



MACQUARIE
University

Macquarie University PURE Research Management System

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article:

Valtonen, A., & Pullen, A. (2021). Writing with rocks. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 28(2), 506-522.

which has been published in final form at:

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12579>

This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Use of Self-Archived Versions.



Anu Valtonen (Orcid ID: 0000-0001-8940-1254)

Writing with rocks

Authors

Anu Valtonen*
Professor of Cultural Economy
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Lapland
96100 Rovaniemi, Finland
anu.valtonen@ulapland.fi

Alison Pullen
Professor of Management
MacQuarie University
Sydney, AU
Alison.pullen@mq.edu.au

*corresponding author

There is no conflict of interest.

Data availability statement: The data employed in this article is not available due to its embodied and personal nature.

Author bios

Anu Valtonen has lived her life on and with the bedrocks of Finland. They, and other inhabitants of the Northern area, have inspired her to explore various earthly relations and to develop ways of investigating, and living with them, with care. She works at the University of Lapland, and feels privileged by being able to breathe pure air, and to be related to feminist scholars who provide an endless source of inspiration.

Alison Pullen has lived on Gadigal Land for more than 15 years, each year experiencing more dramatic and unseasonal weather. As a mother she hopes her son's generation will care for the Land more than her own generation. Alison was born in Wales and loves being in the mountains. She works at Macquarie University and is fortunate for the feminist relations that sustain her, including land, water, and the sky.

Funding

This article is supported by research funding (Envisioning proximity tourism with new materialism project, Academy of Finland, no. 324493).

This article has been accepted for publication and undergone full peer review but has not been through the copyediting, typesetting, pagination and proofreading process, which may lead to differences between this version and the [Version of Record](#). Please cite this article as [doi: 10.1111/gwao.12579](https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12579).

This article is protected by copyright. All rights reserved.

Writing with rocks

Abstract

Rocks. Geological forces across time and space. Non-human beings.

Humans. Affect material encounters *with* rocks.

Connecting. Being. Writing... From the Arctic to Eastern Finland. From Sydney to Kangaroo Island, Australia. From the north to the south, and back again.

Corporeal, affective. These rocks live with and through us. Touch-ing rocks – rocks touch us. Bodies – rocks, co-constituted in life.

Disrupting. Non-violent. Ethico-political acts of writing. Writing rocks.

Humans become geologic forces. Care. Response-able.

Keywords: geologic, feminist new materialism, affect, touching, ethico-politics, writing

Acknowledgement

This article is supported by research funding (Envisioning proximity tourism with new materialism project, Academy of Finland, no. 324493). Like all writing, it benefits from our engagement with human and non-human others across time and space. Our thanks go to the special issue editors for creating spaces where writing can be placed, without its justification. Our reviewers have a special place in this text, as they responded, felt and shared, with care and generosity, their words.

This article is protected by copyright. All rights reserved.

Orienting

Anu and Alison share a love of the outdoors and through their friendship regularly exchange experiences and photos of being outdoors. Anu is an adventurer. Alison likes looking up at trees. Over the past two years we shared time in Finnish Lapland breathing, being, thinking. During our times together, we developed a shared fascination with rocks – and what rocks do. Through our academic relationship, we started to think about the ways in which non-human materiality affects us and our writing. In this contribution, we listened to the ways in which we have been affected by rocks, and the ways in which the wisdom of rocks shapes our writing. Reading and thinking with feminist new material scholars we offer the following embodied text which could, if you so wish, be read as entanglements of materiality, affects and writing. Instead of writing on feminist new materialism and on rocks, we write *with* feminism and rocks. Writing with rocks presents a collaborative opportunity for feminist reflection and friendship and ethico-political writing.

The texts that follow throughout this paper were written by each of us separately; they remember rocks through time and space. These words were originally written for us, not to be read by anyone else (including each other). Our writing was spontaneous and unedited by ourselves or each other. We refer to them as pre-reflective, open and vulnerable texts, and they offer the voices of our bodies, entanglements of mind and body, murmured voices spoken and unspoken elements sitting on the page, and the rocks that affect them. These raw texts display how rocks prompted us to write, without constraint, without vision. Our texts were written long before the formation of this manuscript and we contemplated whether they

Accepted Article

should be used in an academic manuscript. After we shared our rock texts with each other the manuscript was written in an emergent way, being influenced by the writers that we have read over time. As the full manuscript came together, we edited it for structure and form, and our rock texts remained untouched. Maybe you the reader will look for consistency between these texts and our writing in this manuscript. If consistency presents itself to you, unintended rationality has crept in without our knowing.

Our writing with rocks is situated, embodied, and intimate, a collaborative writing that has been written about by methodologists and feminist thinkers (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2011; Essen & Värlander, 2012; Helin, 2014, 2019; Katila, 2019; Pullen & Rhodes, 2008; Pullen, 2017; Meriläinen, Salmela & Valtonen, forthcoming; Salmela, Valtonen & Meriläinen, 2020). Such writing is often emergent, unfinished and relational. Some readers would label our writing differently (Gilmore, Harding, Helin & Pullen, 2019; Pullen, Helin & Harding, 2020), but we offer something more modest in that we feel no need to position our writing, other than *with* rocks.

Writing with rocks enables embodied, affective relations to be captured at the time of writing, and in their re-reading. Even in the ways in which this manuscript is written, we remember our lived experiences with rocks and the ways in which they were originally written. These affects live under the skin and they are reawakened when we re-read them, even when we read the words of the readers who respond to our text. As we work together with this manuscript our texts bring us closer together even though we are thousands of miles apart. Collaboratively writing with rocks enables writing based on proximity, trust and care. In so doing, writing with rocks becomes an expression of affective materiality. We write rocks to lure us toward the possibilities of engaging the force of imagination in its materiality (Barad, 2012, p. 216). Various non-human beings, such as animals (e.g. Sayers, Hamilton & Sang, 2019); bees (Davies & Riach, 2019); mosquitoes (Valtonen, Salmela & Rantala, 2020);

This article is protected by copyright. All rights reserved.

compost (Kinnunen, 2017); and rivers (Kalonaitye, 2018) have stretched writing materiality. Now, we add rocks. This is an important addition in the current era of the Anthropocene that “has at last begun to shake Euro-American scholars in social sciences from their assumptions that their worlds are geologically dormant” (Palsson & Swanson, 2016, pp. 152-3).

Woken up by feminist new materialist scholars the responsibility of our inevitable relations with multiple others with which we have been ‘worlded’ becomes visible. Joanna Zylinska puts it this way:

“Our human responsibility can therefore be described as a form of experiential, corporeal and affective “worlding” in which we produce (knowledge about) the world, seen as a set of relations and tasks. This may involve relating responsibly to other humans, but also to nonhuman beings and processes, including some extremely tiny and extremely complex or even abstract ones (microbes, clouds, climate, global warming)” (Zylinska, 2014, p. 97).

This is a paper that is influenced by, and contributes to, feminist writing in relation to eco-feminism (Phillips, 2015), feminist ethics (Bolso, 2020), and feminist new materialism in organization studies agenda (e.g. Calás, Ergene & Smircich, 2018; Davies & Riach, 2019; Valtonen, Salmela & Rantala, 2020). It provides a situated account of how our air-and-breathing bodies (Irma, 2020) come to matter in relation to rocks. Breathing slowly, together, across distance, we response-ably offer writing *with* rocks.

Connecting rocks and us

Seasons: Engrained through rocks and bodies

I am laying on a glaciated rock of my summer cottage, in Eastern Finland, like I have done during all the summers since my early childhood. I feel the warmth, smoothness, and strength of the rocks through my body. I let my hand caress the surface of the rocks, my fingers to sense its small, familiar shapes. I enjoy the sun, and listen the sound of the waves as they slowly hit to the cliffs. These rocks have been written to my body. My feet remember the grooves left by the late Ice Age when I go to swim. I know where the under-water rocks situate. I can hear my mother's warnings of not running on slippery rocks after the rain. I smile back to the large stone that has a smiling, gentle face. I think of my deceased dad while stepping on the stones that he had put on the footpath leading from the shore to the sauna. When the sun is about to set, I go to see the engravings on one part of the rocks. They could be best seen at the moment when the light comes from down. I touch the engravings with my forefinger. The Russian initials and dates engraved go back to 19th century. Perhaps those people liked these rocks, too.

Every winter, I long for the rocks, my rocks. They make my body to feel still, peaceful, blissful. Perhaps because they have existed long before my body, or any human body ever existed on the Earth. But they have not been still. The late Ice Age was a tremendously dynamic and forceful time period that reshaped the entire landscape making it look like it currently does. Beautiful, gorgeous. Before that, the Fenno-scandic lithospheric plate, on which I and Finland are now, has been floating across the Earth before settling in the North. It has also been near Australia, where my Alison lives and breathes.

Footprints: A foreign traveler

Reminded, I am cast a foreigner on this land,

Bold songs of native birds and green pastures remind me of the landscape of my birth,

Autumnal colours and the ocean at the foot of the cliffs,

My face is exposed and sheltered by the atmosphere.

The redness of the rocks and its scale vividly remind me I am on another's land,

These rocks are a recent discovery of white travellers,

Yet in shape, form and colour belong to the first nations,

Karta, an island off mainland South Australia, in 1802 Matthew Flinders renamed Kangaroo Island.

Witnessing man's forces over time, weathering the storms of the sea, and the heat of the Southern sun.

Stood still in the passage of time. Standing silently on sacred ground.

Travelling across the formations, temporary,

Insignificant in scale and history.

Humanity awakened through the forces awakening inside me,

Lost humanity, the industrialization of Aboriginal land,

Knowledge provided by the land.

Dreamtime guiding, I should leave.

Capturing the beauty, scale. I should stay.

Eroded over time and through the harshest of seasons, sunrays, waves, wilderness,

Nature has created rocks of beastlike characters.

A playground for the flaneur of nature,

Duty of care. Compassion.

I am alone, enveloped and nurtured by the curvature of nature.

A child, mothered by the land of Black women gone, trespassing.

Our writing bodies are geologically detached, and yet, simultaneously connected by the rocks. Rocks affected us in many similar ways. Between us, over thousands of miles which take over a day for our bodies to be in proximity, we are affected, inspired and connected.

Knowing rocks

Marguerite Yourcenar writes in the introduction of Roger Caillois' book *The writing of stones*:

“Those fusions, pressures, ruptures, imprints of matter on matter have left traces inside and out which sometimes almost exactly resemble writing and actually do transcribe events from millions of years ago.” (Caillois, 1985, p. xix)

Rocks have been present in our lives since childhood, both lovers of the outdoors but perhaps the country loved and protected us. In our writing here, the connection of rocks to our skin varies and our ability to speak of their memories shift; sometimes the message is direct and at other times obscure as can be read in connection to our childhood memories. We write at a time of climate catastrophe. Australia burns this summer, known as the ‘black summer’ where citizens are advised to wear masks to walk outdoors. The Arctic is warming up, some parts of Finland have no snow this winter. Our hearts ache for the land that we remember as children – big snow in winter, spring flowers, warm summers and shady Autumn. Our

writing here emerged from a simple sense of wonderment: What do rocks mean to us? How do they affect us? Shall we write about rocks? How could that work for a journal? In the end, we decided to write from our sense of wonderment, suspending all functionality on the way.

Our sense of wonderment was inspired by recent feminist geo-social literature (Bennett, 2010; Clark & Yusoff, 2017; Povinelli, 2016; Yusoff, 2016, 2017) that deliberates “the capacity of geologic materials to provoke not just knowledge but also creative aesthetic and political responses” (Bosworth, 2017, p. 25). Rocks have the capacity to help us think, to enable us to connect and to allow this writing to speak for itself. Rocks enabled us to become open to the land, and the capacity of geopolitical engagement through feminism. This openness and vulnerability become vital for feminist writing, thought and method.

Our lives are fully dependent on rocks, stones, and minerals. By writing with rocks, and not of them, rocks and human bodies become intertwined earthly beings, inhabitants of the Earth related to each other. Kinds of kin (cf. Haraway, 2016).

Writing
with
rocks.
Kin
writing.
Compassion,
Care,
Intimate.
Local.
Respecting.
Response-able.

Some writers and their ideas influence and connect us (to rocks, and each other). Jane Bennett (2010) allows us to consider rocks as vital, lively beings, and Gisli Swanson and Heather Palsson (2016) remind us with their situated geo-social study of Icelandic rocks that geologic formations matter for particular people in particular locales. Rocks are situated. Rocks also are matters of care – not only resources for exploitation and consumption, as is the case in rock tourism, mining, or fracking (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017; Springgay & Truman, 2017). And writing with rocks? It is:

Staying in touch with the material-affective dimension of doing and engaging research
(Barad, 2012 p. 208).

“What do we touch when we touch a rock?” This question leads us in this moment of writing.

Touching rocks

Obsessed with the ocular, attempts at resistance,

Touching, and at once being touched,

Forming, connecting, relating.

Huge rocks once fallen off from the main formation, lay to the side, each
impressive in their own right,

Together, regal, towering beneath the huge formations, sides standing tall and
broad like a giant mammoth, shoulders protected.

Polished to palm's touch, like the passing of one's hand on a lover's back,

Stone grounding,

Inner strength emerges with physical contact: connectedness.

A time for respect. Breathe.

A place on the land.

Touching rocks, rocks touching us. Touch matters as Karen Barad aptly notes: “So much happens in a touch: an infinity of others – other beings, other spaces, other times – are aroused” (2012, p. 206). Being in touch with rocks arouses, among other things, a heightened attentiveness to the materiality of our relationality. Our material bodies inhabit the material world through touch.

While I, Anu, am laying down on the rocks of my summer cottage, I touch them with my whole body: feet, legs, buttocks, hips, back, shoulders, head.

Touch is excessive, it is always there as Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017, pp95-102) reminds us.

I can close my eyes, but I cannot close my touch. I can see without being seen, but I cannot touch without being touched. I can see from distance, but touch assumes closeness, intimacy.

Touch is not a given, but a process through which my body becomes my body.

My bodily contact with my rocks is specific and the specificity produces diversity. The contact with rocks is different depending on whether I am laying, sitting or walking on the rocks, or whether I have my clothes on, or not. It is different depending on the weather, whether it is sunny and warm or cloudy and cold. Rocks could be warm, or they could be cold.

We are not the only ones touched by rocks. When talking about this research project here and there, many people spontaneously started to tell their stories, their relations to rocks. One man in a leading position at a Finnish university said that he always carries ‘lucky stones’ in his suitcase, showing them to me, proudly, letting me (Anu) touch them in my hands.

This article is protected by copyright. All rights reserved.

Another colleague told how she received the core idea of her thesis while walking in Iceland, having a stone in her hand. She kept the stone to remind her of that very moment. And another colleague considered stones as baby dolls in her childhood, she and her sister carried them and took care of them, keeping them in their laps. As if these, and many other stories had just waited to be told and listened to.

Touching rocks creates affects, ambivalent affects. Touching heals, connects, is a sign of care and trust. Stone healing as a form of therapy provides a case in point. Sometimes touching hurts - there is unwanted touch, abusive touch (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, pp. 99-100).

‘Touché’ is a metaphor for being wounded. In Italian, touch, ‘to care’ refers ‘to strike, to hit’, and in Finnish touch, ‘koskea’ has roots with the word ‘pain’, being hurt. Throwing stones is a well-known act of violence throughout human history. Being untouched may also hurt, like those who suffer from loneliness know well. ‘Do not touch’ is a powerful expression of protection, of making boundaries. Touching exposes our vulnerability. Rocks are vulnerable in their own way.

I can see and feel the cracks on the rocks of my cottage that are caused by the campfires we made to grill sausages or heat the jar for the wooden rowing boat. If the heat of even a small fire cracks the rocks, what, then, do the fracking industry or mining industry do to the bedrocks, not to mention the idea of storing nuclear waste into them? Our affluent way of life, and indeed life itself, is truly dependent on rocks. Yet, curiously rocks have been given the label of non-life, while our bodies are associated to life. It is however rocks that have lived, and will live, long after our bodies have passed away.

To tell my story, I touch the screen of my mobile phone to take a picture of my rocks. I need it for the presentation we are giving in a conference. I feel

Accepted Article

confused. I want to take the picture, because I want to let people to experience what I am talking about. Yet, I know that my phone involves some thirty minerals, extracted from somewhere – not from nowhere, but from somewhere where they have perhaps been significant rocks for somebody. My phone involves plastics as well and thus it is soon to be plastic litter – that, as we unfortunately know, are everywhere, and it takes thousands of years for them to break down. I read from a recent study published by Geological Society of America (<http://www.iflscience.com/environment/rocks-formed-plastic-found-beach/>) that plastic litter can become fused with rocks and other materials to form a new material: plastiglomerate. I feel sad, so sad. Is it this what future visitors on my rocks will find – Samsunglomerate?

Touching time

Time

Surrounded by bus tours, loud travelers, concerned about the next meal, toilet break,

leaving time of the bus, the solitude dissipated, I became aware of others.

A wooden walking path, guided Instagram worthy travelers to the rocks,

Many gliding, swirling to get the best shot, even in the wilderness.

Excitedly, I walked quickly towards the coast, the sea winds dampening my brow,

Red curls untamed flying in the wind, unbounded by others,

I leave the path onto the rock: should I walk? Take care not to slip, no climbing,

Standing magnificently, I shrank towards the rock below my feet,

The travelers disappeared, they didn't stay long.

A fragile, small child approached textured rocks, sat trying to take it in.

Eyes overloaded, legs dumb by the scale of the rocks.

I sit. Still. The rocks' stillness grounded me. I am. At one.

Today's docile travelers tend to follow busy schedules, walk in queues, take selfies, and that's it: done! They, like many of us, are likely to be socialized to consider rocks as stable, inert and passive matters – as reflected in sayings such as 'solid as rock'. Rocks are, however, lively: they evolve, change, and move (Bennett, 2010). Yet, what now appears as a stable bedrock or stone is an effect of the dynamic earthy processes played out throughout the history of the Earth. The processes are still going on but largely goes unnoticed, because of the expansive timeline of geology surpasses human comprehension. On-going movements and changes, for their part, take place so slowly that they are not easily visible (earthquakes and eruptions make an exception). Elisabeth Povinelli says: "we think something is enduring because we can't see or don't experience the constant wobbling" (Povinelli, Coleman & Yusoff, 2017, p. 182). The constant wobbling is experienced when performing today's busy lifestyle in the proximity of rocks that have taken billions of years to compose. The contrast of temporalities is more than striking.

Not only does the human body move on rocks, but the rocks are moving as well, albeit on a different temporal scale. Movements of the water – waves of a sea or a lake, as well as the freezing or melting ice – together with the wind, take part in composing the shapes of the rocks that we experience today. When a human (urban) body moves on the rocks, she has to adjust her movements and rhythms to that of the rocks. Walking on rocks may be difficult for somebody habituated to walk on paved walkways. Rocks are uneven, their surfaces may be slippery. Rocks may slow down our walking, or invite us to stop, to stay on the ground, feel

the ground, either standing or sitting. Rocks thus move through us, as we feel the contours through our feet, legs, torso and so forth (see Rantala, Salmela, Valtonen & Höckert, 2020).

Rocks are lively and agentic, acting on and with us; agency emerging as the effect of configurations of human and nonhuman forces. Lively rocks hold agency in that they have the capacity to affect us: to stop us, for instance. In the Spinozist notion, the very nature of bodies is that they are continuously affecting and affected by other bodies – including nonhuman bodies, since “organic and inorganic bodies all are affective” (Bennett, 2010, p. xii). The human body may feel enchanted when relating to the rocks. Her agentic capacity may be changed – strengthened, impressed, elated, effectuating changes in the mood.

Entering into relation with the rhythms of rocks: their seemingly still rhythm makes us to stop, to feel the stillness, the connection, being grounded with the Earth. Bodies respond to their rhythm.

Attuning to the rhythm of the rocks and forming a bodily communion with them may perhaps be easier for a child who has not yet internalized the nature-culture divide that governs western thought (Rautio, 2013). The combination of three different bodies described in the end of the poem – that of a child, an adult, and the rocks – opens up an intriguing scenery that Jane Bennett (2010) would describe as an aesthetic-affective openness towards material surroundings. It assumes an attentiveness to and sensuous enchantment by non-human forces, an openness to be surprised and to grant agency to rocks. Such an experience may also change the rhythm of breathing.

Strength and Stillness

Stillness surrounds these magnificent formations,
Climbing over the base of the rock, on which other formations emerge.
Boots treading on ancient memories, hard, yet fragile,
Timelessness prevailed, breathing becomes my clock.
Uneven underfoot, weathered existence,
Textures like printed antique fabrics, each rock surface becomes a work of art, formed
by science and time passing,
Bold and strong in scale, hard to touch and soft in color,
Burnt orange and reds, the color of the desert, the earth's sunset, sandstone, mutated by
weather and chemical formations.
Taking the gradual incline to the center rock,
Dwarfed by nature. Irrelevant in time.

Writing enables voice to various temporal modes of existence, that meet when a human body meets the body of the rocks. The scenery it opens describes what Isabella Stengers (2005, in Springgay & Truman, 2017) calls politics of slowness. Instead of referring to a speed, slowness creates a space for producing new modes of relating.

Slowness... Deep time. Deep breathe. Touching bodily moments as a writer, as a reader. Enjoy.

We do not live on the Earth, or learn about it, but with it (Bennett, 2010; Springgay & Truman, 2017). When starting to live with the rhythm of rocks, the human time scale – the one we are accustomed to think with – loses its significance. A timeless mode emerges.

And, the body starts to follow its basic rhythm, that of breathing. The blissful rhythm of breathing becomes the guiding thread of human existence.

Breathing, through which common interactional rhythms and synchronous behavior is established between humans (Lyon, 1997) – and between humans and nonhumans (Irma, 2020). Breathing is closely linked to affectual states. The capacity to breath changes along with affects, demonstrating the intertwinement of material and social body. The rapid breathing accompanying the feeling of intense fear. Breathtaking.

I go to hike Pyhä-Luosto National Park, situated in northern Finland. The park is famous for its geologic formations; fells that are remains of the ancient mountains, and deep gorges with magnitude of rocks. Every time, year after year, the magnificent presence of rocks surrounding me like walls while walking on the wooden duckboards on the bottom of the Big Gorge takes my breath away, and then makes me to take a deep, long breath, while staying still, astonished. Suddenly, my busy daily rhythm appears as ridiculous. Every time while walking there, I stop to admire stones whose surface displays well-preserved ripple marks, a memento of waves of a sea situated here some 1.3 million years ago. They lure me. Every time I bend over the stones, let my fingers to touch the smooth shaped ripples, still telling the rhythm of waves. I know that we are held apart by the passage of over a million years, yet when I touch the stone, this other time comes somehow close. In such moments I touch the past, and the past touches me.

Thinking time through the rocks (Harries, 2016) invites us to consider the prevalent discourses that separate peoples and things into different temporary orders. A hand holding a fossil or touching the ripples inscribed into a stone, tells us of the on-goignness of their material becoming (Povinelli et al., 2017, pp. 177-179). While the trace of the previous form

of existence predates the human subject, they co-exist at the same time, and they both are materially and discursively formed – and moving. Breathing with their distinct rhythms.

Emerging

In awe, I gaze into the distance,
The rocks' magnitude left me standing.
Colour and form, from afar, unfamiliar,
Stood at the high verge of the flat, green plateau before me,
From some distance this rock formation became remarkable, beyond name.
Unknown to mind, unseen to my eyes, the body's senses came forth,
Breathing fast with excitement, I wonder whether I have enough air to breathe.
Music arising from the swirling breeze and a chorus of local birds,
I am cast back to the countryside of my youth.
Green. Nature. Air. Breathing fast. Rosy cheeks.

Response-able touch / Caring touch

Engulfed

Dry like power, embellished by nature, a scattering of desert soil smearing the surface,
Aesthetic decay, enhancing the senses: every claw of the rock surprises,
Harnessing the sea, wind, and creatures, Porous, delicate, rugged.
New shapes emerge under finger and consolidated by eye.
Like an eagle spreading her wings across the landscape, the beak of a vulture,

The eye of a cat awakening, the curves of a newborn human baby,
A family of formations creating a spectacular sight which changes.
Inside the cave, security and shelter can be found, small crevices for hiding memories,
A wondrous beauty homing spiritual ancestors, tolerating migrants in search of fortune,
A sacred place, a place of theft – my heart bleeds.
Becoming frail, reminded by the force of nature, life lived through the land,
My skin trembles, pores opening to the forces surrounding me,
Eyes wide open, I listen to the ways these rocks mark my body,
The rocks story themselves through my body, formidable forces,
Remembering, passing through the rocks I become responsible for them.
Forever, grateful for the solitude, and remembering oneself.

The aesthetic attentiveness surfaces our response-ability to rocks, ethical relations. When rocks are understood as something more than stable and inhuman resources to be exploited, different ethical relations become possible. Paying attention to what it means to touch and to be touched by rocks deepens awareness of the embodied character of affect and thinking.

Affective material relations emerge *of, as* and *through* rocks,

The intense corporeality of ethical questioning.

Being touched by rocks, an affective materiality,

proliferates ethico-political relations between human and non-human.

Affective relations, including openness and care, and stillness and silence

become central to politics and ethics.

What possibilities surface through thinking and writing?

Transdisciplinary thought and writing guides us, and ethico-political possibilities. The starting point of an ethics is the recognition of human participation in a shared, vital materiality: “We are vital materiality and we are surrounded by it” (Bennett, 2010, p. 14). Jane Bennett (2010) continues, “if we continue to see the things as passive objects, encourages (and legitimizes) us to ignore the vitality of matter and the lively powers of material formations”. Recognizing that agency is not solely the province of humans, might spur the cultivation of a more responsible, ecologically sound politics. This is a responsibility that does not see the person separate from their lands, as Indigenous people teach us. There is no subject without the land water and skies (Povinelli, 1995).

Responsibility is not an obligation that the subject chooses but rather an incarnate relation that precedes the intentionality of consciousness. Responsibility is not a calculation to be performed, it is a relation always already integral to the world’s ongoing intra-active becoming and not-becoming. Responsibility is an iterative (re)opening up to, an enabling responsiveness. Rocks inspires a greater sensibility of how all bodies – human and more-than-human – are kin in the inextricably enmeshed network of relations: harming one member in the network, is to harm others (Bennett, 2010, p. 13; Haraway, 2016; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2015).

Relations in the network are ethical relations.

Human and more-than-human bodies form these relations.

Responsibility emerges through nature, from breathing and touching.

Too much action? The potential to violate sits amongst us.

Touch embodies forms of caring and intimate knowing.

Touching rocks, care and thought in reciprocity...

“we think, therefore we touch” as Maria Puig de Bellacasa (2017, p. 19) puts it

...

Suspended, fragile.

Beyond ego.

Response-able.

The potential for life.

Touching rocks calls for ethical questioning, since “touch’s unique quality to reversibility, that is, the fact of being touched by what we touch, puts the question of reciprocity at the heart of thinking and living with care” (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 20). Touch offers the potential for “the sensorial universe that better explores the ambivalences of conceiving caring knowledge as an intensification of involvement and proximity” (ibid). Such corporeal encounters (Diprose, 2002) are always ethical encounters: “Something gets under my skin, something disturbs me, something elates me, excites me, bothers me, surprises me. It is this experience that sets off a movement that extends my world beyond the intimate and familiar.” (Diprose, 2002, 132, cited in Kinnunen & Pullen (2017, np.). Affective embodiment – the processes through which we are affected and affect in and through the body – is the site where politics become possible (Pullen, Rhodes & Thanem., 2017). An ethics without politics and a politics without ethics appears unviable (Pullen & Rhodes, 2013). Ethico-politics emerges from the affective material relations with rocks and the Earth more generally.

Writing with rocks surface potential for a more humane and less human centered future in which we learn to become response-able for the capitalist destruction of our planet.

Writing/ with rocks

Bodies being affected and affecting, mutually constituting knowledge.

Sensitized and open, affects circulate human and nonhuman bodies.

Touching – footprints, traces.

Thinking bodies, writing bodies.

Thinking and writing with rocks, embodied.

Shared materiality with rocks, affective materiality.

Writing affective materiality, leaving a trace.

But, what is, actually, this body that writes?

From ‘bios’ (genes, flesh, muscles, blood) to ‘geos’,

Bodies as “walking, talking minerals”.

Russian geochemist Vladimir I. Verdandsky (cited in Bennett, 2010) reminds us that the very existence of the human body, in the form we know it now, is thoroughly dependent on the minerals. This idea becomes more comprehensible when considered in the evolutionary time perspective. Let De Landa explain:

“Soft tissue (gels and aerosols, muscle and nerve) reigned supreme until 5000 million years ago. At that point, some of the conglomerations of fleshy matter-

energy that made up life underwent a sudden mineralization, and a new material for constructing living creatures emerged: bone. It is almost as if the mineral world that had served as a substratum for the emergence of biological creatures was reasserting itself” (1997, p. 26 cited in Bennett, 2010, p. 11).

Mineralization created bones, and bones “made new forms of movement control possible among animals, freeing them from many constraints and literally setting them into motion to conquer every available niche in the air, in water, and on land.” (De Landa, 1997, pp. 26-7, cited in Bennett, 2010, p. 11). The process of mineralization represents a form of creative agency itself, and a human body with its much-lauded capacity to move appears as its product. Without this process, we could not have walked on the rocks, sat on them, or written about them. This insight allows us to elevate the shared materiality of humans and rocks, and to raise the status of this over-looked materiality of which our bodies are composed. The ‘material body’ can no longer be thought of as flesh but also of bones. Bodies are opened to geologic forces.

Feminist scholars have long argued that a human body is always also a nonhuman body (Alaimo, 2008; Barad, 2012; Haraway, 2008, 2016; Frost, 2016; Mol, 2002). Humans are nature in relation to and constituted by all other animate or non-animate beings. Highlighting the rocky basis of the human body invites us to be even more aware of the diversity of ways in which our bodies are nature already. Thinking of the body in terms of ‘open materiality’, that exists ‘in continuity with organic and inorganic matter’ (Grosz, 1994, p. 22; see also Bosworth, 2017), and conceiving our writing bodies as an entangled co-composition of ‘bios’ and ‘geos’, allows us to trace the geo within the bio, the inhuman within the human (Clark & Yusoff, 2017, p.16). Kai Bosworth (2017, p. 33) writes:

“The shared permeability of geologic and biologic materials specifically invites feminism to reflect on its own engagement and understanding with human and nonhuman forces, beyond our more intimate companion species and local networks of interaction.”.

This way of thinking opens-up one way of decentering the humanness of the body that writes, and to acknowledge how rocks write in and through us. Rocks are writings themselves.

Repeating our opening quote by Marguerite Yourcenar: “Those fusions, pressures, ruptures, imprints of matter on matter have left traces inside and out which sometimes almost exactly resemble writing and actually do transcribe events from millions of years ago.” (Caillois, 1985, p. xix)

Our writing bodies are forever situated,

not only social categories, but geologically.

Living across geological areas,

shapes the way we relate to rocks and think of them.

Different social orders, imaginaries and epistemologies are all associated with specific geological formations (Clark, 2017). Acknowledging geologic positions opens-up a way to re-write the commonplace power positions.

Finland is a small country, often marginalized in European political discourse, and in the Anglo-American academy (Meriläinen, Tienari, Thomas & Davies, 2008). Then again, within Finland, there are two regions that are marginalized in the commonplace national discourse, because of being socio-economically

poorer and less populated: Eastern-Finland and Lapland. From a geological perspective these however are central regions, the geological centers of Europe, representing the oldest bedrocks and exhibiting several types of rocks (a radio program on geology, Finnish national broadcast company, 2018).

Touching, intimate, engaged,

Our rocks reclaim touching as a neglected way of intimate knowing.

Touch expresses a sense of material-embodied relationality that disrupts the detachments associated with dominant ocular epistemologies of knowledge-as-vision: ‘theoretical lenses’, ‘viewpoints’, ‘perspectives’, ‘seeing the phenomenon in a new light’, ‘blind review’ or ‘eye-opening reading experience’.

Touching, affective, proximity, closeness,

Being in and with the phenomenon.

Writing (and theorizing) from within.

All life forms, including inanimate forms of liveliness, *do* theory, as Karen Barad (2012, p. 207) writes in her article *On touching – the inhuman that therefore I am*:

“Theorizing, a form of experimenting is about being in touch. What keeps theories alive and lively is being responsible and responsive to the world’s patternings and murmurings. Doing theory requires being open to the world’s aliveness, allowing oneself to be lured by curiosity, surprise, and wonders. ---

Theories are living and breathing re-configuring of the world. The world theorizes as well as experiments with itself.”

From adding geologic relations to human, non-human and inhuman relations to asking what porous materials provoke for feminism is an exploration of that which is shared or held in common between human bodies and earth forces. If we begin to understand ourselves as “beings who have something in common with the geologic forces that are mobilized and incorporated” (Yusoff, 2013, p. 781), geologic materials can appear as secret collaborators in developing our capacities for political language and organization. The permeability of human and nonhuman bodies renders corporeal feminism open to the interposition of various scales of matter beyond the local – radical openness to other times, scales and materials. Karen Barad (2012, p. 215) captures this idea:

“In an important sense, in a breathtakingly intimate sense, touching, sensing, is what matter does, or rather, what matter is: matter is condensations of responsibility. Touching is a matter of response. Each of “us” is constituted in response-ability. Each of “us” is constituted as responsible for the other, as the other”.

An affective engagement with rocks for us becomes a politics of materiality (cf. Irni, 2013) that emerges between human and non-human body. Through touching the production of transformative knowledge at the same time as it intensifies awareness of the imports of speculative thinking (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, p. 20). Thinking and writing with touch proliferates affective ethico-political relations based on care, compassion, openness, generosity and vulnerability.

Touching rocks, bodily communion with earthly beings.

Open to the aliveness of rocks,

Lured by curiosity, surprise, and wonders afforded to us.

Rocks are now much more than mere rocks, more than ever.

Entangled.

Not separate of them.

Response-able of and to and with them.

After word

There are too many words. Are there too many words? Do these words rehearse the same authorial intention? Time after time, papers adopting formulas for the correct structure of an article, the right way to build an argument, appropriate relations between theory and experience/empirics, justifiable writing of conclusions. Perhaps we write too much. Who do we write for? Does it even matter? We write here for us – through this writing we were able to say something about the connection between materiality and writing. What is the body that writes becomes how does non/human materiality enable embodied affective writing? But this writing, evades announcement. Announcements are everywhere: this is embodied writing, this is feminine writing, this is dirty writing... this is us writing with rocks. This disclosure precludes ethical openness. And, the more words we add to this text, the more we are at risk of announcing. It is part of the toolbox of the writer – to justify one's text. For whom? And, why? Writing for us has been situated, embodied and geo-social. We open-up our relation to and with rocks so that rocks open up matters of care and compassion for land, locale and life itself.

Accepted Article

As we have written in our starting section our texts were written in isolation and then developed together. Entangled. Collaboratively: between us, our readers and our rocks. Our voices sit alongside each other in the same way as our text sits alongside and under and above our theoretical inspirations. Our relations with rocks came before we read our authors. Our friendship came before our co-authorship. We move forward carefully, deliberating on what we should 'end the paper with'. There has been a tendency to bring the 'paper' together in a way to announce our intentions, explain our rationale and structure, and make continual announcements on the direction of the paper. Already anticipating what our colleagues expect of us. We have struggled with this. Evading the announcements. Making announcements. Deleting the announcements. We wonder why in the spirit of writing differently, or as this special issue desires, writing for change whether we need such announcements which make our text more understandable to the reader. Announcing speeds up the writerly and readerly processes. Not only, does this announcing reduce the multiplicities of our voices, it violates the silences that sit suspended in our texts. We have always loved the suspended silence that sits amongst us, but how will this silence be received within the text. Do you think the reader will 'get it'? Or rather, is it that we fail to consider/care for the reader by our refusal to announce? I feel the struggle. I am already anticipating the reader's rejection of our text. Am I bound by the growing traditions of writing differently that texts cannot lie on the page without mediators – editors, reviewers, colleagues – asking us to explain our ordering, our rationale. And we are seeing the convention of the foreword and coda to have conversations about what is said and not said, known and unknown with all the compliance and resistance involved. Whilst we may not be able to articulate the 'hows' and the 'whys' of our method any further, importantly material, discursive and affective forces circulated in the writing of this paper, and in that way we have been response-able (cf. Warfield, 2019). Most importantly we have remembered, and we have shared our sentiments.

Collaboratively we have learned to care and embody slowness. Care emerges at those moments when we reflect on the process of being and writing, alone and together. Caring for these rocks of ours embody slowness. Slowness provides a means through which care, and feminist care, can stand a chance. Care emerges in the silence, and in the stillness – it rests suspended. Care between human bodies, and nonhuman bodies, are small beginnings for a different future.

Rocks – and writing with rocks – has taught us about the beauty and power of silence, and the failure of words. Silence opens-up a particular relation to the world. One in which our voices, our words, no longer matter. Appreciating the geo-social relations of rocks, writing beyond our own ego.

From 'I' to response-able,
Care, ethics, beyond the self,
Strange encounters some may say,
When we touch rocks, what do we touch?

Can these words stand the test of time without announcing their presence? We hope that our words can stand the test of time. But, if not, it hardly matters, because it is enough that response-able human-rock relations are imagined, written, read, and told. In this way the writers and our words stand to be read and not to offer conventions for writing, or embodied writing but rather to write until the bones in your fingers know they have stopped.

Influences and citations

- Alaimo, S. & Hekman, S. (2008). *Material feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Barad, K. (2012). On touching – the inhuman that therefore I am. *d i f f e r e n c e s: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*. 25(5), 206-223.
- Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter. A political ecology of things*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Bolso, A. (2020). Val Plumwood: Organizing for the Future. In R. McMurray & A. Pullen (Eds.) *Morality, Ethics and Responsibility in Organization and Management* (pp. xxx-xxx), London: Routledge.
- Bosworth, K. (2017). Thinking permeable matter through feminist geophilosophy: environmental knowledge controversy and the materiality of hydrogeologic processes. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. 35 (1), 21-37.
- Caillois, R. (1985). *The writings of stones*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia.
- Calás, M. B., Ergene, S. & Smircich, L. (2018). Becoming possible in the Anthropocene? Becoming-socialentrepreneurship as more-than-capitalist practice. In P. Dey & C. Steyaert (Eds.), *Social Entrepreneurship: An Affirmative Critique* (pp. 264-293). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Clark, N. & Yusoff, K. (2017). Geosocial formations and the Anthropocene, *Theory, Culture & Society*. 34(2-3), 3-23.
- Cohen, J. (2015). *Stone: An ecology of the inhuman*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.
- Davies, O. & Riach, K. (2019). From mainstream measuring to multispecies sustainability? A gendered reading of bee-ing sustainable. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 26, 246-266.

Frost, S. (2016). *Biocultural Creatures: Toward a New Theory of the Human*. Durham: Duke University Press:

Gillen, P. (2016). Notes on mineral evolution. Life, sentience, and the Anthropocene. *Environmental Humanities*, 8 (2), 215-234.

Gilmore, S., Harding, N., Helin, J., & Pullen, A. (2019). Writing Differently. *Management Learning*, 50(1), 3-10.

Grosz E. (2012). Geopower. *Environment and Planning D: Society & Space*, 30 (6), 973–975.

Grosz, E. (1994). *Volatile bodies: Toward a corporeal feminism*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Haraway, D. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

Haraway, D. (2008). *When species meet*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Harries, J. (2016). A stone that feels right in the hand: Tactile memory, the abduction of agency and presence of the past. *Journal of Material Culture*, 22 (1), 110-130.

Helin, J. (2019). Dream writing: Writing through vulnerability. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 25(2), 95-99.

Irma, K.A. (2020). Thinking with a feminist political ecology of air-and-breathing bodies. *Body & Society*, 26(2), 79-105.

Irni, S. (2013). The politics of materiality: Affective encounters in a transdisciplinary debate. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 20(4), 347-360.

Kalonaityte, V. (2018). When rivers go to court: The Anthropocene in organization studies through the lens of Jacques Ranciere. *Organization*, 25 (4), 517-532.

Katila, S. (2019). The mothers in me. *Management Learning*, 50 (1), 129-140.

Kinnunen, V. (2017). Bokashi composting as a matrixal borderscape. In V. Kinnunen & A. Valtonen (Eds.), *Living Ethics in a more-than-human world*, (pp. 66-74). University of Lapland. Rovaniemi.

Kinnunen, V. & Pullen, A. (2017). Corporeal ethics in the sauna. In V. Kinnunen & A. Valtonen (Eds.), *Living Ethics in a more-than-human world*, (pp. 29-45). University of Lapland. Rovaniemi.

Lyon, M. (1997). The material body, social processes and emotion: 'Techniques of the body' revisited. *Body & Society*, 3(1), 83-101.

Meriläinen, S. Salmela, T. & Valtonen, A. (forthcoming). Doing it differently: collaborative knowledge production on the floor, in wilderness, and sauna. In E. Kelan, H. Lui, B. Ozakazanc-Pan, B. & A. Pullen, (Eds.) *The Routledge Companion of Gender, Work and Organization*. London: Routledge.

Meriläinen, S., Tienari, J., Thomas, R. and Davies, A. (2008). Hegemonic academic practices: Experiences of publishing from the periphery. *Organization*, 15 (4), 584-597.

Mol, A. (2002). *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Nyberg, D., Wright, C. & Kirk J, (2018). Fracking the Future: The Temporal Portability of Frames in Political Contests, *Organization Studies*, on-line first, doi.org/10.1177/0170840618814568

Palsson, G. & Swanson, H.A. (2016). Down to Earth. Geosocialities and geopolitics. *Environmental Humanities*, 8 (2), 149-171.

- Phillips, M. (2016). Developing ecofeminist corporeality: Writing the body as activist poetics. In M. Philips & N. Rumens (Eds.), *Contemporary perspectives on ecofeminism* (pp. 57-75). London, UK: Routledge.
- Povinelli E. (2016). *Geontologies. A requiem to late liberalism*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Povinelli, E. (1995). Do rocks listen? The cultural politics of apprehending Australian aboriginal labor. *American Anthropologist*, 97 (3), 505-18.
- Povinelli, E., Coleman, M. & Yusoff, K. (2017). An Interview with Elizabeth Povinelli: Geontopower, Biopolitics and the Anthropocene. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 34 (2-3), 169-185.
- Puig de la Bellacasa, M. (2012). ‘Nothing comes without its world’: thinking with care’, *The Sociological Review*, 60 (2), 197-216.
- Puig de la Bellacasa, M. (2017). *Matters of care: Speculative ethics in more than human worlds*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Pullen, A., Rhodes, C. & Thanem, T. (2017). Affective politics in gendered organizations: Affirmative notes on becoming-woman. *Organization*, 24(1), 105–123.
- Pullen, A. & Rhodes, C. (2015). Ethics, embodiment and organizations. *Organization*, 22 (2), 159-165.
- Pullen, A. & Rhodes, C. (2013). Corporeal Ethics and the politics of resistance in Organizations. *Organization*, 21(6), 782-796.
- Pullen, A., Harding, N. & Helin, J. (2020). *Writing Differently in Critical Management Studies*. Bingley: Emerald.
- Rautio, P. (2013). Children who carry stones in their pockets: on autotelic material practices in everyday life, *Children's Geographies*. 11 (4), 394-408.

Rantala, O., Salmela, T., Valtonen, A. & Höckert, E. (2020). Envisioning proximity and tourism after the Anthropocene. *Sustainability*, 12 (10).

<https://doi.org/10.3390/su12103948>

Salmela, T., Valtonen, A. & Meriläinen, S. (2020). Accessing uncolonized terrains of organizations: the uncanny force of sleep and dreaming. *Culture and Organization*. 26 (1), 33-47.

Sayers, J., Hamilton, L. & Sang, K. (2019). Organizing animals: species, gender and power at work. *Gender, Work & Organization*. 26 (3), 239-245.

Springgay, S. & Truman S.E. (2017). Stone Walks: inhuman animacies and queer archives of feeling. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, 38 (6), 851-863.

Valtonen, A., Salmela, T. & Rantala, O. (2020). Living with mosquitoes. *Annals of Tourism Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.102945>.

Warfield, K. (2019). Becoming Method(ologist): A feminist posthuman autoethnography of the becoming of a posthuman methodology. *Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodology*, 10(2-3), 147-172.

Yusoff, K. (2013). The geoengine: Geoengineering and the geopolitics of planetary modification. *Environment and Planning A*, 45 (12), 2799-2808.

Yusoff, K. (2016). Anthropogenesis: Origins and endings in the Anthropocene. *Theory, Culture & Society*. 33(2), 3-28.

Yusoff, K. (2017). Geosocial strata. *Theory, Culture & Society*. 34 (2-3), 105-127.

Zylinska, J. (2014). *Minimal ethics for the Anthropocene*. Open University Press. University of Michigan Library: Ann Arbor.

Other sources

Luonto Suomi, geologiailta, radio-ohjelma, YLE, 28.3. 2018. Nature of Finland, geological evening, a radio program by Finnish National broadcasting company.

<https://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2018/04/01/vesi-huuhtoi-jaa-muokkasi-nain-synty-suomi?ref=ohj-articles>

Responding to and with rocks

Our generous reviewers have responded to our article, and wrote responses free of judgement, to us as anonymous authors. To end, we leave these words from reviewer one, two and three here.

Thank you for Writing with rocks, which is a creative, bold and thought-provoking text in my reading. Written in the midst of climate changes, and at the moment of my review-reading, Corona-virus, it is a reminder of the materiality of human bodies, distancing and creating of (anti)social spaces and the materiality of with geographies and things to touch. The text created engagement and commitment for me as a reader to be attentive to and re-shape my relationship to stones, to rocks, and to develop a writing with, rather than about rocks. The reading evoked memories of the rural landscape where I grew up, of woods, and rocks by the lake, my feet touching them when they had stored the beams from the sun. The text awakens my senses to acknowledge ‘unnoticed’ communities, places and spaces.

The key message that resonates with me, as a reader, is that you feel grounded when surrounded by geological formations, and this inspires you to write poetically and self-reflexively, leading to problematization of social issues such as climate change and tourism. Yet, what remains opaque is how this work relates to the intersection of gender, work, and organization; it is also unclear how precisely it contributes to a literature that seeks to change the hegemony of academic writing. That said, the article is successful in presenting an example of how collaborative theoretical writing can be done non-normatively.

I settle down with your article for many days absorbing it, coming back to it in-between other pressing duties, reflecting on it, and observing my embodied reactions. Sitting at my oak kitchen table in the fifth week of lockdown due to Covid-19 it is heart-lifting to imagine you both on and with your different rocks in Australia and Finland and in connectivity with each other through and with your rocks and writing with your rocks. Sadness overwhelms me as I think of the apocalyptic scenes of Australian bush fires this season on my internet screen and of Arctic melting. Yet... a pebble of hope in me lodges as I time-travel this week along a lost Viking 'highway' revealed by melting arctic ice. 2,000-year-old horseshoes, sleds, and tools are emerging from a shrinking ice patch in Norway; telling the story of the rise and fall of a mountain pass and the intertwined things and people who traversed along it. Pilø's team discovered multiple cairns—stacked rock formations—designed to help people who were unfamiliar with the terrain find and navigate the pass on longer journeys throughout Scandinavia. I recall embodied memories of my own embodied encounters with rocks. I fever-night-dream of the Tors of Cornwall, UK from where my family hails with its backbone of granite, adjacent shales, slates and soft sandstones of clambering children and anxious spouse. I stroke the surface of our green granite

kitchen countertop marvelling at its marbling and veins. I miss rocks. I miss the bits and bobs of everyday human/inhuman entanglements with others.