

Holding Space with Peat

by Mari Keski-Korsu

When you run on the bog, you can navigate with colours. The red surface will carry you. The yellow might do the same but you can't be sure. The black will swallow you. If you keep still and stand straight in the black muddy peat, you'll sink until only your shoulders and head will be above it.

Let this environment exhaust us. Exhaust the physical body and the rational mind to the point where you may start to feel the melting of yourself into this bog; into its' soft and gentle touch, it's existence.

Breath.

Silence.

Breath.

I will experience clear, emphatic connection.

Breath.

What would you like to show me?

Breath.

Then.

I remember a story about indigenous people who had learnt to deal with the forest when it was alive and well. Then the Westerners came and wanted to protect the forest. Indigenous locals had been slowly interacting with the forest and learnt to co-live with, they were a part of this ecosystem. Suddenly the Westerners said that they can't touch anything in it.

When I was walking on the peat and also thinking where we can move, I started to feel really stupid because I realised my way of experiencing this environment was to treat it like a museum object. And it is not that.

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The only thing that is dying, is us. We are not talking about the planet really but we are talking about our base of life. The planet will be fine. Our discussion is anthropocentric. It's not the damage we are doing to the planet, it's the damage we are doing to us.

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When I opened my eyes, lying there after running and meditation, I saw a little green maggot in the grass and I could see her little tiny hands or legs. And I realised OMG. We made such a mess here! But then immediately, I thought what if the maggot is thinking: Finally, there's something going on here!? Of course, it's a projection. But maybe it was the best thing ever happened in the life-time of this maggot.

It was strange experience to be in the bog. I was lying down and felt like my hands were tight and I was pulled down. It wasn't unpleasant, though.

Hmm, interesting, that didn't happen to me. Did anybody see a bog angel?

I felt very peaceful. I could call it angelic state. Of course, I was shivering but hanging there. It so natural for me, personally – the joy of the child in you. It's incredible and to do it in this

environment that really exhausts you, I just need to give up and surrender. Thankfully, there was a bit of guidance as well. It's quite tripping and high feeling, that could be connection to angels as well.

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How can we go disanthropocentric?

I don't know, maybe we should fully embrace it.

Embrace what?

This whole thing reminded me of one gender study... Why are we so afraid of confusion? We should embrace confusion more. That kind of goes to what we did today, running on the peat. Embrace confusion and non-defined, non-binary concepts. Maybe everything can go-exist – even capitalism, socialism, anarchists you name it. Everything!

What is the exact definition of confusion here?

I'm referring to what he said before.

I'm confused.

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Yes, I believe we belong to the peat. I think there are places where people shouldn't be in the this planet like in planes or very deep in the ground. Can it also be about being aware of belonging but also un-belonging. We can't live there, we are not bog-people. You ask if we should do it again: maybe but not too often. It's specific entry and exit zone. It was a celebration, frankly and very special.

You asked us to be emphatic – was also wondering if the bog could be empathic. Could the bog be forgiving for us. How do you think of this?

Empathy is a tricky thing. It's basic biology to eg. emphasise our children, because we want their survival. So it's basically quite a lot to ask to be emphatic with the bog because it's about bringing empathy to some different kind of level, other than our build in empathy has. The bog doesn't look like us, it's has kind of nothing to do with us in the empathic sense. So it requires a lot of imagination to experience that you're are one together.

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Text: Mari Keski-Korsu

Images at FB by Ulla Taipale

Holding Space with Peat -session with peat running and inter-species bog communication was realised in Siikaneva peatland, close Hyytialä Forest Research Station in Finland in the beginning of September 2017. The session was lead by artist Mari Keski-Korsu and was a part of Earth Observation Source -workshop. This text contains fragments of the participants thoughts.

See also artsufartsu.net / shiftregister.info / climatewhirl.fi

The peat runners were Jamie Allen, Erich Berger, Marc Dusselier, Verena Friedrich, Antye Greie-Ripatti, Meri Hietala, Martin Howse, Maippi Ketola, Janne Korhonen, Aino Korrensalo, Mirko Nikolić, Kati Roover, Beta Simultan, Ulla Taipale and Nina Trivedi.