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Collective Processes in Land Crafting

Neighbouring Through Natural Dyeing

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Abstract

This article is based on the 3-day workshop 'Botanical Colour Laboratory', which mapped the colours of the landscape of Osterøy, Norway, through land crafting with natural dyes. Land crafting builds an understanding of and connection to the land. This article discusses the multi-sensorial aspects and relationships between humans and non-humans in collective plant dyeing. The terms situated knowledge, orientations, unruliness of things, production of locality and mujaawarah (neighbouring) are used to reflect on the workshop and their entangled relationships to matter, landscape, crafting and knowledge. These terms are woven together with the experiences from the Botanical Colour Laboratory. The research was conducted as a creative practice using an ethnographical approach. By combining written texts with videos and drawings, new multi-modal field notes were made. These field notes provide an overview of the multifaceted processes of plant dyeing. This research shows that projects such as the Botanical Colour Laboratory are highly relevant and can influence orientations to surroundings through collective land crafting with our living and non-living neighbours.

Introduction

This article is based on my experiences and reflections from the land crafting workshop, Botanical Colour Laboratory (Video 1). I am an artist and researcher who often works with textiles in social frameworks, mainly in Norway and Palestine. The Botanical Colour Laboratory was a 3-day workshop I organised in August and September 2021. Each day, up to ten participants collected plants, lichen and mushrooms from the fjord, forest and mountains at Osterøy, on the West Coast of Norway, to use for dyeing wool and silk. The participants then actively engaged in the dyeing process, from finding plants in the landscape to preparing colour baths and dyeing, labelling and naming the colour samples. Working with natural dyes is a form of land crafting, as the process involves crafting with resources from the land.

> We walked into the forest in a group of three. We looked around to see what could be used for plant dye. It was a rainy autumn day, and many plants and flowers had already withered. We started collecting Spanish chervil, salted shield lichen (Parmelia saxatilis), and juniper. Further into the forest, we found white lichen growing on tall trees, witch's hair lichen (Alectoria sarmentosa). We passed oyster mushrooms, white and fresh, and discussed if they can be used but concluded that they probably won't give any colour. We looked at the trees to try to find polypore shelf fungi, but saw none. We wondered why we couldn't find them. Is it the dry weather this year?

> We don't know. Field note 13.09.21, *From the Botanical Colour Laboratory A 3-day plant dye workshop*

Video 1.

Walking into the woods, with part of the 100s. (Click on the picture to watch the video)

One of the plants we returned to the workshop with was witch's hair lichen (Alectoria sarmentosa), a light-coloured lichen that is common in the forest. It hangs down from tree branches like beard or hair. It gave a bright orange colour to silk and wool, which was a surprise to me and the other dyers. Previously, when I dyed and placed it as a sample in my colour chart, it was a beige-brown colour. The next day, when we went to the mountain to gather plants, we collected more witch's hair lichen. However, this time, the resulting dye colour was more brownish and cloudy—quite different from the result of the first dye bath of witch's hair lichen from the forest and more like the colour from my previous sample.

I arranged the workshop Botanical Colour Laboratory in connection to the exhibition of my work 'Forbindelser' (which is Norwegian of 'Connections') (figure 1) at the Osterøy Artist Society (Osterøy kunstforening). In this work, I used naturally dyed yarn to weave on stones. The yarn was coloured in 2020 and 2021 using dyes from plants, trees, lichen and mushrooms found in the landscape of the West Coast of Norway and Northern Norway. The work was inspired by the traditional, vertical, warp-weighted loom—the Oppstadvev. In 'Forbindelser', stones originating from the same landscape as the plant dyes were used as

looms instead of warp weights. Thus, the stones formed a woven installation in the exhibition space. As an artist working with plant dyes, I place my work within a field of other artists working with landscapes and naturally sourced colours such as Arja Hop & Peter Svenson, Hildur Bjarnadóttir and Anne Stabel. They have inspired both 'Forbindelser' and the Botanical Colour Laboratory by how they work with plant dye in relation to places and have worked with accumulating knowledge about colours extracted from landscapes, as in Stabel's Herbarium Tinctorum (2017–), Bjarnadóttir's Cohabitation (2017) and Hop and Svenson's Felwa series (2015–2022). The Botanical Colour Laboratory differs from these works in its form of collective processes involving participants.

I spin the threads of my reflections with Donna Haraway (1988), Sara Ahmed (2010; 2019), Arjun Appadurai (1996, 2006) and Munir Fasheh (2021), who deal with the concepts of situated knowledge, orientations, the unruliness of things, the production of locality and mujaawarah (neighbouring). I chose these concepts to reflect upon the workshop and its entangled relationships to matter, landscape, crafting and knowledge. Methodology, epistemology and ontology are interconnected, and the concepts and thinkers we draw upon in our thought processes make a difference. Haraway (2016, p. 35) wrote, 'It matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges. It matters what relations relate relations.' Feminist and decolonising theories bring our bodies and places in the material world into the foreground and question whose knowledge matters. It critically investigates how the response-ability (Barad, 2012, in Murris, 2022) to interact with our surroundings, humans and non-humans is affected by our being and places in the world. Curator Reem Fadda (2007) focused on Palestinian female artists who had been working with the land and territory, using their own bodies in relation to the land through embodied, material practice. Through this prism, I took a closer look at some fragments of the context and practice of the plant dye workshop.

In this article, I present a study of the multi-sensorial aspects and relations between humans and non-humans in collective plant dyeing. I am interested in how works such as the Botanical Colour Laboratory can be a participatory textile practice through the collective process of mapping the landscape colours. As a form of land crafting, these practices can affect our orientations with and within landscapes and our relations to our human and non-human neighbours, thereby connecting us to our complex localities.

Figure 1.

Forbindelser exhibition, Osterøy Artist Society, 2021. Photo: Lars Mjøs.

Creative Practice Ethnography

Creative practice ethnography has guided the methodology of this research, and the traces from the workshop are written field notes, drawings, dyed wool and silk, photos, videos and tacit memories. The traces also include texts that I have named 'The 100s', which are part of my field notes and appear as text in the videos. 'The 100s' are inspired by Laurent Berlant and Kathleen Stewart's (2019) 100-word poetry exercises, which involve responding to various events and ideas through spontaneous writing of thoughts, ideas and reflections, without using direct citations or references. By combining part of 'The 100s' texts with videos and drawings, I created new multi-modal field notes that convey more than text and moving images. Thus, the videos and images in this article provide an overview of the multifaceted processes of plant dyeing.

An ethnographic study is based on the social aspects of fieldwork and requires a longer presence in the field of study (Aull Davies, 2007). Creative practice ethnography is based on the researcher's creative practice, including sensory experiences. I have chosen this approach, as this study was based on my own artistic practice and participation. Multi-sensorial, embodied experiences are central to creative practice ethnography and are

thereby translated and transmitted into an academic setting. Knowledge is built from and in the field through action and embodied ways of knowing (Hjorth, Harris, Jungnickel, & Coombs, 2019). In this study, I investigated both social and material aspects, where I lean on new materialism that focuses on the intra-activity between humans and non-humans (Barad, 2003). I used ethnographic methods and reflected on the processes in the workshop with field notes. Field notes are 'the materials (in the widest sense) that fieldworkers collect, produce and absorb in the field; and the drafts, comments, outlines, sketches and so forth made before and after fieldwork, eventually, make a formal presentation or publication' (Andersen, 2020, p. 2).

The field notes were written from the position of a participating observer and as an artist who organised and conducted the workshop. I investigated the aesthetic processes that occurred in the Botanical Colour Laboratory through my own practice and experience. The social theatre practitioner Réka Polonyi (2021) questioned how we can transmit complex artistic processes into academic knowledge in a way that does not widen the gaps in the field. Lived life is messier than what can be accommodated into academic texts, and it leaves out and marginalises many aspects of lived experiences. I used my field notes to reflect upon my thoughts and translate my multi-sensorial experiences into a multi-modal academic text that includes videos, images and 'The 100s'.

By conducting research through creative practice ethnography, I explored different ways of gathering information through field notes. I also experimented with combining the poetic text of 'The 100s' with some of my drawings and videos from the walk into the forest and the process of dyeing with Usnea lichen. Alongside collecting and assembling research material, the research process also involved mending, mapping and forgetting in the shifting conditions of space, time and language.

I see the world as a constant flux of entanglements, where matter, humans and non-humans are constantly changing and undergoing processes. Research situations are never just given; they are also assembled and changeable. They are always shaped in some ways and are affected by our presence or lack of presence (Mauthner, 2018). As a researcher, I am part of a field and make choices on where, when, what and who to involve within the constraints of circumstantial conditions such as time, economy, space, and body. Within the expanded field of ethnography, which also includes creative practices, there are tools I can use to translate and transmit these multi-sensory experiences to multi-modal text.

Natural Dyeing and Land Crafting

Dyeing colours with plants, lichen, fungi and other materials is a worldwide craft practiced through the ages (Wada, 2018). The invention of synthetic dye in 1856 (Stothers & Abrahart, 2019) reduced the need for naturally dyed textiles; however, knowledge and interest in natural dyes have remained within the fields of art and craft. Natural dyes have also been important trade items such as the red dye from the roots of madder, which was extensively grown in and exported from the Netherlands (Auch, 2018). Some other significant historical dyes are purpure, cochineal and indigo. In Norway, traces of plants grown for plant dyes such as tansy (Tanacetum vulgaris) can still be found at abandoned farms and houses, which suggests the historical importance of plant dyes in everyday life. Many of the plants used for dyes can also be used for other purposes, such as St. John's wort (Hypericum), which is also a medicinal plant. Therefore, natural dyeing enacts knowledge connected to several academic disciplines such as botany, chemistry and physics. Natural dyeing is a craft that uses resources from the land such as natural fibres (e.g. wool or linen), mordant (e.g. alum or iron) and dye material (e.g. flowers, bark, lichen and mushrooms). In addition, after the dyeing process, the dyed material composts into the soil and returns to the land.

Figure 2.

Botanical Colour Laboratory, Osterøy, 21. Photo: Author

Land crafting builds an understanding of and connection to the land. Land here is understood as including land, water, air, subterranean environment and urban areas (Tuck, McKenzie, & McCoy, 2014, p. 8). Through crafting, materials from the land and our

entanglements in the world are sensorially available as ‘part of a relational world-making process in all its ongoing materiality’ (Murris, 2022, p. 23). Land crafting is more than doing craft outdoors in nature. In land crafting, there is an ongoing relationship with the land and its human and non-human dwellers. These relations are complex, as many factors affect the resulting colours in the dye process such as humidity, minerals, PH, temperature, time, bacteria and molecular structures. In addition, dyes and materials continue to be transformed after the initial dyeing processes; for instance, fading and composting occur due to the impact of other elements.

When I craft with the land through natural dyeing, I continue a line of generational foraging, foresting, fishing and farming from the land and sea. This legacy relates to all of us at some point in our common history. Humans and non-humans are changing and crafting the landscape, which undergoes constant transformation and movement. According to Tim Ingold, humans and non-humans are ‘growing into the world, the world grows into them’ (2022, p. 7). Using resources from nature requires responsibility in what to use and how much to pick. It is based on local knowledge by knowing the landscape and what grows there, and which species are endangered and not. I learned from other foragers to gather only what one needs and not to pick everything, leaving enough to let the plants, lichen and mushroom regenerate. This requires relational knowledge about the land and awareness to be passed on to new generations of response-able (Haraway, 2016) land crafters crafting with the land.

Materials are marked and transformed through crafting that uses our bodies in walking, lifting, cutting, pouring and other actions. In plant dyeing, the fibres are marked with colours through the chemical and physical processes of different matters interacting together. Groth and Fredriksen (2022) presented the concept of crafting with in their introduction of the anthology ‘Expanding Environmental Awareness in Education Through the Arts. Crafting-with the Environment’. Crafting with is building on Donna Haraway's (2016) thinking with. Crafting with draws attention to the collective practice of crafting with matters, including humans and non-humans. In the Botanical Colour Laboratory, we crafted with the landscape through the awareness of the multi-sensorial aspects and the relations between humans and non-humans in the collective plant dyeing process (figure 2). In the following section, I will weave the terms situated knowledge (Haraway, 1998), orientations (Ahmed, 2006), unruliness of things (Appadurai, 2006), production of locality (Appadurai, 1996) and mujaawarah (neighbouring) (Fasheh, 2021) with experiences from the Botanical Colour Laboratory and land crafting with through natural dyeing.

Situated Knowledge

Video 2.

The processes of time and temperature, with part of 'The 100s'. (Click on the picture to watch the video)

Haraway (1988) wrote from a feminist position about situated knowledge in her essay 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective'. Situated knowledge opposes a disembodied, scientific and objective epistemic tradition and advocates for feminist accounts that focus on embodied and situated knowledge. This perspective calls for an active, sensory vision that regards situations from different angles and pays attention to the overlooked. To work with natural dyes is therefore to work with matters that are interrelated and interact with each other in a process that takes time and many phases.

The process of dyeing is driven by circumstances such as previous experiences; the availability of materials and tools; expectations and physical conditions. In the Botanical Colour Laboratory workshop, the witch's hair lichen picked from the forest and mountains gave two colours in the dye process, one brownish and the other clear orange (video 2). Something unexpected happened in the process, as on the next day, we anticipated a similar colour to appear when we dyed with lichen also picked from the mountain. This raised curiosity among the dyers about which factors could have affected the differences in colour.

Searching online using keywords like ‘witch's hair lichen plant dye’, we found an answer that directed us to information on several sites about variations of witch's hair lichen such as Usnea lichen (Darlington, 2005–2020; Fiber, 2021). The orange colour comes from the usnea acid found in this variant and explains the vast colour differences between seemingly the same type of lichen.

Dye processes are complex and situated and can expand into social, botanical, environmental, sensorial, physical, chemical and other fields of knowledge. Haraway's term situated knowledge (1988) is useful for going deeper into the process I described in the field notes and for being critical about my own position as a researcher. I paid attention to the overlooked and rely on aesthetic, collective and sensorial ways of knowing (Waterhouse et. al, 2019). When we move through landscapes to forage dye materials, how we orient ourselves matters (Ahmed, 2010).

Orientations Matter

Sara Ahmed (2010), a writer and independent scholar, wrote about orientation from a queer point of view. How we orient ourselves affects how ‘matter’ matters. Our orientation in the world is embodied and situated, and we shape and are shaped by the world and objects in the world we move in. Our orientation towards the world affects what is available to us, as spaces and objects are formed for some bodies and not others. In the workshop, when the workshop participants and I entered the woods to collect dye, we oriented ourselves towards the plants, the lichens and other possible sources of natural dye. This shaped what we sensed and did not sense. In the dye process, we experienced how the natural dyes we created transformed the colours of the fibres such as with the white Usnea lichen that gave an orange colour to the fibres in the dye bath. In doing so, this embodied and aesthetic experience changed how we regard this lichen and how we orient ourselves in the woods. It also tuned us collectively into ecological awareness and how we cohabit the world (Morton, 2021). Therefore, the dye process shapes and transforms both the fibres and dyers.

Unruliness of Things

Lichens are in symbiosis with algae and fungus, and Usnea lichen often grows on trees that are in a transformational process of becoming other matter. We used this lichen to extract its colour by heating it in water and adding wool and silk to bind the colour to the fibre. The anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (2006) wrote in his essay ‘The thing itself’ about the possible unruliness of objects that resist instrumentalisation and commodification by being a thing in itself. He wrote about the social life of things in contemporary Indian art and that in a world

full of things, art and everyday objects can be difficult to distinguish. Artists that work with such everyday objects allow materiality to thrive instead of mastering it. The Botanica Colour Laboratory also relates to Appadurai's theories, as it is a time-based, ephemeral work in which the process is open-ended and constantly transformed due to different factors

The Usnea lichen also relates to Appadurai's ideas about the circle of things and their transformations, not in a linear form but as unpredictable modes. The value of things and what they represent is chaotic and complicated. The Usnea lichen enters a circulation of use as a natural dye in the workshop by becoming part of making by transforming the colour of the fibre. Tsing (2015) traced the matsutake mushroom and followed its life from Japan to Finnish forests and other places. She wrote multiple layers of stories, tracing the history of a globalised chain of commodities and workers in a capitalist society. I investigated some layers of histories and networks of which the Usnea lichen is part. I found that the usnea acid found in the lichen, which brings out the orange colour, is also used for different medicinal purposes, including as an antimicrobial agent in traditional Chinese medicine for more than 2000 years (Guo et al., 2008). The lichen itself has also been used in cosmetics to make diapers and bandages, and can also be consumed as food by both humans and non-humans («Strylav», 2020; Sullivan, 2013; Woodland Trust, n.d.). For me, this knowledge was concealed. However, the use of the lichen to make dye opened up other possibilities of seeing the thing itself in its unruliness and letting the matter thrive and cross different lines of possibilities.

Grounding Locality

We moved through the landscape—the mountain, forest, and fjord coast—where we collected the plants and lichen. Arjun Appadurai (1996) wrote about the relations between the ethnoscape (non-local) and local practice in the production of situated locality, which involves a moment of colonisation by a socially organised power. In his view, locality is ‘relational and contextual rather than scalar or spatial’ (p. 178). Locality is a complex social and spatial practice that requires and produces its context in the relationship between local and non-local contexts. The experiences in the plant dye workshop were entangled with social practices and experiences that were grounded in both a local practice and a larger ethnoscape with the flux of human movements, which included the movements of practices and knowledge.

Naming and using the plants for natural dyes created new contextual, local knowledge that can be seen as part of the relational production of locality. This knowledge is drawn from a larger context, from natural dye practices across space and time to understanding why and

how a colour from natural material is transferred to a fibre (Wada, 2018). In our interactions with the landscape, we encountered observations that can be linked to the complexities of global climate change; for example, we expected to find shelf fungi but found none. This entailed that our observations in the forest were then connected to a larger, interrelated global context. Thus, working with plants and natural dye links us directly with the landscape which is situated within and part of a multi-layered relationship to the locality in the neighbourhood, that is, in a local and non-local context that we see with climate changes.

Mujaawarah (Neighbouring)

Munir Fasheh (2021) is a recognised Palestinian learning theorist and practitioner who focuses on community education. He introduced the Arabic word mujaawarah (neighbouring), connecting it to knowledge, involvement and understanding in community, which is relevant when discussing collective crafting processes. Mujaawarah can only be lived, as it requires physical presence and face-to-face conversations (Fasheh, 2016, 2021). One strength of using the term mujaawarah is how it relates to local contexts, whether in Palestine or Norway, that is, the active living together through a neighbouring with people who are different. Fasheh uses the metaphor of the flowering plant to explain part of the mujaawarah, as its 'roots' and 'seeds' can spread to other places through their stories. The workshop was based in an art institution that I helped establish more than 20 years ago. From a single gallery format, it has developed into the Osterøy Artist's Society, which is comprised of several galleries and workshop spaces in the village. Some dyers were locals from the village, and others were living in the same region. The workshop participants were mostly women, and not all participants had Norwegian as their first language. We brought in different knowledges about the landscape we worked in, which also spanned across the different generations that participated in the workshop. When we moved together in the landscape, foraging plants and other natural dye materials, we were attentive to our surroundings and were present in the landscape and in our relations with each other. When we returned to the workshop, we shared experiences and continued the processes of textile dyeing and naming the organic dye materials we used. This collective crafting-with process can be considered a fragment of mujaawarah, not only with the other dyers and the artist's society but also through neighbouring with the landscape and land. We learned from the intra-actions, got involved in the entangled process of natural dyeing and gained new understandings of our continuing production of locality and relationships within our neighbourhood.

Collective Knowledge Processes

In facilitating the Botanical Colour Laboratory, I began by giving a basic introduction to dyeing processes, including historical perspectives and an explanation of my own experiences with plant dyeing. The participants then introduced themselves and explained their interest in the workshop. After this, we started foraging dye materials in the surrounding landscape. When we returned to the workshop, we looked at what we had gathered and planned the dye procedures. Throughout the workshop, as references, we used dye samples that I have made throughout my practice. At the same time, I emphasised that the workshop was about exploring and learning together through sharing, not by instruction. In doing so, I created a framework for each day of the workshop that was reflectively adjusted to accommodate the dyers and dyeing process.

Lave and Wenger (1991) used the concept of situated learning and learning as a part of social practice, being in the world and communities of practice. Through the workshop, the dyers gained experience of the dyeing process, which connected them to a wider network of natural dyers and a community of practice. According to Ann-Hege Lorvik Waterhouse, Lovise Søyland and Kari Carlsen in 'Experimental exploration of materials and materiality in transmaterial landscapes' (2019), collective learning processes occurs where knowledge multiplies through sharing, reflecting and interacting in an environment that includes living and non-living matter. In their study of kindergarten teacher students' experiments with materials and digital tools, unforeseen events occurred in the exploration of materials, and new discoveries followed. As in the Botanical Colour Laboratory, these unexpected occurrences unveiled potentials for situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and further explorations into the unruliness of things (Appadurai, 2006).

Natural dyeing is an ancient craft. Graecus Holmiensis is a written document that contains several dye recipes from Egypt in ca 300 AD (Caley, 1927), and dyers were one of the earliest professionals to form guilds, as the oldest known guild for dyers was established in Venice in 1234 (Sundström, 2002). Historically, natural dye guilds have preserved and developed valuable knowledge about natural dye processes, which has been passed onto communities of practice. Inspired by the guild system, I organised the participants into working groups of 3 or 4 dyers. In the workshop, these small guild-like groups did not protect knowledge but opened and shared their findings in a community of practice. The dyers brought along their different levels of experience and knowledge into the workshop. This contributed to knowledge exchange and new discussions and findings, which arose owing to the shared format rather than from working alone (Waterhouse et al., 2019). In doing so, I also worked

to facilitate an environment in which responsibility was taken by the groups to explore natural dyeing within a collective learning situation.

Figure 3.

The dyeing process during the Botanical Colour Laboratory. Photo: Author

In moving through the landscape and land crafting, we built upon each other's knowledge to develop new situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988). In the following section, I will examine closely some potentials for knowledge production and learning processes within this collective-making practice. The workshop involved learning through encounters with different materials and tools in the process of crafting with natural dyeing. In their literature review, Akkerman and Bronkhorst (2016) examined research in which learning was situated across different contexts. They focused on learning outside of school environments, that is, in informal and authentic everyday settings. In doing so, they became interested in the continuity and discontinuity of learning in these contexts. The workshop took place in a cross-situational environment, moving physically from one context to another. The aspects of continuity and discontinuity in the learning contexts in everyday settings that Akkerman and Bronkhorst examined had parallels to the workshop, as it focused on how new and previous knowledge and experiences can weave new layers of understanding within the multi-layered context of natural dyeing.

In addition, natural dyeing touches upon various contexts and fields of knowledge, such as craft, botany and chemistry. The dyers brought their previous knowledge and experiences

into the workshop, such as an understanding of medicinal plants and mushrooms. Through the workshop process, these understandings were transformed and would likely influence our future practice. I foresaw this, especially on the second and third days of the workshop, when we mapped the colours of the mountain and forest. Some dyers who joined the first workshop also joined the second and third workshops. They were more acquainted with how I organised the workshops, in which I was not instructing and teaching but creating a situation for experimentation and new outcomes. I also organised the second and third workshops better. For example, I organised time more effectively and gave the participants handouts that listed several natural dyes and encouraged them to search for new dye materials, drawing upon their experiences from the previous workshops. As a result, the different guilds came back from foraging with varieties of new dye materials, several of which we had never experimented with before (figure 3). In total, we created sixty-one colour samples in wool and silk during the three days of the Botanical Colour Laboratory (figure 4). The outcome could have been even better; however, some dyes did not create as much colour as we originally expected. Nevertheless, these less successful outcomes were also part of our mapping of the colours of the landscape. It was important to me that the dyers took an active part in shaping the workshop and that there was room for 'failures' and mujaawarah with the dyers and landscape. In the process of making throughout the day, there was also time to tell stories and form common memories and new knowledge.

Mapping Colours of the Landscape

Today, many contemporary artists worldwide work with the landscape in their practice. Herein, I will mention 'Losæter', which was established by Future Farmers in Oslo, Jumana Manna's works on seeds and foraging and the ongoing project Palestinian Heirloom Seed Library by Vivian Sansour. These artists relate their works to their contemporary living experiences and to the historical backgrounds of investigating new possibilities. Losæter is an artist-initiated farm in Oslo that engages citizens in planting, seed saving, farming and bread making. It is a trans-cultural and trans-generational public space activated by neighbours, schools, artists and others. The Palestinian Heirloom Seed Library is similar to Losæter, protecting and gathering seeds for the future. Sansour works directly with several Palestinian farmers to use heirloom plants and create a seed library. These two projects work on mujaawarah (Fasheh, 2021), which takes place through working together with land crafting and practicing neighbouring. In 2018, the artist Jumana Manna created the film 'Wild Relatives', an account of an agricultural research centre that was forced to move from Aleppo to Lebanon and the seed bank in Svalbard. It follows the traces of seeds relocated between these distanced locations. In her essay Where Nature Ends and Settlements Begin,

the artist Jumana Manna (2020) writes about foraging in Palestine, a social, cultural and political landscape under military occupation, and how foraging the most used herbs such as sage (maramieh) and thyme (zaatar) is illegal for Palestinians.

Figure 4.

Marking the samples with information. Photo: Author

Mapping is not an innocent tool and can be used to control and colonise land and regulate the use of the landscape. The trade and production of textiles and dyes are interwoven in the history of colonisation with the production and trade of resources such as cotton, Brazil wood and indigo. Thinking about the colonising aspects of mapping the landscape through the act of natural dyeing affects neighbouring relations with the local landscape and its use. The Botanical Colour Laboratory is responding to the surrounding landscape that has been shaped for centuries through agriculture, foraging and other uses. It is an open-ended project that is continuing in other places and contexts in which the collective mapping of the landscape occurs through land crafting, which is based on an awareness of the colonising aspects of mapping and the use of land.

Mapping the landscape through natural dye changed my orientation to my surroundings. I started to look for certain plants and other potential dye materials, paying attention to how they grow, the weather, terrain access and changes in the landscape. These landscapes are available for foraging and free movement due to allemannsretten. The Norwegian terms related to the commons are allmenning and allemannsretten. Allmenning comes from old Norse allmennr or allemenningr, which means all men. Several streets in Bergen are called allmenning, which, in this sense, means a road or a street with access to 'all men'. Another use of allmenning is for an area that everyone or a certain group has access to, usually for grazing, hunting or logging (Tryti, 2002). Allemannsretten is the right to roam, also called the right to access. This was codified in 1957 as part of the Outdoor Recreation Act. It includes the right to wander, stay and harvest in uninhabited and uncultivated areas such as the mountains and by the seaside (Reusch, 2012). In the Botanical Colour Laboratory, we used our allemannsrett to access and use our commons.

As I wrote in the field notes at the beginning of this article, in the workshop, I went into the forest with the other dyers to look for dye materials. We focused on what was there in the forest and on what we were expecting to find. This was partly based on our previous experiences and local knowledge. For example, we expected to find polypore, shelf fungi in the forest but failed to do so. Some workshop participants stated in their feedback that the process of going into the landscape in this open-ended way of foraging, dyeing and sampling made them look differently at the plants in their surroundings. Two types of lichen especially caught their interest: the witch's hair lichen found in the forest and mountain landscapes that produced different colours and Parmelia saxatilis, commonly known as salted shield lichen, which creates a deep brown colour. Both lichens were previously unknown to several dyers. However, after seeing how these common lichens transformed silk and wool into vibrant colours, they gained a new layer in experiencing lichens in their habitat. As one dyer explained, she had often passed by these lichens in the woods, unaware that they could create such vibrant colours. As we are part of the landscape and affect the ongoing processes of nature, land crafting, as in this workshop, can bring more awareness and attention to the landscape that we use and our relationships within it.

Ethical Response-Abilities

Hal Foster (1996) wrote about an ethnographic turn in visual art where the interest is in the field of others and the object is the cultural 'other' He pointed to many dangers in a practice that is discourse specific, moving from site to site and making works from an artistic interpretation. This critical point can also be found in Miwon Kwon's book 'One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity' (2002). She also pointed to this nomadic

artistic practice of continually moving from one place to another. This practice has the danger of becoming unspecific and superficial instead of contextualising the works socially, culturally, politically and economically to navigate new sites. The site is already there a priori, and I choose to navigate within these conditions rather than create an entirely new setting. I am aware of these ethical dilemmas as an artist that works in social contexts.

For me, it is important that the project is rooted in the local community and that I have the legitimacy to invite people into my project. I have lived for many years in the village where the workshop took place, and I knew the landscape well. In promoting the workshop, I invited participants to join me in mapping the colours of the landscape through plant dye. This means that the workshop took the form of mapping and was less of a 'traditional' natural dye workshop. The participants paid for the materials used in the workshop and could take home the colour samples, yarn and silk scarfs we dyed. In research, the stage of transmission is not only within the academic field but also back to the community that one works with. In both socially engaged art practice and ethnography, it is common to think about how one can ensure give-and-take relationships in the research process (Hjorth et al., 2019).

There is another ethical consideration that I thought about in the workshop that Ahmed (2019) discussed in 'What's the Use?: On the Uses of Use', which dealt with how the workshop was organised for some bodies and not for others. This also extends to the tools and the methods we used, which shape interactions in the dyeing processes and the intended use of the dyed materials. The workshop was organised through an art institution and took place from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm on Saturday and Sunday, excluding some people but enabling others to join. Even if a workshop is open for 'anyone', the reality is that certain groups of people are more inclined to sign up for a workshop involving plant dyes. In my case, people interested in Viking traditions, knitting and plants joined the workshop. In addition, when I invited participants to a workshop, my orientation shapes the workshop and affects which bodies will attend or not attend. It is not only a matter of how matter matters (Barad, 2003) but also who matters, which entails that such choices also become a political matter (Morton, 2021). The ethical framework for this project involved not just contextualising the project and its participants but also drawing ethical awareness to the processes of land crafting.

Humans have been colonising the land by building, farming and extracting recourses, often in damaging and unsustainable ways (Demos, 2016). Land crafting not only uses resources from the land but also takes an ethical perspective that reflects upon how resources can be used and composted back to the land in responsible ways. In the workshop, we were

crafting with materials derived directly from nature while also using industrially produced materials and tools such as wool, silk, alum salt, pans and stoves. These had been transformed from raw materials into products through industrial processes that were most likely colonising in nature and highly polluting. For example, according to the European Parliament (2020), it is estimated that the dyeing and finishing processes in textile manufacturing are responsible for approximately 20% of global water pollution. Therefore, working with natural dyes gave the dyers knowledge and access to alternative, non-industrial dyeing procedures and developed their awareness of how one can forage in sustainable ways.

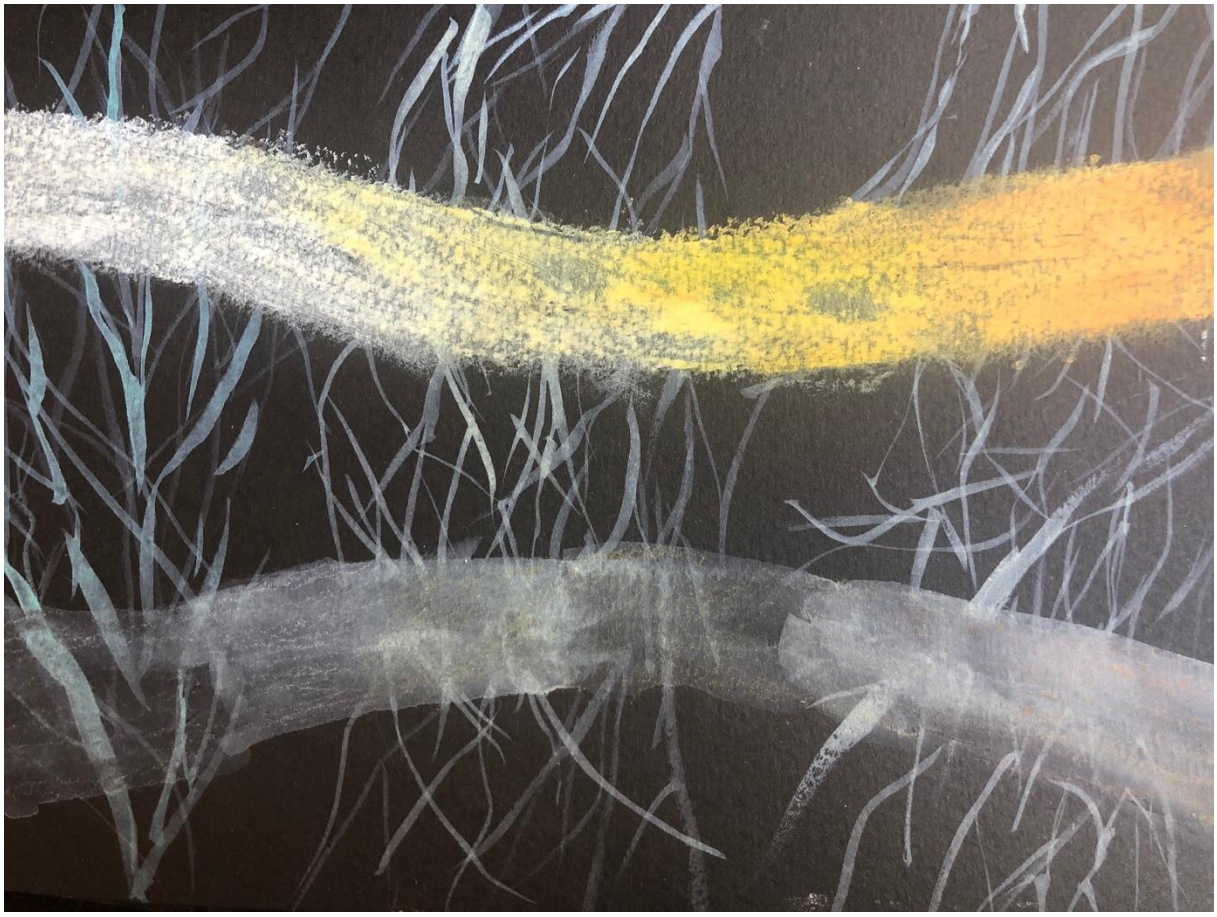
Another ethical consideration is how research materialises in the world, what traces it leaves and what it omits (Mauthner, 2018). Ethics is more than just about not harming or following guidelines; it is a response-ability that is part of an entangled, common practice of knowledge (Haraway, 2016, p. 34). It includes taking care and having awareness of how and why one researches and being critical and reflective of one's methodology and tools. It includes how I organised the workshop so that the dyers felt safe and had room for their own agency and experiments.

Concluding Threads

I have been developing and reflecting upon this workshop with the concepts of situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988), orientation (Ahmed, 2010), unruliness of things (Appadurai, 2006) and production of locality (Appadurai, 1996). These concepts call upon a way of being in and sensing the world as a complex and interconnected reality. According to Haraway (1988), there is power in seeing, as we choose to emphasise what we see and what we choose not to see. In the dye workshop, I was present with my body and senses, and was aware of other multi-sensorial experiences that occurred in the different layers of the workshop. These were in relation to other humans and non-humans, and a grounding in situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988) and ecological awareness (Morton, 2021). These shifted our attention to the presence and absence of plants, polypore, lichens, fungi and other matter as we moved through the landscape. Art projects such as the ‘Botanical Colours Laboratory’ have the freedom to propose other forms, encounters and ways of transforming (Ingold, 2022, p. xi) and living with our surroundings (Demos, 2016, pp. 271–272). Moreover, they have the potential to be critical and troubling of our intra-action and colonisation of the landscapes (Demos, 2016; Manna, 2020) and to be aware of the unruliness of things (Appadurai, 2006). Land crafting with plant dyes in collective processes involves crafting in direct relationship to matter through a practice of transforming materials that requires presence and time.

Video 3.

A (de)structed landscape, with part of 'The 100s'. (Click on the picture to watch the video)



What I observed from the workshops was not from a non-place but from a position. According to Ahmed in 'Orientations matter' (2010), it is not from a single orientation but from several perspectives. With the workshop, this included not only how I oriented myself but also how others oriented themselves in the workshop that I facilitated. How I organised the space and time, and the tools and information available affected the collective crafting process. In this way, matter matters.

One thing that interests me in working with natural dyes is how the plants we use have other purposes such as for medicine or food. Part of the aim of the workshops was to mediate and build knowledge about land crafting as situated, relational (Haraway, 1988) and complex. This takes me to Appadurai's (2006) concept of unruliness of things and how things could exceed their categorisations and be opened up for other intentions and circulate into different uses. His text on the production of locality (1996) started with a reflection on how we connect to and produce locality and how a workshop with natural dye can be part of this.

The research tools, what we think about, how we choose to enter a situation, what position we take and how we assemble our research material are all complicated and sometimes messy. In this chaotic world, maybe things can surprise us and awaken our need to search for meaning while we are shaping and being shaped by the world.

My experience is that working with natural dyes and moving in the landscape to forage dye materials affect how I read and relate to my surroundings. In addition, involving others in the workshop became part of a collective mapping of natural dyes in one specific area that produced locality. Reflecting on the processes in the Botanical Colour Laboratory, I found that mujaawarah (Fasheh, 2021) could be relevant to discuss regarding land crafting in a village in Norway. It is more than just about neighbouring other humans. It includes neighbouring with our non-humans and learning in the community, in mujaawarah. With the process of mapping the colours of natural dyes found in the fjord, forest, and mountain, we learned and shared knowledge by experiencing the process of dyeing, which is partly unpredictable owing to the many complex factors of natural dye (video 3). The knowledge and stories in and from the local landscape are part of our collective memory and collective situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The collective-making processes in the workshop included learning with our human and non-human neighbours using our senses in multiple ways (Waterhouse et al., 2019) and within several contexts and fields of knowledge (Bronkhorst & Akkerman, 2016).

The complexity and different entries to our relations to the landscapes and our human and non-human neighbours are found in the following works: Future Farmer's ‘Losæter’, Vivian Sansour's Palestinian Heirloom Seed Library, and Jumana Manna's ‘Wild Relatives’. These are facilitated for in the Botanical Colour Laboratory. The workshop is a minor intervention, but it can be the beginning of new threads woven into the fabric of mujaawarah. It is a situation for learning through multi-layered sensing and making through crafting from and with the land, using our commons, allmanneretten. In the workshops, two generations from the same family participated. Knowledge about natural dye and textile crafts, in general, has been passed on from one generation to another. Past, present, and future bleed into each other in a unilinear way in the collective processes of land crafting. Projects such as the Botanical Colour Laboratory can be part of the connection between us and our complex locality by crafting with the Usnea lichen and other matters. It can make us more aware of how entangled we are with the land and our human and non-human neighbours.

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