study as an analytic frame that orients our method of generating and analysing empirical materials and representing results (Tucker & Shelter, 2018). The power of storytelling and narration in meaning-making and constructing

worldviews is widely recognised in social (Bruner, 1987), feminist (Haraway, 2016; Zylinska, 2014), and tourism research (Grimwood et al., 2019; Hollinshead, 2009; Tucker & Shelton, 2018). This body of literature highlights the agential or performative nature of narratives: they can enact, not just describe, things (Rosiek & Snyder, 2018; Zylinska, 2014), a characteristic often referred to as ‘worldmaking’ power in tourism research (Hollinshead, 2009). It also pays particular attention to the ethical and political consequences of narratives circulating around social, economic, or academic practices and stresses the epistemic responsibility of researchers to tell stories (Grimwood et al., 2019). This critically-oriented body of work is interested in the transformative potential of narratives, deliberating on how narration can propagate change and pave the way for more just futures (Tucker & Shelton, 2018; Grimwood, Stinson & King, 2019).

However, stories are not just a human account. In the words of Haraway: “Storying cannot any longer be put into the box of human exceptionalism” (Haraway, 2016, p. 39). Haraway’s (2008, 2016) impactful work with companion species, Tsing’s (2015) work with wild matsutake mushrooms, Probyn’s (2016) journeys with the inhabitants of oceans and their people, and Despret’s (e.g. 2005, 2013) extensive work on human–animal relations, just to give a few examples, all derive from collective storying in a more-than-human world. These works illustrate the importance of storying with the seemingly mundane, and perhaps small, fellow earthly creatures to disrupt anthropocentric worldviews. Some stories are harder to tell-with, especially if our companions look, sound, communicate, and smell different from us to the utmost. Storying is a practice of thinking, and this thinking “must be thinking-with” (Haraway, 2016, p. 39).

We set out to explore mosquito–tourist encounters through a memory-work method (Small, 2004; Onyx & Small, 2001), crafting stories of our mosquito-related tourist experiences. Aware of, but not hindered by, the inescapable human-centricity of our memory-work method, we make space for the affective, disrupting, and complex presence of mosquitoes in our experiences. Collective crafting of stories seeks to break down the barriers between subjects and objects of research (Onyx & Small, 2001): in our case, between us and mosquitoes. Conflicting, clashing, surprising moments occur as our situated histories with mosquitoes come together. Instead of trying to produce harmonic accounts of mosquito–tourist encounters, thus aiming for synchrony, we open up to dissonance (Tsing, 2015, p. 23-25) and craft narratives that better recognise tourists and mosquitoes as fellow earthly creatures and travellers.

Our goal of elevating overlooked multispecies encounters in tourism has similarities with auto-ethnographic inquiries, which often seek to expose experiences obscured in dominant research discourses (e.g. Ellis & Bochner, 2016; Markuksela & Valtonen, 2019; Rantala & Valtonen, 2014). However, the memory-work method highlights the collective construction of memories through sharing, discussing, and theorising as a whole instead of concentrating on individual biographies (Small, 2004, p. 256). Furthermore, instead of assuming that the researcher narrates neglected experiences that exist prior to the telling, we think, in line with new materialist premises, that the very process of telling co-constitutes the writer, reader, and the focus of the study (Barad, 2007; Rosiek & Snyder, 2018).

Our primary set of empirical materials consists of written personal stories wherein we memorialise our encounters with mosquitoes. We first wrote our own personal stories independently, concentrating on memorialising a range of mosquito-related moments in settings ranging from domestic and international tourism, proximity tourism, hiking,

camping, academic conferencing and other work-related travels, and visits to urban cities and cabins, covering childhood memories and those of other life-phases, as well as different social combinations, from familial travels to those with partners and friends. Memories traced us to the affective moments when mosquitoes, our own bodies, and the bodies of our family members, friends, or partners, related and intersected. The moments related with living and dead bodies, with bodily parts covered by mosquito poison, with the blood of our own, via the bodies of the tiny creatures whose mouthparts had speared our skin. While most of our stories are situated in Northern Europe, they cover also other regions; yet, they all deal with non-contagious mosquitoes, including midges and blackflies.

Afterwards, we gathered in a shelter around a fire and shared our stories (approximately two pages long, consisting of a range of mosquito-related episodes) by reading them aloud together (Small, 2004). Hearing each other's stories provided a novel angle to our lives: while we knew beforehand that we might have differing ethical relations to mosquitoes, the texts manifested these ethical struggles into practice. After reading the texts, we collaboratively reflected upon the similarities and differences among our stories, making connections to the stories from both our secondary data and the feminist new materialist approach (Onyx & Small, 2001). The discussion led us to remember more events and more details. After the session, we complemented our stories with new understandings that arose from the collective sharing and discussion of our memories.

At the next stage, synthesis narratives were created through a communal writing process instead of one of us taking the lead (cf. Onyx & Small, 2001). In this process, we returned to each other's complemented memories and to our discussion in the shelter, beginning to write a multi-voiced narrative – one of the authors started, and others continued. Creating a synthesis narrative of our travel experiences by writing through and with each other's memories provided us the opportunity to go deeper into each other's experiences of encountering mosquitoes. Within the process, memories became contested and contradicted (Haug, 1992; Kivel & Johnson, 2009), since our individual memories highlighted different stances towards mosquitoes. In the synthesis story, by including contradicting experiences within the narrative, the black-and-whiteness became blurred, reflecting better our complex and conflicting relations to mosquitoes. In this way, the very process of writing, reading aloud, and analysing our stories transformed our relations to each other and to mosquitoes.

During the process of analysis, we place our texts in a dialogue with our secondary set of empirical materials that consists of mosquito-related media texts (such as mosquito forecasts), a documentary film on mosquitoes, online materials in which tourists describe their experiences and service providers offer tips for coping with mosquitoes, scientists' talks and texts published in the media, and an interview with a biologist specialising in mosquitoes. These materials were generated by the first author during 2016–2019 and they serve to situate our stories as part of a 'bigger' social narrative, illustrating how such narratives circulate through several practices, normalising certain conduct (Lorimer, 2015). Based on the analysis of the personal stories and after a few iterative writing experimentations, we ended up writing two thematised and synthesised stories – 'trekking during räkkä time' and 'the hut' – that summarize much of our experiences. Through them, we narrate the 'living-with' of mosquitoes and tourists while travelling and propose the presence of trans-corporeality and messy ethics in these encounters. In the analysis, we also make reference to secondary materials to highlight how the personal stories resonate with the wider social narrative that surrounds us and our histories. Our personal stories render visible how social narratives, in the form of advertisements of mosquito repellents for instance, are a

significant part of our memories with mosquitoes.

MOSQUITOES AS FELLOW TRAVELLERS

“Trekking during räkkä time”

The train passes forests, fields, reindeers, humans, and birds bathing in a heat wave. We fellow travellers – the small mosquito in the window and myself, both small in size, but with different scale – remain still while the train steadily approaches my home city where I join my friend on a trek. The mosquito’s body is motionless, yet she is certainly alive: her posture is upright, and she holds on to the window with her arms and legs. It is as if we are staring out of the window together. A subtle movement in one of her thin legs – lifting it, then putting it back down again – communicates her presence. Perhaps my presence, in turn, does not interest the tiny creature. We will reach our destination soon – is that where the mosquito is going? Questions run through my head: do you want to get out? Where are you heading, and where did you get into the train? And why? I’m used to mosquitoes sucking blood, but less to them travelling together with me. I start to become increasingly troubled. Is it a male mosquito? Why did I call her “she” in the first place? Or is there something wrong with her... him? Melancholy arises. Worry arises.

An announcement fills the carriage: “Welcome to Rovaniemi”. It is time to get up. Mosquito, do you want to come with me? A small panic takes over my body – what should I do? What would the other passengers think if I took her/him/it with me? And what does the mosquito think? Does she/he think? I’m confused! I have a huge backpack with me. How would I even be able to take the mosquito out? Maybe I could seal her/him in my hand. I could also accidentally kill her/him. Mosquito, hurry, tell me, do you want to go?! In confusion, I find myself taking steps towards the carriage door – my gaze still on the window, the tiny passenger. I have to go. I have to leave you. Bye, little mosquito. I feel sad and guilty, and I have been in this situation before. I hug my friend at the platform, puzzled.

We are being told: “It is perhaps not wise to go to trekking during ‘räkkä’ time, the mass occurrence of insects – mosquitoes, blackflies, and midges – during the northern summer”. As experienced trekkers, we already know this, but we have no option: this is the only weekend possible for us to go, and we are eager. I only wish for a miracle, to avoid having very many mosquitoes as our travel companions. We decide to head to the open fells around Kilpisjärvi, the arm of Finland, between Norway and Sweden. While we estimate that there would be less räkkä, local reindeer herders, experts on this matter, tell us that with this weather we will not escape the mosquitoes. We are having heat, heat, heat! We decide to go anyway. When starting our walk, I see a group of scouts returning from the fells. One boy has an arm full of red bites. It looks so painful! Only seeing it makes my body shiver, and I pull my sleeves down. Despite the heat, I wear long-sleeved blouse, long trousers, and a hat. We head up the fell, wishing to escape räkkä. Our wish does not come true: the tiny bloodsuckers surround us. I am sweating; my skin feels sticky because of the mosquito repellent my friend has offered me. There is not even a light breeze. I feel irritated and forced to move all the time – if I stop even for a second, I am attacked. We see a pond. It would be nice to dive in, into fresh water, but in this situation, I would not think of swimming, as that would mean exposing my skin to the insects. They would enter everywhere.

It gets late, and we have to give up and make camp. While we are eating, the insects even try to access our mouths! We cannot escape them in the tent, as the evening sun heats it up. There is no shadow here, up in the fells. No place to hide, no place for peace. Later in the evening, I enter the tent, trying to avoid mosquitoes entering. My friend starts to smash the ones that have slipped in. I rush to open the zipper of the tent and whirl with my hands, trying to get them out alive with the help of airwaves. Finally, we settle in. From inside, I look at the tiny bodies of the mosquitoes on the roof of the tent and listen to the sounds that their tiny legs make while walking on the roof. They are outside, we are inside, and this is how it should be.

The synthesis narrator writes about memories where mosquitoes travelled-with in unruly times and spaces. The mosquitoes' presence is polyphonic – ranging from those with a single mosquito (as in the train), to the mass occurrence of insects during räkkä time. The contrast between emotions felt by the synthesis narrator, those of melancholy and worry, and those of irritation and slight panic when surrounded by 'attacking' mosquitoes forms a nuanced and conflicting understanding of common worlding with mosquitoes. While in the train, the individual mosquito becomes a fellow traveller with a sense of a shared journey. In the trekking memory, in turn, mosquitoes are deemed unwanted, but they are still regarded as fellow travellers. While trekking, the synthesis narrator wishes for their absence, but for a very different reason than on the train: on the train, a wish for the absence of the mosquito is motivated by a sense of empathy (regardless of the correctness of the interpretation of the narrator) – a wish for her not to be 'trapped' indoors – whereas during trekking, the wish is based on a motivation to avoid being attacked by the mosquitoes. These memories tell us about mosquitoes' "everywhereness", but also their individuality, which both, in different ways, unbalance power relations based on an anthropocentric understanding of multispecies relations. The illusion of human mastery becomes troubled, like in the moment of struggling what to call the mosquito in the train – she, her, it? Besides not knowing the sex of the mosquito, the narrator also feels troubled using 'it' to refer to her fellow traveller.

Thinking across bodies (Alaimo, 2008, p. 238) leads to the emergence of emotions associated with humans' emotional repertoire (empathy, sorrow, protection, guilt), which travels in-between the queer, unexpected, 'two of a kin' on the train (cf. Barad, 2007; Haraway, 2016). A single mosquito troubles the synthesis narrator with its presence in the 'wrong' place, indoors, while there is no rational argument to make that place any 'worse' than another. Perhaps the effortless presence of the mosquito in that space-time – its unwillingness to suck the narrator's blood – disrupts the common worlding as the narrator knows it. The mosquito demands, with its mere presence, ethical consideration. Trekking-with mosquitoes exposes the porosity of bodily boundaries. A mosquito's thin mouthpart entering human skin, then the blood vessels, allowing the sucking of blood to begin, bodily fluids changing owners, placing the tiny in control of the seemingly dominant – a porous, yet dissonant dance is in play, and it can stop with a surprise at any moment (see also Tsing, 2015, p. 23-25).

Common worlding is happening in the story. Boundaries dissolve, material entities entangle, and processes of co-constitution are able to be seen by the human eye. Penetration becomes even more unruly as mosquitoes enter the narrator's mouth. Affects flit by, ranging from panic and irritation to anger and fear. Violent marks of mosquito attacks on other humans, such as the boy scout's arm, make mosquitoes present – felt in the narrator's shivering skin. Protection and acts of care are needed to protect the human body with matter – clothes,

repellents and tents – and knowledge – tactics, wise decisions in the choice of trekking route. This kind of knowledge, how to avoid mosquitoes, is offered via various sources, as our secondary materials illustrate. A Finnish newspaper article advises people to stay calm so that the body produces less carbon dioxide, offering also “mosquito forecasts” – estimating the number of mosquitoes based on weather indicators, such as temperature and humidity (LK 28.5.2016, A4-5).

Crafting our story with the mosquitoes lays bare the usual failure of human-motivated efforts of protection and care that aim to protect the human from the ‘trouble’. Tiny creatures begin to trouble anthropocentric coping strategies. The large number of mosquitoes, or the stubbornness of a single one, perhaps coupled with opportune help from the weather, can lead to unexpected stories. Worlding practices characterised by the ‘attack’ of the tiny can lead the humans to finally give up and/or accept the biting-and-sucking travel company of these tiny females. While our human bodies provide food for them, the mosquitoes are in turn food for other animals. As a newspaper article from our secondary materials illustrates: “Mosquitoes that torture people are vital to birds. For example, one pair of willow tit eats up about ten kilos of insect biomass a year” (LK 28.5.2016 A4-5).

Overall, the story provides a down-to-earth example of how mosquitoes hold powerful agency, affecting the experiences and flows of trekkers in the North (Granås, 2018). This compels tourism developers and organisers to invest in campaigns to inform tourists about the best ways of living with these tiny insects. For example, Only in Lapland, a Lappish tourist organisation, notes, among other tips, that tourists should act like a reindeer and find the spots where the wind or dry climate keeps the mosquitoes away (<https://www.lapland.fi/visit/tips-stories/how-to-mosquitoes-lapland/>). This exemplifies the more-than-human knowledge that helps in coping with and living alongside mosquitoes – yet, the rhythm of nature does not always fit with the logics and rhythms of commercial tourism, as our story indicates (see Rantala & Valtonen, 2014). One possible solution is then to turn the mosquitoes into part of the experience and post pictures online of body parts covered by mosquitoes (e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KB5omGVUPAU>) or make jokes about them, as on the popular site “Very Finnish Problems” (www.facebook.com/veryFinnishproblems). Laughing is one way of living with mosquitoes while simultaneously representing the production of “moral distance” with regard to constructed others (Yates, 2004, p. 74).

“The hut”

A white, thin curtain twirls silently in the breeze coming from a ventilation window equipped with a mosquito net. Small, black shadows of mosquitoes in the curtain follow the breeze. It is summer. The lake, the spruces. Brother, mom, dad, the dog, mosquitoes. The hut that smells like mosquito repellent mixed with the scent of fresh coffee. The hut is desired to be a mosquito-free zone. Arrival to the hut must be quick, the door closed behind one entering immediately. Even one mosquito can turn a holiday into a nightmare for humans, if it stays in the hut for the night. Then no human can sleep, or perhaps only dad, the deepest sleeper of all. Mother does not sleep. Neither do I – but I would not want to kill. Sensing there’s blood nearby, the nights would be sleepless for the mosquitoes too.

This year family friends won’t be visiting the hut, as they keep complaining about mosquitoes. For our family, mosquitoes and blackflies are part of the summer holiday

experience. We are much-awaited guests for the mosquitoes, too. When we come back to the hut after some time, the black bodies of mosquitoes and blackflies cover the white corners of the windows. They did not get out. Mom brushes the dead bodies into a dustpan and tips them over into the forest. Is there a mosquito graveyard somewhere? I understand the anxiety towards mosquitoes from those who are not accustomed to them. However, if I ever fall in love and my loved one is terrified of mosquitoes, I think it will be better for me to enjoy being in the hut by myself.

Mosquitoes celebrate the warm sunny days. They gather together in packs, and are especially delighted if there's almost no wind at all. Easy approach and landing on skin. Less possibility for blood sources to prevent themselves from being stung. They might not like the green jumper I'm putting on, tying the hood strings firmly under my jaw. We are planning to make waffles in the fire, and we are ready to face a swarm of mosquitoes. We have rolled OFF (mosquito repellent) onto our ankles and covered the jumper with it. The mosquito army builds up its strength when the evening comes, the shadows growing larger in the yard – it is already six o'clock in the afternoon.

Dad is already out, making a fire for the grill and heating the sauna at the same time. No mosquitoes will sting him. Mosquitoes do not like him that much. If they do, he probably will not care, or even notice. Yesterday I saw a mosquito sucking blood from his forehead. When dad was talking to me, I stared at the mosquito on his forehead and silently hoped that it would be finished sucking blood before dad noticed it. If not, he would probably whip it dead with his hand. The mosquito took off from dad's forehead eventually as I made a small whirl of wind in his direction with my hand. The mosquito was saved. I noticed a gentle smile on my face. I also smile when sitting on the terrace after the sauna, a towel wrapped around my naked, hot body that steams in the quiet summer evening. Mosquitoes come, of course, and I look at how their tiny bodies gradually fill with my blood. They must be satisfied. I wonder if it is only a myth that if you let the mosquito suck your blood until it fills up all the way, it does not leave a lump on your skin.

Later in the evening when we are back inside the hut, my brother, sitting by the table, stops his movements, as if he is preparing his mosquito-killing position. His body is almost silent, and his right hand rises, his left staying on the table. I see a small black creature landing on my brother's hand. One second, and SMASH! The hit does not even have to be powerful, but it guarantees the death of the mosquito. My brother lifts up the dead mosquito from his hand with a skilled grip, his first finger and thumb, and puts it on the table. "Not on the table!" shouts mom. Brother does not hear mom's voice, but sees the next victim, a mosquito humming in the kitchen window. He gets ready, looking like he will throw a spear, but just before he slaps, mom shouts, now with a louder and more stern voice, "NOT ON THE WINDOW!!!" Brother stops hunting and heads out.

Mom catches the mosquito from the window inside a white paper towel. The white paper hides within it a black stain. There is no red colour to be seen. The mosquito was not fast enough to suck anyone's blood. Suddenly, I feel a sting on my arm. I swipe it without further thought. I feel something moist. Turning my gaze, I see something black and blood-like. The small limbs of a dead creature stick out. I wipe my arm quickly and feel deep sadness. Another effort for continuation of life was

ruined.

Encountering dead and living mosquito bodies indoors, outdoors, on the skin of human bodies, and on the corners of white windows is a strong part of our memories from family holidays in a hut – a typical holiday practice in Nordic countries (Müller & Hoogendoorn, 2013). Tensions between violent acts of killing and acts of care occur, giving rise to troubling questions and advocating for a ‘messy’ consideration of ethics. In our memories, humans are forced to live with the logic of killing during their holidays when it would be ordinarily avoided. Accidental killing takes place, too. The narrator’s efforts to avoid mosquitoes being killed, feeling deep sadness seeing a mosquito dead or wounded, entangle violence and care. This entanglement leads to the contemplation of mosquitoes sucking her blood after the sauna, a form of appreciation and generosity from a human being. Less is known about the generosity and appreciation from mosquitoes. Their quest for blood as a life source is concurrently accepted, understood, and defied.

Bodies taking part in the encounter, which does not include verbal communication, become of importance. Killing, violence, and care become trans-corporeal. To see or feel a dead mosquito’s body, filled with human blood, represents a form of trans-corporeality that calls for ethical reflection. The very moment a mosquito fills with red human blood is commonly present in our memories, as well as in close-up pictures spread in media and online outlets that have characterised our lives with mosquitoes in the North. Killing, violence, care, and trans-corporeality in multispecies relations also entangle with humans’ conceptions of cleanness and appropriateness: the mother of the story practices familial care by not allowing the mosquitoes to be smashed in particular places in the hut.

Memories with mosquitoes bring forth also other questions related to family holiday dynamics. They illustrate how co-travellers, family members in this case, have different relations with non-human fellow travellers sharing the holiday space-time. The mosquitoes practice agency while shaping the social relations of travellers, not only between those present, but also those with whom they choose not to travel. One way to keep the ‘right distance’ manifests: care for the place of family holidays, and all its inhabitants, might exclude those considered to be ‘outsiders’.

In media, the act of killing mosquitoes, either by hand or with repellents, might appear to be an almost normalised practice, as illustrated by, for example, headlines such as “Say goodbye to mosquitoes – these repellents are the most effective” (IS 30.5.2016) and world championships of killing mosquitoes (a tournament organised in Finnish Lapland that was not a success). An illuminating documentary film by James Logan, “The secret life of midges”, details how DDT was used in the Scottish Highland to kill midges in the 1960s to make the region more attractive to tourists. It invites us to see the problem inherent in our normalised and normative narratives of killing these tiny creatures for the sake of holiday experiences.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our paper has brought mosquitoes into the study of multispecies encounters in tourism. We have problematised the way these encounters have been narrated in tourism studies so far, suggesting that the existing narrative is problematically human-centric and gives most attention to charismatic and attractive animals – be they large or tiny – that are considered

valuable to humans for economic, social, or conservationist reasons. This method of narrating is problematic, especially in terms of ethics, reducing mosquitoes, together with other small creatures regarded as ‘pests’, to merely something to be dismissed or gotten rid of altogether (Carr & Broom, 2018). We have unsettled this narrative with a theoretical approach inspired by feminist new materialist literature and subsequent notions of trans-corporeality and relational ethics. This approach has allowed us to re-position mosquitoes as earthborn fellow creatures with which tourists share their travels, thus understanding better the common worlding of tourists and mosquitoes and making tangible the messiness of ethics of this worlding. Therefore, touristic encounters of humans and mosquitoes have revealed their complexity, giving us the ability to question power relations and ‘roles’ granted according to normative, anthropocentric understandings of multispecies relations. To conclude, we discuss how our study enriches the existing debate on multispecies encounters and suggest a novel way of narrating these encounters in the future.

Multispecies encounters

Mosquitoes have provided us a fruitful case for theorising multispecies encounters as trans-corporeal. This notion has allowed us to shed light on the thoroughly relational nature of mosquito–tourist encounters and to acknowledge the various material, biological, and cultural aspects of circulation across these bodies. We have highlighted how the bodies of a mosquito and a human connect and entangle via blood. Blood carries strong symbolic meaning and is literally the life constituted by both bodies involved in the encounter. Neither could live without it. While much of the existing literature discusses how the type of animal body – such as furriness (Haanpää et al., 2019), or large size (Khanom & Buckley, 2015) – works as a glue in the tourism encounter, we highlight the blood as a novel corporeal dimension that connects the two beings.

To continue, while many of the animals explored thus far in tourism studies enjoy the aura of attraction, our focus is on a tiny animal that often is associated with unattraction. By theorising and empirically exploring the tiny mosquito, our study extends the range of nonhuman animals within the current body of work in tourism studies. In addition, it provides a more nuanced account of what can be considered a ‘tiny’ or ‘small’ creature in the first place. In doing so, it continues Carr and Broom’s (2018) proposal that small creatures merit more reflection when tourism is narrated. Highlighting, instead of downplaying, the presence of various small creatures in touristic contexts renders visible the essential life-supporting role of ‘the tiny ones’. Therefore, our study highlights that tourist experiences are dependent on the lives of other, much smaller, often overlooked, and sometimes invisible creatures – our fellow inhabitants of the Earth.

Our analysis of trans-corporeal encounters with mosquitoes has brought up ethical questions revealed in the act of killing. To date, much of the debate around mosquitoes is concerned with whether mosquitoes do harm to (or kill) humans by spreading diseases (Richter, 2003, p. 343). Our study has flipped upside down the normalised human practice of killing mosquitoes in order to ensure they do not disrupt the tourist experience. We have argued that our relations with other earthly creatures cannot be either thoroughly peaceful or pleasant, and that this does not make our efforts to find ethical ways to live-with them any less significant. Our stories render visible how the decision *not-to-kill* can suggest one way to practice more-than-human generosity; as humans, we *can* make conscious decisions to give our blood to a mosquito by not killing it when it penetrates our skin or to feel empathy towards a mosquito trapped inside a tent without a way out. We consider it our species-

boundary-breaking responsibility to theorise and critically scrutinise acts of killing, which are always violent, no matter how small the creatures' bodies are that become their victims. We consider bringing the notion of care into this theorising as one way to practice response-ability.

In theorising tourist-mosquito encounters, we have employed a relational understanding of ethics that highlights their complex, embodied, messy, and contextual nature and the subsequent tension between violence and care. This view enriches the heritage of ethical theorising in tourism (Fennell, 2012), demonstrating that there is much more at stake than the issue of 'animal rights'. Our study makes the deliberation of ethics in the context of human-animal encounters more complex, contextual, and relational (cf. Cui & Xu, 2019). It provides a further example of what contextual ethics means: instead of elephants (Cui & Xu, 2019), our study details the way contextual ethical relations are played out when mosquitoes are encountered in two different tourist settings, while trekking and in a hut. Our study also points to the ethical questions aroused when the bodies of the two different earthly creatures are conceived of as entangled. In the entanglement of bodies, ethics become 'messy' both theoretically and practically; to live-with is to live in a complicated world, where violence, care, vitality, death, joy, and sorrow come together and create dissonance.

Post-anthropocentric approach

To close, we discuss the potential of the post-anthropocentric approach we have worked towards in this paper for tourism studies more widely. Our approach recognises the necessity of appreciating the relatedness of all earthly creatures that play a part in tourism and the importance of narrating this relatedness. While the worldmaking power of tourism narratives is well demonstrated, we suggest that it is the common worlding with various earthly creatures that future tourism narratives should focus on. This recognition is a matter of ontology, pushing scholars and practitioners to consider tourism phenomena beyond (merely) human scope and human interests.

By choosing a tiny, troubling other with which to narrate, we have been able to trouble the prevalent tourism practice that values attractiveness and pleasure defined from a (Western) human perspective. As Raffles (2011) writes in his book on insects, we care surprisingly little about the creatures with which we share our lives. In contrast, in South Korea, insects and other 'micro-fauna' and 'micro-flora' (e.g. small leaves, various fungi, or gall on dead leaves) enjoy a high status as ecotourism attractions and are appreciated for their vital role in supporting life (Lemelin, 2007; 2012; Young-Sook, Lawton & Weaver, 2012). Unmasking the ways in which prevalent multispecies relations are framed by Western hegemonic discourses and proposing a more comprehensive one is a significant ethico-political act. This paper thus points to the need to widen scholarly focus on multispecies encounters to cover all the species and creatures involved and to recognise the performative effects of the socio-historically constructed category of 'attractiveness' that significantly shapes tourism discourse and practice.

Our narration is necessarily human driven, but as Tsing points out: "Our own human involvement in multispecies worlds is [...] a place to begin" (2013, p. 34). Mosquitoes, as our fellow travellers, help us to unsettle the prevalent tourism narrative that highlights human control and mastery over nonhuman animals. Despite their tiny size, mosquitoes have significant agency: they shape tourism experiences, social relations, and choices of destinations. They also transgress several human-set boundaries, such as the body and place.

To quote Raffles: “They’ll almost never do what we tell them to do. They’ll rarely be what we want them to be. They won’t keep still. In every respect, they are really complicated creatures” (2011, p. 4). In this sense, mosquitoes fulfil the post-anthropocentric goal of decentralising humans and establishing kin-relations (Haraway, 2016), as well as unsettling the long-lived anthropocentric nature of tourism research that still provides “little regard for the interests of the animal other” (Fennell, 2012, p. 9). The recognition of the common worlding with multiple others demands that we think differently. Here, it has made us imagine and embody relationships with mosquitoes, and other smaller creatures, differently (Grimwood et al., 2019, pp. 7-8). Writing with a mosquito has, indeed, made a difference.

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