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Encountering the cosmos; negotiating conflicting worlds through learning and engagement

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Abstract

Interventions by the state or development organizations in post-disaster landscapes or through infrastructural development have long been criticized for their incongruity in project design and implementation which tend to ignore the local cultural, political and social landscapes. This paper discusses an educational program called Laajverd Visiting School that attempts to question the simplistic and linear frameworks (often one-size-fits-all) adopted by intervention projects which usually disregard local context resulting in half-baked, ill-equipped projects. Inspired from Isabelle Stengers' cosmopolitics, as means of constructing a common world, the Laajverd Visiting School program engages with multiple actors which are equally part of composing landscapes that we sought to explore. This paper is positioned to highlight the interconnections between teaching, learning and research (Harland, 2016). It unpacks experiential learning (Hooks, 1994; Shor, 1992; Wink, 2005) as means of attending to the more-than-human worlds. Specifically, it explores pedagogies of experiential learning; of being immersed in the field and remaining open to its terrains, hurdles, surprises and discomfort. It highlights methodologies employed in the field to allow learners/participants to explore multiple ways of approaching and understanding these landscapes; the threats and challenges they face, and how communities continue to live in constrained environments.

1. Introduction

> 'But this is a Red Zone declared by the UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees], it's not safe', said a student anxiously. 'You see, this is my home', replied an old man while picking up a bucket to fill water from a tap in his back yard, 'and these trees are my children', proudly pointing to a row of mid-sized apricot trees in the orchard. 'I have raised them and they have grown this tall under my care. And see that tall one? It was planted by my great-grandfather, it has seen me grow this old, and it still stands…I can't leave them.' Another student enquired hesitantly and gravely, 'Aren't you afraid [pause] that the land may slide?' 'It will (slide) when its time has come … like our time comes and we die, so do these mountains,' said the old man, before walking off with his bucket of water (Conversation between Participants 1,3 and 15, 2014).

This encounter took place on the 23rd of August 2014 in the village of Sarat between a group of Laajverd Visiting School (hereafter LVS) participants and an old man as they were roaming about in Sarat (a declared Red Zone) conducting research on post-disaster areas and communities. Sarat is located on a mountain slope, a few hundred meters from the Attabad landslide that occurred in January 2010 in the Karakoram mountains of Northern Pakistan. This major landslide blocked the Hunza River and resulted in the formation of the Attabad Lake. Moreover, the Karakoram highway came to halt and three villages were submerged as the river water began to rise. Villages located in the downstream valley were also evacuated and marked as a 'Red Zone' by the Local Council and DCO (District Coordination Officer), which meant that inhabitants were not allowed to be in this space for safety and security reasons.

The conversation marked the 'turn' in a learning exercise that the fifteen participants of the Laajverd Visiting School were involved in, and raised several questions around forms of security, safety, home and belonging – the case witnessed had presented an entirely different circumstance. This encounter raised questions around the relocation of communities affected by the disaster, and forms of security, safety, home and belonging. It also prompted debate around how landscapes were thought of, lived in and understood by inhabitants, and how this came to bear upon their everyday life as well as the proposed resettlement intervention. Multiple and contesting stakeholders gathered around a shared concern that 'the land may slide': for some it was a probable event predicted by geologists hence the land had to be evacuated; for the others, it was the mountains natural life cycle, hence life must go on as usual.

Discussions amongst the participants of the LVS (including myself) following this encounter tried to unpack the landscape we had encountered. The same landscape declared unsafe and unfit to live in by the State, was being cared for and understood as home by the affected inhabitants. These conflicting realities needed to be negotiated by any intervention or project initiated in the valley, especially those related to the resettlement of displaced inhabitants. This situation presented a condition where this 'unsafe' landscape had to be recognized in its multiple presences in order to proceed with any decision. The landscape marked as 'Red Zone' by the authorities was home and offered sense of belonging for those who used to live there; trees were nurtured, as were children, and mountains would live and die as did inhabitants. It is this multiplicity and potentially conflicting cosmoses that Laajverd Visiting School program set out to explore. LVS is a research and engagement program that provides an interdisciplinary and cross-curricular platform for its participants to engage

with local landscapes and peoples with the understanding that landscapes are multi-layered, complex interrelations of a variety of factors affected and moulded by social, cultural and political processes. Held annually in different post-disaster and post-conflict sites in Pakistan, this two-week intensive activity combines workshops, seminars, critique sessions and field research. The interdisciplinary nature of the project aims to bring together participants (approximately 20) from diverse disciplines to collaborate in the field with local communities and their landscapes. Participants include undergraduate students, early career researchers, professional practitioners and members of the local community. Due to its interdisciplinary nature, it tends to attract undergraduate students and practitioners from the fine art, media studies, architecture, music, film and television, social science, anthropology, environmental sciences and geology. This program includes interdisciplinary workshops (culture, natural environment, disaster management, climate change, cultural crafts), along with a field research component aimed at initiating a dialogue on the specific topics in post-disaster and post-conflict zones – particularly with respect to displaced people and their rehabilitation. LVS attempts to revisit interventions [primarily led by local non-governmental organisations (NGO) and international non-governmental organisations (INGO)] in post-disaster scenarios where local knowledge and patterns of life and living are often disregarded in favour of top-down and often imported solutions.

Landslides, floods and earthquakes have given rise to crises in Northern Pakistan, where issues of displacement, anxiety, anticipation, and being cut off from other parts of the country have plagued the past decade. Likewise, infrastructural development projects throughout the country, especially those connected with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor have also resulted in unfair land grabbing, resulting in communities being driven out of their indigenous lands (Awan & Hussain, 2020). Conducting research in these areas created space for participants or learners to engage and reflect upon the multiple realities of a supposedly single landscape.

This paper is positioned to highlight the interconnections between teaching, learning and research (Harland, 2016) as observed by the leader of the LVS field school program. It explains the program, its larger objective and conceptual concerns, as well as how this program promotes learning through research. Specifically, it explores pedagogies of experiential learning; of being immersed in the field and remaining open to its terrains, hurdles, surprises and discomfort. It highlights methodologies employed by the instructor in the field to allow learners/participants to explore multiple ways of approaching and understanding these landscapes. By sharing observations from three field sites about participants' encounters and learning experiences, this paper highlights how learning, and engagement with, affected people in constrained environments allow for a deeper understanding of the threats and challenges they face, and the practices they adopt to circumvent them. Questions and issues raised during this multi-sited ethnographic field program were seldom resolved, and rather allowed recognition of landscapes that needed to be explored, rather than problems to be solved.

2. The program

In any locality or context, intervention projects cannot be designed or implemented in a vacuum; they must be aware of deep histories of occupation, land use patterns, class struggles, cultures and environments, in addition to current contextual particularities. The mode of engagement with sites, communities and landscapes therefore requires consideration for how contextual concerns, beliefs, and inhabitants' modes of living and understanding the world are acknowledged and addressed

through the project (Antweiler, 1998; Kohsaka & Rogel, 2019) In the global South, for instance, marginalized and dis-enfranchised voices and actors have been produced through the legacy of colonialism, imperialism and slavery where modes of being and living, knowledge production, languages and landscapes were lost to the imperialist ideals and frameworks. The population, and their knowledge and cultures, have been ignored and disregarded in the past and this has continued into the present through discourses around the 'third world' and the underdeveloped global South. Literature highlighting the politics of representation, and the limits of a Eurocentric canon of knowledge production that excludes other modes of knowledge, has been widely discussed by postcolonial scholars (Mbembe, 2015; Said, 1995; Bhabha, 2004). It is about who speaks and for whom, what is captured and represented through frames in order to produce a fact or truth claim. An inspiring approach is explored by John Law (2004) where methods used for deriving field material and representing research, put forth a particular ordering of the world. Such ordering and framing can be a potentially violent disqualification of other modes of knowing and being in the world. This paper builds on 'engagement' as means of knowledge production for learners who visit the field sites and engage with the landscapes (McPhee & Przedpelska, 2018) that among other things 'give meaning to learning' for the participants (Larsen, Walsh, Almond & Myers, 2017).

The LVS, is an experimental and pedagogic intervention that aims to 'activate' students' critical analysis by engaging with the political, social and economic environments in the field. It is an experimental project devised under the rubric of Academy for Democracy (hereafter AFD), which aims to cultivate an epistemic practice that places its participants in a position to meaningfully engage with contexts and environments they find themselves in. In spirit, this project is aligned with Gaytari (2012) concept for an 'aesthetic education' which sets out the task of "training the imagination for epistemological performance" (Caruth & Spivak, 2010:1023), placing great importance on cultivating the 'imagination' of the students (in particular in the humanities). While Spivak's (2012) book on 'aesthetic education' is a rich body of essays engaged with discussions on the postcolonial condition, globalisation as assembled through class division, and the politics of representation, she also deeply explores the question of ethical engagement with the worlds we seek to explore. In a similar vein Helen Verran (1998) asks, how can we be more accountable to the worlds we study? The LVS project draws on such works, is rooted in the context of higher education in humanities and arts in Pakistan, and seeks to experiment ways in which students are enabled to recognize and better respond to the worlds they interact with. LVS is a learning program that seeks to encourage participants to recognise, attend to, and engage with environments which may include the temporary displacement from the worldviews they are attuned to. Based on learning from experience, this teaching strategy aligns with the 'pedagogy of discomfort' that creates ground for learners to question taken-for-granted assumptions (Boler, 1999) and tread terrains outside their disciplinary bounds.

AFD is concerned with how this condition might be produced within the current academic environment of the humanities and arts, where the student is trained to actively and critically engage with the environment through imagination, rather than habits formed through transmitted structures of knowledge production. Mieke Bal (2014:495) expresses this in connection to how educational training can limit critical engagement: "education is, or involves, training, and the double bind of education is the fact that habits – the desired result of training – are first and foremost ways to avoid the need to question. One forms habits to not have to question ones premises repeatedly". It is this habit, bounded in disciplinary frameworks, that AFD seeks to avoid. On the contrary, AFD seeks to

develop tools and strategies that enable an open inquiry and engagement with possibilities. Yet how can one actively refrain from our habits and navigate the field of possibilities? How can one develop tools and strategies that promote imagination? How can one deal with encounters that entail a contradictory reality – such as that of the old man living in the Red Zone? A contradiction that can either fall prey to a sustained privileged habit, deeming the old man's claim as a perspective of the world thereby allowing a possibility for it to be disregarded; or, open us up to Isabelle Stengers' 'cosmos' where one cannot enter a "practical territory, to judge, deconstruct or disqualify what appears to them[/us] as illusions or folkloric beliefs and claims" (2005:191).

These claims, stories or folklores, ways of being in and knowing the world, are important in recognizing the context or landscape which we seek to explore and account for. Cosmopolitics proposes that in our epistemic endeavours we "slow down reasoning and create an opportunity to arouse a slightly different awareness of the problems and situations mobilizing us" (Stengers, 2005:994). For example, what the old man told LVS participants in Sarat presented an entirely different reality of the Red Zone, where land continued to be lived on, cultivated and care for. This moment encouraged participants to hesitate as they entered an unknown terrain. The same conversation with the old man revealed multiple realities of the landscape that cannot be ignored, for the landscape declared as a Red Zone (hence dangerous) is considered a safe zone by those who continued to visit and cultivate it. It is these multiple realities of a landscape that LVS encourages its participants to recognize. As such it proceeds with two objectives:

1. To recognize multiple worlds.
2. To engage with multiple worlds in manners that facilitate learning by way of discomfort, displacement and the like.

3. Learning to recognise and engage with multiple worlds

In terms of teaching, this raises important questions for how one can encourage students to recognise worlds beyond humanist ontologies and to attend to supposedly inert matter and mythical characters (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013). This recognition would remove binaries between objects and subjects and attend rather to the emergence of agents and their co-existence in an assemblage (Mazzei & Jackson, 2017). This requires diverging from the known disciplinary terrains of research and engagement with the world, to recognizing non-human and more-than-human presence and agency in the formation and maintenance of worlds (Snaza & Weaver, 2015). Feminist scholarship has been at the frontiers of critiquing the limits of understanding human, non-human and more-than-human forms. Here, I turn to Stengers who denounces the absolute pre-eminence and foundational status of science as the only rational and objectively true discourse, calling instead for open inquiry and engagement with the world. She argues that the 'cosmos' is not limited to human beings, but also includes 'the Gaia', the non-human, the material and natural entities that compose the world (Stengers, 2005). Moreover, "the presence of *politics* in *cosmopolitics* resists the tendency of *cosmos* to mean a finite list of entities that must be taken into account" and "*Cosmos* protects against the premature closure of *politics*, and *politics* against the premature closure of *cosmos*" (Latour, 2004:454). Inspired by this approach, Sarah Whatmore explains how different entities in research "affect its conduct, exceed their mobilization as compliant data and complicate taken-for-granted distinctions between social subjects and material objects reproduced though scientific division of labour" (Whatmore, 2003:91). In this sense, the political modelling of cosmopolitics reveals the world as a problem and promotes slow science as a

way of recognizing and engaging with the world, without foreclosing it or reducing it in the direction of a solution.

For the LVS, learning to recognise worlds involved place-responsive pedagogies (Mannion, Fenwick & Lynch, 2013) that focus on deep environmental awareness, relations between entities, vibrant materials and the immaterial attachments which form life-worlds in the sites we visited. In particular, the exercises were designed to encourage participants to focus on the relations through which actors and entities negotiate and maintain landscapes. Whilst the LVS used mapping exercises to help participants recognise other-than-human entities, Jukes and Reeves (2019) explored this through more-than-human stories to think about more-than-human places.

Figure 1: LVS participants learning about vernacular architecture in Ganish village of Hunza Valley in 2014 (Photo taken by Nazia Hussain, Laajverd Visiting School Archives).

Practical engagement with the world contributes to how one learns and acquires knowledge about the world. This kind of learning requires total immersion of the student to experience the complexity of the lived-in-world where knowledge is produced through engagement. Wendy Gunn (2008) explores this in her attempt toward practice-based exploration to enhance collaboration, not only between disciplines, but also instructors and participants/learners. This ties in with what we know as 'experiential learning' which is a pedagogy of engagement (Hooks, 1994) with the surroundings, in ways that can be transformative for learners (Shor, 1992). Meaningful learning requires discomfort, struggle and displacement from our assumptions and known patterns of knowledge. Experiential learning thus requires the space to think critically (Wink, 2005), whilst being engaged with the communities we seek to learn from (Mooney & Edwards, 2001; Jakubowski, 2003). Using experiential learning as a base to proceed from, with interactions in the field, LVS seeks to not only work outside

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the regulated comfort of the classroom, but also the disciplinary frameworks through which participants seek to access the world. Promoting interdisciplinarity within the LVS aims to create ground for co-thinking and co-working with knowledges and practices that diverse participants bring to the environments we seek to explore. An important aspect within this is our focus on mapping relations between entities and how they constitute and maintain environments. This kind of learning has also been discussed as 'relational empiricism', which Helen Verran (1998) explored as means of conducting a situated inquiry giving great attention to the relations that constituted her research environment. Attending to these relations between entities, actors and landscapes means carrying out empirical work with care that could contribute to constructing engaged "versions of reality [that un-mask the] mediations that sustain and connect our worlds, our doings, our knowings" (Bellacasa, 2012:210). Participants were therefore encouraged to proceed with the spirit of openness and not fore-close problems or isolate entities during their inquiries.

Our approach was to echo Stengers' call for an engaged research practice for it is "through the middle" and "with the surroundings" that we must learn to work from when conducting an open inquiry, as "no theory gives you the power to disentangle something from its particular surroundings" (2005:187). For the LVS, this meant adopting non-extractive research processes that encourage participants to question and deliberate on "which kind of attention, concern and care are required" (Stengers, 2008:44). One way of doing this was to adopt diverse and creative mapping practices in order to reveal, acknowledge and attend to multiple entities (material and immaterial) and engage with their worlds in the field. For the LVS participants, this meant exploring the field, the entities, and their entanglements in the landscape: their spatial and temporal rhythms, and the interrelations and interdependencies through which they maintain their situated presence. In what follows, the learning strategy developed and employed by the LVS in order to engage participants in meaningful learning environment, is discussed. Learning activities designed for participants were geared at creating better understanding of the worlds and landscapes the participants engaged with.

4. Learning and engagement through mapping exercises

During the LVS, an interdisciplinary exercise called 'mapping cultural landscapes' – which uses a range of different community participatory methods, such photography, drawing and mental mapping – was introduced (Kitchin, 1994; Brown, 2001; Grasseni, 2007). The exercise aims to investigate local inhabitants' ideas and 'sense of place' along with notions of dwelling, interpretation and movement within a landscape. This exercise was further adapted to allow recognition of the more-than-human world, material and immaterial entities and their underlying relations. Whilst the pattern of this mapping exercise was like that of transect walks used in Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA)and Participatory Action Research (PAR), the mode of engagement varied in response to the context, environments and communities. Participants were appreciative of 'participatory action research' as a way of recognizing marginalized discourses within the field of development (Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2007; Minkler, 2005).

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Figure 2 and Figure 3: LVS participants walk through local landscapes with local community members. (Source: Laajverd Visiting School Archives).

To address the gap between top-down intervention models, scholars have explored participatory rural appraisal and research action approaches (Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2009; Reason & Bradbury, 2001) not only in academic research but also in terms of implementation on the ground, where participants have agency to affect decision-making processes (McTaggart, 1991). PAR and RRA mapping tools have proven useful for engagement with communities within their local landscapes in order to recognize their concerns, challenges and priorities around a problem (e.g. disaster, displacement of communities). However, they offer little appetite to engage with the multiplicity and varied realities of a landscape as encountered by participants in the LVS. Furthermore, these approaches are challenged by the notion of 'cosmopolitics' discussed by Isabelle Stengers (2005) as a quest for gathering multiple entities (human and non-human) around a problem or concern.

Transect walks are a popular tool used in RRA and PAR; they are carried out with communities within their native landscapes with the aim of spatially mapping areas and zones of conflict, natural resources and challenges to physical environment, among other things, resulting in a map or list of individual elements identified during the field survey (Panek, 2015). This participatory mapping method was retrofitted during the LVS. Layers of inquiry were added to the transect walk in order to unpack the processes, interrelations and interdependencies through which landscapes and contexts are formed. LVS participants were encouraged to dig deeper into this spatial mapping by investigating networks and practices through which places acquire specific meaning. Objects and elements come to be revered and entities such as trees, water springs or rocks (also known as natural assets in transect walks) are featured in the landscape. This mapping was meant to encourage an understanding of the deeply entangled and interdependent landscape that is formed through the practices and processes of, and between, entities in order to slow down lines of reasoning and problem solving for participants of the LVS. This method transpired in different ways in the field sites where LVS was conducted, in order to make cosmopolitical maps that recognized and addressed multiple actors, entities and stakeholders in the field, and to reveal these landscapes as shared problems rather than stifle these with short-sighted solutions. In what follows, I will discuss how the method of conducting a transect walk was adapted in response to thematic inquiries in the LVS, while following a shared concern for recognizing entities and processes that form and sustain landscapes.

4.1. The built environment and immaterial worlds

The spatial mapping exercise conducted was mapping the 'built environment pattern language', a concept introduced by Christopher Alexander (1979) which contains rules for how human beings interact with built form. It codifies practical solutions developed over millennia, which are appropriate to local customs, societies and climates (Salingaros & Mehaffy, 2006). Hence, the 'pattern language' in a region is developed in response to the natural environment, climate and culture. A collection of these various aspects constitutes landscapes and forms relationships that are constantly evolving. This meant documenting ways in which land use patterns have developed and been sustained over time, which areas are considered favourable for construction and what is designated for agriculture. This mapping entailed walking across the valley (first downhill, then uphill) documenting the macro-, meso- and micro-level spatial patterns along the way. These walks usually meant sketching out a clustered dwelling, mapping the crop and forest areas, or understanding why openings in houses face the river (windward). This is in order to understand relations between the climatic, geographical, material, cultural, cosmic and religious processes that are entangled and give rise to a particular built environment. These mapping exercises were meant to understand the built environment within its context (entities and processes) as opposed to an isolated documentation of physical built structures. The aim was to enable participants to see things not in terms of what they are, but in terms of the relations that transpire and hold these things together (Ingold, 2011). For example, fire not only warms up the living room but also gathers the family in the evening, and it not only boils a pot of tea but becomes a matter of virtuous guest-host relations in mountain communities (Hussain, 2015). The exercise also included mapping the spatial layout of houses, their orientation, materiality and placement due to climate, geology and local craftsmanship, in addition to the cultural or religious meanings associated with certain patterns and how they give rise to distinct built forms.

Participants began to see the interrelations and interdependencies of inhabitants, objects, practices and materials that together constitute the built environment. Visiting different homes and environments and engaging with the inhabitants and landscapes allowed participants to engage with multiple layers of what goes on in the field, and they also began to see how objects and situations are entangled in a web of relations from which they are not easily extractable. The exercise revealed multiple actors and entities (material and non-material) that affected, or had a stake in a problem, and hence required recognition and engagement that ultimately slowed down processes of problem-solving.

Figure 4: In-depth conversation between LVS leader and local community member in an indigenous Kashmiri house in 2015. (Source: Laajverd Visiting School Archives).

However, there were instances when participants overlooked certain entities that were not instantly apparent while mapping spatial patterns in the landscape. For example, in Neelam Valley in Kashmir, set in the Himalayas, participants of the LVS (mainly students of architectural design and social sciences) developed a preliminary design proposal for local settlement growth, triggered by population growth and local demand for tourist facilities. Their project was inspired by vernacular architecture and community cohesion, considering the local climate, geography and the spatial pattern of houses. On the surface, the project appeared to be well thought out, however it was critically questioned by local community elders in terms of the land use patterns. The project had failed to consider supernatural beings that were very much present in the landscape. Throughout the LVS in Neelum Valley, LVS participants encountered stories of supernatural beings in the mountains, and near water fountains and streams, due to these areas being considered sacred. This landscape was home to numerous water fountains and streams, as well as the Neelum River, which cuts across the valley.

The presence of supernatural beings had inspired names of certain valleys, such as *Janwai* 'Land of Jinns', a lush green valley with several streams located between Kel and Taobat in upper Neelum Valley. Locals explained that "Janwai is believed to protect our countless streams" (Participant 21, 2015). Local stories and folklore highlighted the sanctity and purity of water fountains that were protected by these supernatural beings. In some cases, Jinns (supernatural beings mentioned in the Quran) were the primary caretakers of water sources; in others, fairies had been sighted near streams or a presence felt near bodies of water at certain times of the day. The presence of supernatural beings regulated the movement and activities of human and animals so that water fountains and streams

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were kept clean of waste, littering and defecation. Upon expressing our desire to visit the water fountain source, we were told by some of Kel's inhabitants "you see, we need to protect the source from evil eye – if there is an evil presence, our streams will run dry" (Participant 28, 2015) aid some inhabitants in Kel. Therefore, the land around the water sources is carefully managed and protected and forms an inherent part of land use patterns.

The value of listening to stories as part of the spatial mapping exercise became evident in this experience. Folklore reflected local land-use and water management patterns, and, while participants had carried out a detailed analysis of spatial patterns, they overlooked entities (e.g. supernatural beings) that were so deeply embedded in the cultural landscape of Neelum Valley. This episode allowed LVS participants to revisit the landscape in different ways and consider entities that could come to bear on their decisions. In some sense, they were forced to think about the immaterial entities that were very much part of the material landscape of upper Neelum Valley, ultimately slowing down the process of project proposal completion. Alongside this, participants realized how they are not alone in their inquiries and must think with other entities that are more-than-human and material in order to envision and propose a viable project.

4.2. Lively landscapes: Unpacking material worlds

Certain aspects that the transect walk mapping overlooked in the landscape – with reference to natural assets and resources – was the agency of trees, rocks and the land itself. Apparent in the encounter at the beginning of this paper, participants conducting the transect walk were introduced to a kind of understanding about the land which refused to fit a prescribed framework (physical assets in the Red Zone). The landscape however, was composed of complex and interrelated processes and practices, operating in a temporality somewhat different from our conception. There was more to the land than its fertility (ability to grow crops and trees) or physical composition (loosely formed silt, sand and clay content prone to landslides). Here, mountains and trees would be born, grow old, and die just as humans would. According to Tim Ingold's 'dwelling perspective', "the landscape is constituted as an enduring record of – and testimony to – the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves" (Ingold, 2010:189). In this sense, the transect walk explored the landscape as a complex and multi-layered entity, a repository of traces and memories that could evoke feelings and a sense of belonging. Making cosmopolitical maps meant recognizing these material and immaterial processes – physical, social, cultural, affective and emotional –were equally involved in giving rise to a kind of landscape in a manner that reflected the realities of local communities.

An instance where cosmopolitical maps were generated together with local community members was in the coastal city of Gwadar in September 2019, where the LVS was conducted in order to map the effects of infrastructural development on the lives and lands of local fishing communities. The LVS set out to explore Gwadar, which is currently being developed as a strategically located port city on the southern tip of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Pakistan, connecting China to the warm waters of the Arabian sea. It is an old trading town with historic links across the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean where local lives revolve around the fishing business, locally known as *mahigeeri*. The newly introduced master plan in Gwadar city will disrupt and displace fisherfolk communities who have lived and thrived in this land and these waters for decades.

Through participatory workshops and mapping strategies in Gwadar, LVS explored the socio-economic and cultural landscapes of fisherfolk, including potential opportunities for the local community to develop alongside the etho-ecologies of land, life and water that compose the hammerhead peninsula. During the LVS, mapping sessions were held with fisherfolk (*mahigeer*) to understand how land and water was understood, approached and navigated, and what relocation of these communities meant. Through these maps, *mahigeer* drew patterns of movement and practices of navigation within the sea. These were deeply informed by the behaviour of the water, wind patterns in different seasons and the appearance of specific stars. Moreover, a seemingly opaque sea was made vibrant through their mapping of the seabed, which a *mahigeer* explained as "jaisay aap zameen pe nasheeb o faraaz pe chaltay hein, issi terha samander mei hum chaltay hein, yahan muqhtlif jagah pe qai qisam ki machliyan paai jaati hei" (translated as 'the way you navigate the land surface, so do we the same way navigate the seabed – there are different places within it where various kinds of fish can be found') (Participant 27, 2019).

Visually, the map showed docked and floating boats (elements that were visible) and began to host entities and elements that the *mahigeer* knew and spoke about: seabed formation and different kinds of fish, seamounts, sea animals and weeds, in addition to places where mermaids were seen and Djinns resided. In this sense, this transect map went beyond the immediately visible entities and brought in entities that were significant for understanding *mahigeer* landscape and how they navigated, lived and experienced it. This mapping exercise illuminated how everyday practices, movement patterns and livelihoods of local communities were deeply entangled and informed by a lively sea. How lives and practices of *mahigeer* were curated through multiple waves, winds, appearances of stars and the guidance of saints (reference to Hazrat Khizer, a prophet of Islam who is known to be a guide for those who lose their way at sea). What these maps contested was the stance of the state, which had sanctioned a part of the land/sea to be vacated by the indigenous *mahigeer*, displacing them to waters which were unfavourable for carrying out their everyday practices and thus sustaining their livelihoods. The entities and processes made visible through the mapping exercise led participants to learn how a mere relocation project became a potentially violent act by the state, challenging the autonomy, identity and ways of being in, and knowing of, the world of local communities.

Through this exercise, participants learnt that intervention projects (particularly those envisioned for resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced communities) cannot proceed without acknowledging and addressing the practices, processes and knowledges that give rise to their landscapes, along with notions of home and belonging and ways of living in the world. They also learnt that their own inquires in the world cannot proceed without attending to entities and the relations through which they assume form and life. Moreover, not only do such projects fail, but in some cases, become violent interventions when they neglect to account for entities and processes through which certain beings come to know, live and thrive in a landscape.

5. Towards the possible field

Mapping exercises encouraged participants to question the 'taken for granted' ways in which they understood the environments. As they were encouraged to recognise their field site, engage with the multiple entities and stake-holders, and collaborate between disciplines, it created a renewed

awareness of the worlds they sought to engage with, showing how important is research integrated teaching (Harland, 2016) – particularly in higher education. Several relations, challenges and stakes emerged through our ethnographic research fieldwork, particularly through mapping exercises, engagement in the field, as well as critique sessions that allowed participants to consider how multiple entities, their interrelations and interdependencies can come to bear on their project proposals. These critique sessions with local inhabitants, in the presence of their landscapes and stories, not only helped in knowledge exchange and helping LVS participants recognize the wider networks that they may tend to ignore, but also facilitated "learning to learn from below [by] allowing the others we wish to help to displace our horizons even as we seek to reshape theirs" (Ingram 2013: 83).

Hence the understanding that learning must be reiterated that ethical and accountable engagement with worlds cannot be developed in a vacuum, or through dominant narratives as projected by an understanding of the world, but rather should be done in the presence of multiple entities that can make claims on any decision taken for this collective landscape. In this sense, recognizing and learning from non-human-others pushed participants further to engage with material and immaterial entities. For LVS participants, it generated a certain degree of humility and revised awareness of the situation they encountered, enabling them to seek help and learn to respond to contextual conditions. It thus suspended the belief that 'I am indispensable', or 'better' or 'culturally superior'. It is refraining from always thinking that the 'third world' is 'in trouble' and that 'I have the solutions'. It is resisting the temptation to project myself, or my world, onto the other (Spivak, 2008). Open inquiry and engagement in the field created space for learning to identify multiple stakes, entities and stories which was crucial for understanding the multiple realities and worlds transpiring out there. It is a position that entails hard labour, developing strategies for engaging with the context, all whilst being constantly occupied in a reflective practice of what it means to take a position. An open inquiry and mode of engagement call for adapting methods to the contextual realities, priorities and concerns.

Cosmopolitical mapping as a learning and engagement tool is a step in such a direction, where worlds are accessed as problems to be contemplated by the entities featured in that world or landscape. Through this mode of engagement, entities (human, non-human, material, more-than-human) consistently made themselves visible in various ways: through stories, conversations and drawings, through being present and in association with other entities, networks and processes. In so doing entities featured in these cosmological maps suggested multiple orderings and configurations of the same landscape, revealing possibilities for responding to the context in different and better-informed ways. Cosmopolitical maps produced through the LVS have led to diverse outputs, such as building and curating community ethnographic museums, curating mediation between multiple stakeholders and countering dominant narratives with compelling visual evidence co-created with communities in their landscapes. Moreover, they offered a field of possibilities for participants in terms of what they wanted to explore further, as one of the participants said, "I would never be able to look at the world the same way I used to" (feedback interview Participant 3 LVS, 2015). In this sense, LVS and its pedagogic model paved way for encountering possible fields, where better suited orderings, fixes and strategies could be explored. Whilst there is no correct or tried-and-tested formula for constructing cosmopolitical maps, there is a certain degree of sensibility, attentiveness and care required when one embarks upon a task as immense as interrogating, understanding, constructing or re-organising someone else's world.

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