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Artist-led Building: Artistic Knowledge

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Abstract

This article presents a writing collaboration between an ethnographer and two artists. It was developed from a one-week residency at Kultivator, which is an artist-led project situated on an organic farm on the Swedish island of Öland. The writing is informed by classical pragmatist philosophy and gives focus to the organic trope of human-environment continuity. Drawing on the writing experiment the article argues that Kultivator is not simply doing organic farming; but building a farm to *think-with organically*. Kultivator is presented as a way of knowing continuity; and a way of doing organic philosophy also. As such the artist-led practice of Kultivator has capacity to stretch artistic practice and its discourse beyond human collaboration. The research contributes an experiential account of artist-led practice in a rural context to the field of artist-led practice. Rather than focusing on artworks or 'buildings' this collaboration asks us to consider the way we 'build' our participatory process of living together and the role artistic knowledge can have in doing so.

Key words

Artistic knowledge
Artist-led practice
Trans-action
Worlding
Classical Pragmatism
John Dewey

This article presents an ethnographic project developed by an ethnographer (who is the author of the paper) and two artists: Malin Lindmark Vrijman and Mathieu Vrijman. The project was developed during a one-week residency that the ethnographer undertook at Kultivator which is located on an organic farm in the rural village of Dyestad on the island of Öland on the southeast coast of Sweden. As well as functioning as a farm of thirty cows plus chickens, ducks, sheep and horses, the farm is also part of the artistic practice of Kultivator – which is an artist-led project described by Malin and Mathieu as ‘an experimental cooperation of organic farming and visual arts practice’ (kultivator.org). Kultivator initiate events, workshops and exhibitions that explore possibilities provided by the proximity of art and farming. Since they started (in 2005) approximately eighty artists, researchers and farmers have visited and worked on the farm as part of their activities. This article draws on the author’s experience of a one-week ‘visit’ in 2015. It explores the ‘experimental cooperation’ of Kultivator by asking what this art-farm-work is *doing*. The paper argues that Kultivator’s working process provides a way to ‘think with’ the situated doings of the farm which in turn draws attention to the continuity of human-environment relations. The article contributes an experiential account of artist-led practice in a rural farming context. It draws on one particular residency undertaken by the author (For accounts of other residencies see kultivator-org).

[Image 1: around here – the farm]Caption: Image 01: The Farm. Photo: JC.

To avoid undertaking a study of Kultivator the article is written with a short story that was constructed with Malin and Mathieu called ‘The Stable: A Collaborative Story’. Positioned near the end of the article, ‘The Stable’ acts as an ‘event scaffold’. It includes verbatim spoken exchange which was used in support of writing the ethnographic passages that are presented earlier in the paper. Departing from the organic setting of the farm project, ‘The Stable’ and the subsequent ethnography are informed by the heritage of John Dewey’s (1859-1952) philosophy of continuity; which promotes an organic self in co-constitution with (our) organic environment where human-environment, body-mind and by extension thinking-doing are inseparable. From here the organic perspective extends from the farm to embrace living itself as an organic affair. And through writing with this organic philosophy the article argues that what Kultivator is doing is not simply organic farming; but building a farm to *think-with organically*. Their work contributes to artistic knowledge as a way of knowing continuity. This article suggests that Kultivator offers a practical way of doing organic philosophy via what Donna Haraway (2016) might call a ‘worlding’ practice – as involving more than human builders.

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ARTIST-LED

In art practice, 'artist-led' is a term most often traced from the alternative space movement – when artists re-purposed derelict buildings left by New York's de-industrialisation of the 1960s (Anderson 2015); and is regularly linked to notions of collectivity in art studies more broadly (Stimson and Shollette, 2007). From here the inter-related terms of 'artist-led', 'artist-run' and 'self-organisation' (as often used interchangeably) are regularly utilised to designate artistic work undertaken in repurposed buildings, used as gallery and studio spaces, by collaborating groups of artists or 'collectives'. This study offers a stretched account of collectivity. Through writing with the ethnography of my experience of a one-week residency, instead of delineating Kultivator's artist-led practice as human collaboration in the built environment, the paper positions their practice as a way of knowing our organic (human-environment) relations – as they take place in continuous co-constitution between humans and other creatures. By doing so this article offers a departure from the artist-led literature which is largely focused on questions related to 'the collaborative' between artists and **other people (in buildings)** they work with.

The fieldwork in Sweden began in June 2015 with my attendance at 'Self-Organization as Crisis Management – A symposium on Self Organization in Art' (June 13-14 2015). Convened in Gnesta by the Collective Brain (the Swedish network of self-organization/artist-led practice), this event was for artist-led organisations; developed in collaboration with the Swedish Exhibition Agency, Den kollektiva hjärnan, Konstfrämjandet, Akademin Valand and Kultur i Väst/Västra Götalandsregionen. I was invited to attend the event to introduce my research interests. After the talk, a few of the artists let me know that they would be interested in being part of an ethnographic project – as a way to explore how to better articulate their own practice. Scoped in relation to the scale of the research project and the availability of the artists, I scheduled a five-week fieldwork trip in the early winter of 2015, and returned to Kultivator to take part in an exhibition event called 'New Horse Cultures' in summer 2016 (<http://www.kultivator.org/new-horse-cultures-study-circle/>). During the 2015 fieldwork I stayed with three organisations: firstly Kultivator, then Galleri System (<http://gallerisyster.se>), and finally Gylleboverket (<http://gylleboverket.se>). Each project had attended the Collective Brain event and as such identified with the term 'artist-led' and/or 'self organisation'. This paper focuses on my time with Kultivator.

Through an ethnographic study with the Kultivator artists, I argue that Kultivator's 'building' is not manifest in *buildings* (such as those around the farm) or in the human collectivity between the

artists, farmers and other people. But that the Kultivator 'build' is a continuous process of making joins – between humans and other creatures, and materials which I will call *worlding*. And as 'worlding' I suggest that Kultivator can be understood as an intimate method for noticing world builders as *more than human*; which in turn cultivates organic habits of noticing continuity in support of future living. As housing the literature of artist-led practice, the broader field of art studies commonly denotes collaboration as human-centred. I will argue that the organicism of Kultivator's practice replaces the term *collaboration* – with *worlding*. The substantive contributions of this article are to suggest that the artist-led practice of Kultivator can stretch our understanding of relations beyond human collaboration; and that this stretch springs response-ability for our common living space. As such this introduces artist-led practice as an organic way of knowing. And the second contribution is in the form of a short text called *The Stable: A Collaborative Story* which was developed with Malin and Mathieu as a methodological scaffold for writing this paper; which can be used as a method for writing with others which follows aesthetic scholars who position art as *part of* their inquiry (e.g. Greverus, 2005; Ingold, 2013; Laister 2018).

As operating within an organic farm, it is acknowledged that Kultivator is in more obvious alignment with organic philosophy than artist-led projects manifest within galleries or studios for example. As such this article offers opportunity for artists, curators and other scholars and practitioners to think-with Kultivator's doings – towards shaping future practice beyond human collaborations. The later part of the article presents a short section of *The Stable: A collaborative Story*. Following Haraway (2016) and other story advocates (e.g Bruno Latour, 1988; Michael Jackson, 1995) the ambition of *The Stable* was to find a way of writing that is consonant with the lived experience of Kultivator; and also acknowledges artistic practice as knowledge producing itself. The earlier ethnographic sections are written *with* the story; and as such the paper has a circular structure.

I USED TO MAKE SCULPTURE

Mathieu picked me up from Kalmar's train station on the Baltic Sea. In a borrowed blue estate, we drove across the Kalmar Strait via a sandstone bridge to the island of Öland. After twenty minutes the shadows of birch and oak gave way to a sharp fork. Taking the left turn led us to park next to a stable. A woman dressed in beige overalls walked towards us. 'This is Malin'. My right hand moved to hold her left before saying '*hej* (hello)' and thanking them both for putting me up for the week. As I notice the assorted buildings strewn in the paddocks and fields around us, Mathieu smiled in response whilst saying: 'I used to make sculpture and now I *build*'. Malin and Mathieu live on this

small farm in Dyestad with their two children, dog, horses, Henric (the farmer), cows and other animals. As artists, and partners, they work under the name of Kultivator which is a project they began in 2005 (kultivator.org). Self-termed as an 'artist-led' project, Kultivator's activities include: exhibitions and events; a residency programme; and a dairy farm. They also run a film programme and an integration programme for new arrivals to Sweden at a local school.

After our initial meeting, Malin invites me to eat with herself and Mathieu that night, then Mathieu takes me to a white stone building where the ground floor has a little kitchen area, a bathroom with a dry toilet, a bunk-bed sleeping alcove and a living area with a wood burner and another bed in the corner. Up some wooden slat stairs in the triangle roof space is a low bed, hanging rail, and chest of drawers. As it is winter, during the week I sleep up there, to meet the hot air as it rises. For periods in the daytime I sit at the kitchen table to write and watch a mouse use a tea towel to scale the kitchen cupboards who I presume is the same creature that runs over my face at the end of the week. Just before seven, I take the short walk over the grass and knock on the side door that opens to their kitchen. Henrik (the farmer) and Malin's sister and her son also arrive. After eating *fiska suppa* (fish soup) the others leave and I move to sit by the kitchen stove with Malin and Mathieu. They tell me that they find describing what they do quite difficult: 'Not many people know what an artist does now. *We need a new story*'.

TRANS-ACTION

In the first moments of arriving at Kultivator my right hand moved to hold her left. In *On Human Correspondence* Tim Ingold asks us to do the same (2016, 9). His writerly strategy is a way of handing the reader a body-bond for knowing how *the join* lies at the very heart of our understanding of the social (2016,11). We hold on to one another and go along together (Ingold, 2016,11). Joins move the pages of the ceaseless story for the way we live in continuity; or what the classical pragmatist John Dewey calls 'trans-action'. Dewey's *trans-action* underscores ongoing-ness, for which Karen Barad has offered the new word '*intra-action*' (2007). Trans-action (or intra-action) is not simply *inter-action* – because it emphasises the on-going *co-constitution* between humans, the environment and other beings. You and I are joined: we hold on to one another and go along together' (Ingold, 2016, 9). And in a Deweyan vein we go along together in trans-action as *part of* our environment. This perspective is underpinned by Dewey's central notion of *experience*; which is understood as a product, or by-product, 'of continuous and cumulative interaction of an organic self with the world' (Dewey, 1934, 229). So as Malin and myself are hand in hand with each other we are

simultaneously *in trans-action with* the farm environment. As organic, we are not separate – from the fields, buildings, animals and so on around us.

Indeed Ingold's paper is informed by Dewey's principle of the continuity of experience; and although his reference to Dewey is puzzlingly unusual in anthropology (Ingold, 2016, 25) his work has returned to art studies (as promoted by the curator Mary Jane Jacob 2019; see also Crawshaw 2018); and also sustains a prominent role in feminist scholarship. Here his interest in bodies is reawakened by new materialism which refutes the linguistic by moving us towards 'corporeality, ontological immanence and affect' (Fischer, 2018, 83). As acting in and responding to the environment, in this ontology bodies are regarded as trans-actional. The epidermis is not a rigid border but a crossing between things *outside* the skin and *within* it (Sullivan 2001, 24). And in continuity our bodies and minds also meet. Dewey talks of body-minds. So being mind-in-hand with Malin draws us to Dewey and the heritage of his organic philosophy also.

As fleshed out by Fischer in both feminist pragmatism and new materialism we find recursive conception of the organic embodied being in continuous *transaction* (Fischer, 2018, 88/89); where 'nature is neither the passive surface awaiting the mark of culture nor the end product of cultural performances' (Barad, 2007, 183). As situated in a farming situation, in this article I take the opportunity of the immediate and obvious organicism of Kultivator's practice to think-through-doing-work-with and about the potential for a new story arising from their work. Dewey maintains that living is an empirical affair involving trans-action between the organic body and what lies outside; which occurs continuously because transaction 'of live creature and enviroing conditions is involved in the very process of living' (Dewey, 1934, 36). From an organic ontology farmers 'must join with the way of plants; [and similarly] hunters and herdsman with the ways of animals; [and] artisans with the ways of their materials' (Ingold, 2016, 22). To date, my own contribution to the corpus of literature concerned with art studies' relationship with new materialism (Crawshaw and Gkartzios 2016, 2018; Crawshaw 2018) is shaped by pronounced appreciation of the heritage of John Dewey's experiential aesthetics: where the art experience transacts the body's border – altering 'outer' physical materials (such as paint, plaster and plastic) and our 'inner' materials (such as memories and emotions) (1934, 15). As an artist-led practice I take opportunity to consider the way Kultivator contributes to worlding knowledge, *beyond making artworks*.

The contribution of this article is directed to the study of artist-led practice in the field of art studies. This artist-led literature is dominated by artists reflecting on their own practice; with some

contributions from historians and museology scholars. To explore the opportunity of an organic study I prioritised progressing my body-mind connection (as developed during previous fieldwork, see Crawshaw, 2018); which works to avoid hierarchy between what Dewey refers to as 'had' and 'known' knowledge. Indicated by the arrival sequence which opens this paper, the piece positions the subjective body as a way of getting to know the work of Kultivator as shaped by the heritage of Dewey's materialism. In addition to keeping a fieldwork diary and taking regular images of documentary interest, I wore an automatic camera around my neck that took wide angled images every minute and also audio recorded my day-to-day activity. The fish eye photographs are not intended to privilege the visual; but more so produce an archive for remembering the experience of being within the Kultivator sensorium. The images in the article are from the 'wide angle' camera and selected for use with Malin and Mathieu **as methodological prompts rather than documentation.** And similarly the audio recordings are not only to capture what people said but to remember their interconnections with sonic surroundings also.

With the camera around my neck and the recorder on, we sit in the kitchen beside the fire. To progress this 'new' story I ask Malin and Mathieu what people usually do when they come here. They get involved in the farm they tell me. Some milk the cows, help with giving the calves milk, feed the horses and the goats, or 'people *build*' (Fieldwork Diary Page 19: Dyestad 18th October 2016). What I do for the week depends, they say, on my particular interests and experience. Because I am not familiar with farm work, I suggest that I would like to learn how to milk the cows and perhaps try to be of some use by doing some basic manual work. As I will begin by milking in the morning, Malin tells me she will bring me hard boots and overalls as the cows can kick. She will come for me at 6am to take hay to the horses and then walk me round to the farmer who will take me to the milking sheds.

THE SOCIAL

Beyond classical pragmatism, the recalibration of 'the social' as more-than-human is pollinated across a family of relational thought including Science and Technology Studies and New Materialism. Within this relational family, a particularly prevalent strand is Actor-Network Theory (ANT); which when first introduced to planning studies was previewed as a 'useful way of thinking about how spatial relations come to be wrapped up into complex networks' (Murdoch 1998, 357). As primarily attributed to Bruno Latour, alongside Annemarie Mol, Donna Haraway, Michael Callon, and others, ANT's useful way has taken hold across the disciplines of the built environment; for example in

architecture (Yaneva, 2009), public art (Crawshaw, 2015) and planning scholarship (Abram, 2011; Rydin and Tate, 2017). Central to ANT is the chaining of associations between human and non-human actors; where '*social* [my emphasis] is not the name of any one link in a chain, nor even that of the chain, but is the *chaining* itself' (Latour, 2007, 4). Chaining then rejects 'the social' as a human-only space and replaces it with 'the collective' which is built through continuous associations between humans *and* non-humans (aka there are more than human builders).

And, because across social sciences disciplines there is investment in considering the relational nuance of the continuous co-constitution of our built environment, on first glance the artist-led literature might well be regarded as following this relational sensibility of the new material turn. In the re-purposing of buildings (Anderson, 2015) a key trope of the artist-led is the way artists work collectively and collaboratively; which is viewed by Anderson and Tobin 'as a strategy for making and displaying art outside institutional spaces as well as a political tactic to oppose the isolation of the artist and commodification of the artwork' (2017, 159). The collectivisation of artistic production has a lineage through art history which paves the way to the post-war period when there is a 'shift within the practices of visual artists from a focus on art as a given institutional and linguistic structure to an active intervention in the world of mass culture' (Stimson and Sholette, 2007, 9); when art is said to move away from representation to 'engaging with social life itself as the medium of expression' (Stimson and Sholette, 2007, 13)). As engaging with social life itself, artist-led collaborations are oft noted for creating new ('alternative') spaces for production and modes of display; and from here the discourse melds towards a preoccupation with an institutional perspective focused around interests in the relationship between the 'artist-led space' and the 'official space' of the art institution (eg. Hebert and Karlsen (2013). For example the artist Linus Elmes (2013, 83) describes how he set up Ersta Konsthall as an 'art space' in Stockholm: 'concerned with the kinds of mechanisms that constitute *an institution* [my emphasis]'. So the opportunity for a transactional perspective is perhaps limited by an institutional preoccupation informed by 'art world' theory; where artworks are 'joint products of all the *people* [my emphasis] who cooperate' (Becker, 2008 (1982)). As attributed to the sociologist Howard Becker (2008), critic Arthur Danto (1924-2013) and others, this theory is concerned with what art *is* – as denoted by the institutional mechanisms manifest through the conventions of the network of human relations. And following from here Elmes and other artists who write about their practice are similarly concerned with an institutional conventions of the artist-led.

Becker's (2008) 'network of cooperation' might make connection with ANT and even Deweyan aesthetics. But unlike transactional philosophy, art world agency is imparted to professional *people* as independent from 'physical' (non-human) materials. Becker briefly suggest that conventions of making choices are not only embodied in people, 'but also in equipment, materials, training, available facilities and other things' (2008/1982, 63); but then quickly apologises for overemphasising art's 'collective character' (Becker, 2008/1982, 351). From here division between people and objects and environment continues to play out in the discourse of practitioners; perhaps most notably promoted by the curator and critic Nicolas Bourriaud's 'relational aesthetics', where art is designated to be concerned with the realm of *human* [my emphasis] interaction and its social context (2002 (1998), 14). What differentiates Bourriaud's relational aesthetics from that of Deweyan heritage is significant. Rather than following a transactional ontology where humans are *part of* their 'context', for Bourriaud they are set apart – *to interact with it*. In other words, in the 'art world' people are understood to interact *with* the world; which is out of step with the organic sensibility – where people are *of* the world as co-constituted *within* it.

So, as defined as a collective-collaborative practice – that sits outside of the institution with interests in art beyond making objects to sell, artist-led practice could be said to share two primary traits with what might be called the 'stretched sociality' of neighbouring artistic modes; which Beech has called the 'new art of encounter' (2010, 55) – such as new genre public art, or socially-engaged and participatory practice. Here the pool of the artistic work is stretched beyond an individual; and as such the work interfaces with the scholarly domain of the built environment (e.g. Crawshaw, 2019). I emphasise the *scholarly domain* because it recalls ANT's influence in the built environment; and this provides helpful comparison to illuminate the lack of transactional scholarship in artist-led studies – where 'collectiveness' generally refers to *human relations*. Of course, there are well charted histories of art practices that draw on relational-transactional philosophy. So my emphasis on the human-centred-ness of art *scholarship* (rather than art *practice*) is important here. Artists influenced by relational perspectives include Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) whose concept of 'social sculpture' was influenced by the philosopher and social reformer Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925) (Jordan, 2013); Guy Debord (1931-1994) and The Situationists, who were influenced by Lefebvre's concept of space (Bonnett, 1991) as foregrounding social interaction *within their material environment*; and following the philosophical framework of this paper, Allan Kaprow (1927-2006) was famously influenced by Dewey. So although trans-actional-materialism is not regularly applied within the scholarship *of* artist-led practice, it can perhaps be traced in the *doing* of art practice via Beuys, Debord, Kaprow, and others. SO, rather than following the sociological study *of* social art

practice, this paper is more aligned with the philosophical lineage that informs the practice of artists themselves.

SOUP

After dinner I go back to the white house. And after sleeping I join the morning frost wearing overalls and boots. I find white horse heads push through molten-dark. Standing by the fence marked 'Pasture', Malin hands me a hay bail. Facing two larger-longer faces, she shows me how to take off the plastic strips, loosen the wad, and push clumps through the fence towards oval eyes and nostrils. They watch with their noses enough to show their teeth. Likewise, I sense the cut grass scent mix with muck as she climbs over. With soft salutation she strokes their foreheads and opens her hand for them to eat. They nudge against the familiar stroke; crease their lips; take the hay; and chew.

The gentle care shown by Malin to the horses is extended to the cows. As image two below, in the shed Henric introduces them as a 'mix of things' and 'companions in the stable' (Fieldwork Diary Page 20: Dyestad, Monday 19th October). There are maybe twenty of them lined up in individual metal stalls (returning to the field after milking): the black one is an American type but mostly they are Swedish Blacks and Swedish Reds. The stinking clamour is made of falling dung, splashing urine, whirring of the milking machinery, scraping hooves, *mooring*, bellowing, snorting and grunting; which provokes anticipation. 'Give everyone some hay' he says, 'that is the first thing'. He directs me to a large fork with a long wooden handle. It is heavy work, shovelling the hay over from the big pile to every one. As I fight my physical struggle he explains that 'it is good for a stomach to start the day with fibre. It is nice for them to get that start; with something that stays in the stomach for a while, like everyone else!' (Fieldwork Diary Page 20: Dyestad, Monday 19th October). They like grain. He says, 'we have this discussion on the Internet about it not being good for us to eat so much gluten; and it's not good for cows either'.

[Image 2: around here – cows] **Caption: Image 02: The Cows. Photo: JC.**

Before approaching a cow I must say 'hello' to introduce myself. Perhaps pat her on the rump to know that I am there and approach her from the right side, he says. Be gentle. Be kind. Be careful. 'So you take your hand like this, and like this [on the machine]. But sometimes it doesn't really work, I don't know why'.

'Do you have to press the button?'

'Yes, just press in a little bit'.

'So this way, like this, but not pressing?'

'Yes, pull it off, *pull it*'.

'Oh, no!'

'Well sometimes it happens, you have to get used to it. So now you unhook [the milking apparatus from the rail above]. And just tell the next cow you are coming [...] She is a nice cow'.

'She is gorgeous'.

'I like the one who is a bit more aware of what is going on'.

'Yes, I was taking photos before and they were all looking'.

'Yes, they are observant and have a personality'.

As image three below, after milking, my lunch that day was *fiska suppa*, which is handily representative of the mutually adaptive environment. Ingredients do not become the other (as with a bisque) but soften just enough to enable the mutual flavouring of each other; and as such demonstrates trans-action. Salmon can still be identified as the pink fish, even though it has mingled with cod and spices. So following a Deweyan perspective, we might say that Kultivator is a soupy mingle – between myself, Malin, Mathieu, horses, cows, leaves, logs, the hay, the fence, the light and dark, and more. Of course this transactional view of farm life is obvious to transactional scholars (e.g. Harbers, 2010). But what can be taken from my experience and other residents of Kultivator?

[Image 3 – around here] Caption: Image 03: **Eating soup in the farm kitchen. Photo: JC.**

AND NOW I BUILD

In the way of ANT we might suggest that the milking episode introduces us to the farm as a network of human and non-human associations; or as Murdoch suggests, a 'stable sets of relations [...] by which the world is built and stratified' (1998, 359). Of course, the workings of the farm go beyond human associations; such as in the earlier sequence – with cows and hay and milking machinery. And it is of course not surprising to find more-than-human relations. As lay people we readily recognise farms as 'networks' – in which people, animals, plants and things co-exist as a 'hybrid collective' (Harbers 2010, 148). We know they are inter-connected in some way and do not require artists or ethnographers to pique our understanding in this regard. However as 'non-farmers' we are not perhaps so readily attuned with the way the constituent elements 'determine one another';

(Harbers 2010, 148); and as such how the 'network required permanent attention and maintenance in order to ensure continuation [through] unremitting *care*' (Harbers 2010, 148).

'I used to make sculpture and now I build' opens the door to a process of material joins that amount not to *a* building, but *building*. I experience these joins between myself and Henric and our 'companions in the stable'. As Harbers' account (2010, 148) the 'joining with' is made through *taking care* as coupled with *caring about* diverse factors – animal feed, communication at milking time, the weather and so on. For non-farmers (and non-organic philosophers) being part of this mini world helps with our relational knowledge gap. At a macro-level, Harbers suggests that care is simply seen as an economic necessity (2010, 148). However at this micro level of *doing farming* I experience care giving as the joining ingredient between organic companions; creatures as part of the environment. Indeed Dewey suggests to grasp aesthetic experience it is necessary to have 'recourse to animal life' because 'the activities of the fox, the dog, and the thrush may at least stand as reminders and symbols of that unity of experience which we *fractionalize* [my emphasis]' (Dewey, 1934, 18). From my experience of being on the farm – *doing farming*, I suggest that being there is being reminded of unity – through milking and feeding. It stops us carving the world in to fractions of discrete living for animal creatures, humans, flora and so on. The experience of the continuity of farming relations fosters knowing how care operates as the grease of organics. As such Kultivator carries us towards more fruitful and caring relations with others.

Beyond farming, Kultivator undertake other activities including: teaching, contributing to exhibitions in galleries and festival contexts, and hosting events on the farm – for example in the way of New Horse Cultures (see Fisher, 2019). The farm is where Kultivator's work is realised – both via the farm work itself; and also the objects and interventions that arise from caring for and about the farm – which are sometimes denoted as 'art' by virtue of their invitation to be included in exhibitions and so on by curators and other professionals; or simply because as artists Malin and Mathieu present their work as such themselves. As a short term resident of the farm I come to know the way Malin and Mathieu think-with the farm-work; and enable others (such as myself) to take part in doing this also.

BUILDING

As well as milking the cows and feeding the horses, I also undertook other farm tasks including chopping wood, and clearing and piling leaves to protect new growth from frost. As centred around

the belief that the concept of art could include the entire 'process of living', Kultivator perhaps initially recalls Joseph Beuys' concept of social sculpture; which promoted 'the idea of art being enacted by a wide range of people beyond artists' (Jordan 2013, 145). However, as a collective sculpture, because Kultivator joins more than people, it is more 'organic' than 'social'. The experience of the farm takes me beyond eating *fiska suppa* with new friends sat round a table; to more so understanding how we and other creatures are mingled as part of the Kultivator environment.

The worlding work here is undertaken in noticing that we are *part of Sullivan's 'soup'* (metaphor). The broth includes strokes and nuzzles, a pat on the rump before saying 'hello' before milking, and the morning mist. There is intimacy here. And between people, intimacy is understood as a mode of friendship which the artist Condorelli (2013) privileges as an important ingredient of artists' collaboration. For Dewey, friendship is when 'the interests and modes of response of another become an expansion of our own being [so] they are built in to our own structure' (Dewey). So we are stretched. And as such I support Condorelli's commitment to this expansion as an important ingredient of collaboration. But the care and intimacy of Kultivator swells beyond human to human. As organic practice, this worlding work goes beyond the human relations of artist-led and social art practice to more closely realising Dewey's own proposal for art as a 'mode of intimate communication' (Alexander, 1987, 17). For Dewey communication is central to the continuity of the life process or 'the participatory process of living together' (Ingold, 2016, 15). Here care is an ingredient of intimate communication for building structures for living.

To experience something of this, let me take you by the hand – to walk from the white house to the white horses. As we stand at the front door you will see the back of Malin and Mathieu's house, and as we turn to the right you will glance the gable end of the stable building which we pass to get to the fence which has a hand painted sign on it that reads 'Pasture'. With the sign on our left side we are looking at the hotchpotch of farm buildings and structures made for agricultural use and previous art events; and the fields beyond with tractors parked to the right on the way to the milking sheds that promise cows. We can hear the horses and smell the muck and manure mingle which feels mushy underfoot. And as we move we know 'in multiple ways and at multiple levels, our embodied practices form us; they constrain and enable us; they cultivate and activate habits' (Cuffari, 2011, 535). For Dewey habits are a 'movement, a life-process, in which – the things we do – perpetually shape the conditions under which both we and those who follows us, and to whom we relate, will live together in the future' (Ingold 2016, 15): And so 'if habits are significant conditions

for our conduct then the potential for good living lies precisely in the cultivation of certain kinds of habits' (Cuffari, 2011, 535). Through our transaction with the world, we also *in-habit* (my emphasis) (Dewey 1934: 108). As a worlding practice, Kultivator cultivates habits of organic care that support us to inhabit our world together.

THE STABLE

At the outset the ambition of my one-week residency was agreed with Mathieu and Malin as being to articulate Kultivator's practice. And as contributing to the 'Stretched' research, we also acknowledge that our work would contribute to scholarly outputs (including this paper). From here, as following their usual mode of working, and mine also (e.g. Crawshaw, 2018) we agreed that this research would be collaborative. By which we meant that rather than me writing *about* them, the ethnographic project would be developed between us.

After eating, on the first night, Malin and Mathieu briefed me about their week. They told me that Mathieu would be at the school for some of the days and Malin would be mostly at home; working on a proposal for an exhibition. That there was a party being held for the integration programme students on one of the evenings; and that I was welcome to attend with them (which I did). As well as these and other activities that they told me about, a stable was also being repaired. It was located opposite the pasture and close to the white house. Malin told me that the red colour was traditional for these buildings, and that this project had started when she noticed that the stable had a lean. After that Aslambek (who had been on the integration programme the year before) told Malin 'in his way but not really in words' (page 42 Wed 21st October) that it needed underpinning; and that he could do it. From there a plan developed for the stable to be re-built to include space for two horses and a room for people to look in; because this would support the bigger idea – 'for kids from the integration programme and poorer families to be able to ride and care for the horses' (page 42 Wed 21st October).

The stable repair was not something Malin or Mathieu introduced me to as a project. I rather came across it – through hearing banging, sawing and drilling; seeing freshly cut wood and tools near the entrance; and meeting Aslambek on my way back to the white house after milking. And then when I helped Malin and Aslambek carry the stable door to lean on the paddock fence; when after putting the door down, I remarked that the door 'looked like a sculpture'. Malin responded by saying the stable project was: 'a nice collaboration'. And as I hear her saying this, I also experience the stable as

part of the continuity of the Kultivator situation. By which I mean that the stable project is not disconnected from daily goings on which Dewey expresses through the notion of 'event'. Events are part of 'situations' that are open toward the possibility of 'growing together' (Alexander, 1987, 105). Events are 'ways human beings are in the world' (Alexander, 1987: 106) and are characterised by 'trans-actions' (Alexander, 1987, 108). And (through reading Dewey) this is conveyed by Ingold's (2016) suggestion that farmers are required to *join with* the way of plants; and I would add animals also.

During the week I experienced something of the way the *joining with* takes place; how the muscles in fingers work *with* each other to tear plastic strips off hay and pass through wood timbers to the twitching mouths of horses who make manure for ongoing growing. In each event the trans-actions promote a coming together with each other. Trans-actions build events – such as milking the cows and constructing the stable. And these events meld to construct the Kultivator *situation*. The joinery is important. Because it is these careful trans-actions that construct events that build the Kultivator *structure* – that cultivates habits for living. So as a way for us to notice transactions taking place I suggest to Malin that we write *with* the stable event. As a scholar, I write with the relational organicism of Dewey, Haraway and others. And in the way that Haraway (2016) might call a 'worlding practice', Malin, Mathieu and myself think-with and write-with the worlding of the stable event.

Thinking and writing with the stable first produced a short text called *The Stable (A Collaborative Story)*; which was written in response to a call to present at a conference at Lund University called *Co-laborations: Sharing authorship and space in architectural and urban research* (11-12 February 2016). After that the same text was published as a small booklet (designed by Kjell Caminha) for inclusion in 'New Horse Cultures'; during which the booklets were piled in the stable for people to take if they wanted. From there the thinking expanded in to this article. The text to follow is a short section taken from the booklet which was written to be performed at the conference by myself, and Malin. The text began during the residency, and was further developed via email exchange. At the conference we read the parts from our script (as below); which includes parts for myself and Malin, and also Mathieu and Aslambek. But as Mathieu and Aslambek weren't at the conference myself and Malin 'play' their parts also. When reading you are asked to feel between the lines, to stretch beyond the story on the page – to make connection with the ethnography of the earlier part of the paper – which is written with the stable.

Malin's mention of 'collaboration' was our link to the Lund conference theme, but the ambition of our contribution was to invoke a worlding event. This story to follow tells of an event as it takes place within the Kultivator farming situation. It is made of transactions that interconnect with other farm events (happening off the page). The story does not account for something particularly special that is designated *as art* by Malin and Mathieu, but is rather constructed from a mundane sequence that happens as part of their general day-to-day activity. The opportunity of the Lund conference provided the initial impetus for writing the story-to-perform (which is longer than this short section). And the time restrictions and live audience of the session directed the scope of the edit which is trimmed around the construction of a stable. The sequence includes Aslambek. Malin and Mathieu met him as tutors of the school integration programme; and because of his skill-set he is now working on the farm. As performed at the conference, the story starts here:

The Stable (A Collaborative Story).

Malin: To set the scene Mathieu explains that during the week he will mostly be at the school, teaching film studies and the refugee integration programme. There will be a music evening on Thursday for the refugee families and other students. This is an unusual week for me, as I will be mostly at the farm, apart from Thursday when I also need to be at the school for meetings.

During the week, we decide that Julie should stay on the farm a bit, but also go to the school and interview a few people we work with: another artist-led project called Yellow Box, the director of the Kalmar art museum, our regional art coordinator and the headmaster of the school.

I ask Julie: What would you like to do tomorrow?

Julie: When people come here, what do *they* do? Do they get involved in the farm?

Malin: Mathieu responded, 'Yes, we encourage them to have the farm experience. And they can continue if they want to'.

Julie: I think tomorrow I will stay at the farm. I will join Henric for the milking.

Malin: Ok, milking starts at 7am and continues until around 10.30. What size are your feet? It is better that you wear capped boots. The cows can kick. Come here first. I will give you the boots, we can take hay to the horses, and then I will walk you to the milking shed.

Julie: On the way back to my house I notice a man in a red jacket.

Malin (*as Aslambek*): Hej. Julie: Hej.

Malin: The man in the red jacket is Aslambek. Last year he was a student of the integration course. He has experience of farming and building, so we asked him to work with us to help build a stable. He is from Chechnya. He speaks Russian and is learning Swedish. He speaks to Julie in Swedish. She doesn't understand. He probably just asked if she had seen us, or maybe he asked if she was lost. 'Svenska?', he asks.

Julie: Engelska? My name is Julie, pointing to the white house. The next day I go to the main house to pick up some logs for the re. Malin invites me for a coffee. Aslambek comes in with Mathieu. 'Svenska. Lerra svenska' Mathieu says. Then looking at me, 'she wants to learn Swedish'. I say, 'I have learned that I am in the *vita huset* (the white house)'.

Malin: Mathieu says, 'The idea is that he helps to build *and* learns Swedish but he is always by himself'. Looking at Julie, Aslambek asks 'Ingelska?'. She nods. He tells of his time in Chechnya. I try to translate parts for Julie. Sometimes I realise that I am translating things he *hasn't* said, he is 'speaking' physically. After coffee, Julie goes back to the *vita huset* and Mathieu and I help Aslambek. We need to move the stable door so it can be painted. It is heavy, so I ask Julie if she will help.

Julie: I say, 'Of course'. And help carry it, to rest on the stone wall in front of the horses. It looks like a sculpture.

Malin: Yes, it is a very nice collaboration.

[Image 4: around here – the stable] Caption: **Image 04: The Stable Door. Photo: JC.**

THE WAYS WE JOIN

From holding Malin's hand, there is perhaps segue with Celine Condorelli's (celinecondorelli.eu) notion of friendship 'as a *specific entry* [my emphasis] in relation to the large question of how to live and work together towards change' (2013, 63). The question of how to *live and work together towards change* is a central concern of pragmatism (Fischer, 2014); which encourages us to replace our craving to know how to *know* with a desire to know how to *live* – positioning knowledge as a way of 'carrying us in to more fruitful and caring relationships with others, rather than distancing ourselves [...] in the name of objectivity' (Jackson, 1995, 163). However, as knowing is a 'distributed practice' (Barad, 2007, 379), it cannot be claimed as human only (or 'human led'); 'not simply because we use nonhuman elements in our practices but because knowing is a matter of part of the world making' (Barad, 2007, 185). In other words, knowing-world-transaction is tied up in doing,

making or building-world-trans-action. And as this research is designed to get to know Kultivator and what Kultivator is *doing-in-transaction*, I arrive at Kultivator acknowledging that the moniker of 'artist-led' as 'human-led' infers an anthropocentric hold which is out of step with material organic thinking.

But by now we know that Malin's 'nice collaboration' goes beyond human involvement. And this is because the article presents my experience of the Kultivator residency as one of thinking-with the farm; which offered particular insight in to the caring relations which is Kultivator's working environment. From here *The Stable* (story) was used as something for Malin, Mathieu and myself to think-with; and this article can be used by artists, curators and other art professionals to think-with Kultivator towards new stories that re-form our understanding of collectivity and collaboration – by acknowledging builders as more than human. Earlier I used Sullivan's (2001) metaphor to introduce continuity as a soupy-mingle. The new story of this article offers the stable as a 'think-with' event and event method; and also as a metaphor that stresses companionship and caring. Because we are all in the stable. And knowing this helps us avoid fractionalizing. So this short residency experience can be equated with Jackson's (1995, 163) view of anthropological ethnographic fieldwork: where the ambition is not to represent the world of others 'but a mode of using our experience in other worlds to reflect critically on our own'. The experience of being in the 'other' *continuous* world of Kultivator enables us to reflect on our dualities; it turns attention to the ways we join (or could). It is not simply a farm. But a farm to think-with. It is worlding. And as such has an important role to play in the development of the bigger stable story for making future life – beyond human history (Haraway 2016).

CONCLUSION

To explore how artist-led practice expands artistic practice and scholarship this article draws on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken as part of Stretched: Expanding notions of artistic practice through artist-led cultures (funded by the Swedish Research Council). It is written with the heritage of pragmatism and has argued that the practice of Kultivator can be understood as a practical way of doing organic philosophy. The paper arises from a one-week residency at Kultivator which is an artist-led project on the Swedish island of Öland. The literature of artist-led practice is concerned with collaboration and collectivity between artists and other human collaborators and gives focus to buildings in urban contexts. As a contribution this paper makes a novel contribution to the literature firstly by giving attention to a rural arts practice. And more specifically the paper illuminates how

Kultivator's collaborative practice stretches beyond the confines of the current literature to human-environment relations; and Kultivator is creating space for residents to understand the continuity of these relations. Kultivator promotes a 'landed-ness' that re-calibrates the privilege given to the human-only social that pervades institutional theories of art and their influence on artist-led literature. Rather than focusing on 'buildings' as an artist-led project Kultivator asks us to consider the way we 'build' our participatory process of living together and the role artist-led practice can have in doing so.

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