

Caring for Glaciers: Land, Animals, and Humanity in the Himalayas | Text Transcript

This is a text transcript for the book panel on “Caring for Glaciers: Land, Animals, and Humanity in the Himalayas” by Prof. Karine Gagné, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Guelph. The panel was presented by the Canada India Research Centre for Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). It was recorded on September 25, 2020. The panel was moderated by Prof. Sharada Srinivasan. The featured panellists were Tanya Richardson, Sara Shneiderman, Travis Steffens, and David Borish.

Transcript:

Sharada Srinivasan:

Okay, welcome everybody. I am Sharada Srinivasan, I'm at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Guelph. I'm currently the director of the Canada India Research Centre for Learning and Engagement, CIRCLE for short. CIRCLE was established in February of this year, it aims to be an interdisciplinary gateway for cutting edge research related to India, and the Indian diaspora in Canada.

Today we have a very exciting session; the first of the series for this term, the fall term. We have a distinguished panel discussing Karine Gagné's book, *Caring for Glaciers*. So without any further delay, I'm going to hand it over to Karine Gagné, the author of the book, *Caring for Glaciers*, to speak a little bit about the book and introduce the panellists. Over to you, Karine.

Karine Gagné:

Thank you, Sharada. Hello everyone and thank you for joining us today. So, I would like to start by thanking my colleagues Sharada Srinivasan and the CIRCLE at the University of Guelph, the Canadian Research Centre for Learning and Engagement, for organizing this event. So we were all supposed to be in Guelph, in last April, but I think we all know why this event was cancelled. So even though this is taking place now online, it doesn't mean that there is no work behind the organization, or something like that. So thank you again, Sharada.

I'm reversing a little bit, the order of what I had on my note, but I want to first introduce our four panellists. I am in debt to who was there asking people for extra work at this time of the year, I did. And all of our panellists graciously accepted the invitation to reconvene at this book panel, time is such a scarce resource so I want to recognize this while thanking you for being here. On that, before saying a few words on the book, I would like to introduce our four panellists:

So, Tanya Richardson here, is an associate professor in the Anthropology and Global Studies programs at the Wilfrid Laurier University. She has carried out research about the impact of

the creation of a biosphere reserve on landscapes and lively woods in the Ukrainian part of the Danube Delta. Her current research is about the conservation of an Aboriginal honeybee population in Ukraine's Carpathian Mountains. She is the author of *Kaleidoscopic Odessa: History and Place in Contemporary Ukraine... Ukraine, I'm sorry*.

Sara Shneiderman serves as associate professor at the Department of Anthropology in the school of Public Policy and Global Affairs at the University of British Columbia. She is a social-cultural anthropologist with long-term ethnographic commitments in the Himalayas and South Asia.

Her research explores how social transformation is shaped by dynamics of citizenship and belonging in relation to Indigenous, ethnic, religious, and gender identities, cross-border mobility, conflict, and political mobilization, territory, and land use, development discourses, and practices, and disaster aftermath, and preparedness. Her first book is titled *Rituals of Ethnicity: Thangmi Identities Between Nepal and India*, and she is the co-editor of the book *Darjeeling Reconsidered: Histories, Politics, Environments*.

Travis Steffens is assistant professor at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Guelph. Travis is an evolutionary anthropologist in his research program investigating human-lemur interaction within a shared environment. Travis leverages conservation biogeography, spatial ecology, and one health approaches to understand how lemurs interact with, and respond to, human-caused disturbance.

He also looks at how humans are impacted by applied conservation measures, targeting lemurs and their habitat. Travis is also founding director of Planet Madagascar, a non-profit, focused on helping to create sustainable forest communities in Madagascar.

David Borish- Borish is a PhD candidate in Public Health and International Development at the Department of Population Medicine at the University of Guelph. David is a research-based videographer and photographer who unites an interest in research for transformative social and environmental change, with a passion for visual media.

He has worked with communities in multiple countries to co-produce visual outputs related to human-environment relationships. He is currently working in partnership with Inuits, from Labrador, to co-create a research-based documentary film about the connection between caribou and Inuit knowledge.

So again I want to say thank you all for being here today. Sorry I've presented you before doing my little introduction on the book, I can't reverse the order of what is on my sheet, I feel a bit nervous by the format, so.

Before moving to the presentations, I will take a few minutes to say a few words on Ladakh and the book. So to better describe *Caring for Glaciers* as a book, I should perhaps start with a question: why are glaciers receding? The scientific outlook on glaciers is generally turned towards the global, so there is no exact science to assess the recession of the glaciers of the Himalayas and the rhythm at which they are doing so. But the notion that the recession of

glaciers is an outcome of something which is taking place on the global scene of anthropogenic climate change, is generally accepted.

Caring for Glaciers is a journey, if I can put it this way, into why glaciers are receding mostly from the perspective of Ladakhi elders. And the answer is here, not located at the global level. For Ladakhis, glaciers are receding because a certain ethics of care for the land, for the animals, and for divine beings is receding.

So why is this ethics of care eroding according to elders? There are a number of reasons for that, but there is a certain beginning to this with the post-independence geopolitical context of India. With the independence of India, the state of Ladakh as a border area has solidified at the rhythm of successive wars with Pakistan and with- the war with China.

Today, maintaining an ethics of care in the form that elders have known, it is a challenge. The militarization of Ladakh, together with the expansion of the bureaucratic apparatus, has generated access to employment beyond the traditional agro-pastoralist activities, generally outside the villages, opening up new possibilities for Ladakhis to pursue individual aspiration.

The military infrastructure in the region has grown significantly since I conducted the research which is at the core of this book. Every time I return to Ladakh I can see new military buildings. I often think of this as the slow violence of the reconfiguration of Ladakh, into a border area, a landscape transformed by geopolitical conflicts and an agro-pastoralist way of life, which is eroding.

The militarization of the landscape is however, rarely evoked as an issue by [the] Ladakhi, and the book will offer insights into why it is like that. It is complex. A brief outlook at the recent events of the summer of 2020 can offer some insight into this. In June there was a violent escalation at the line of actual control which divided India and China. Twenty Indian soldiers were killed and an unknown number of Chinese soldiers perished. Then in late August, another face-off broke out with the troops.

The Guardian has recently published an article titled "Villagers help Indian troops face Chinese forces in the Himalayas". Indeed, about a hundred villagers from Chushul, in Ladakh near the border, have been voluntarily bringing material and food for the troops to help with the coming winter ahead. The article cites a young man sitting saying, "We want to help the Indian army to secure their position immediately. We are carrying supplies to them, doing multiple rounds in a day to ensure that the army doesn't face too many problems".

This summer, Ladakhi living near the border were anxiously waiting to perhaps have to do the mandatory portering work if the conflict was worsening. This was at a time when COVID has not only claimed lives in Ladakh, but left many vulnerable with a tourist season that never happened – an industry that many are depending on today. They were worried. One of my friends said, "A war with Pakistan is one thing, a war with China is another". Many experts are indeed questioning whether India is ready or not for that. And Ladakhis certainly feel this.

Something else has been going on in Ladakh. In 2019, a few days after I left the region, the Parliament of India passed an act by which Ladakh became a union territory. But that was until then, part of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. This means that Ladakh is now ruled directly by the Indian state. Ladakhis had for long asked for this, but not entirely in the form which this is now taking.

With the creation of Ladakh as a union territory, came the revocation of certain legal provisions that the state of Jammu and Kashmir had. This means that today, Indian citizens from other states can purchase land or property in Ladakh. Moreover, Ladakhi has not received the provision of the sixth schedule of the constitution; which makes separate arrangements for the tribal areas. Today, manifestations are multiplying as Ladakhi are seeking tribal status to preserve demography, land, environment, and their culture.

Where does it leave us in terms of receding glaciers and an ethics of care? I don't want to end on a sad note, although it's sometimes difficult these days to see beyond that. You may have heard of how Ladakhi are growing glaciers to cope with the impact of climate change based on techniques developed by incredible local engineers.

There is more, Ladakhi are experimenting with new things to grow on their land, some projects are focusing on the revitalization of traditional medicine. Ladakhis' resilience certainly deserves a lot of attention, all the more perhaps today. So on this, I would like to introduce our first panellist, Tanya Richardson.

Tanya Richardson:

Great, thank you Karine for the opportunity to speak about your wonderful book, *Caring for Glaciers*. Writing and publishing a book in anthropology is a long, emotionally, intellectually, and in Karine's case, physically demanding process. So for that reason, the publication of an ethnography is a real event and something that we should take time to celebrate. So I'm really happy to take part in amplifying its messages and to help ensure that the book travels to different audiences.

So will each- each of us will speak about different aspects of the book. In my case, I would like to speak about it as a work of environmental anthropology, and also to highlight a few aspects of Karine's ethnographic writing. So before I do, let me just give a few details about where, when, and how Karine did her field work.

So Karine did her research with Buddhist Ladakhis in Ladakh's Sham area. So this involved spending time in the town of Leh, and in several villages over a 12-month period in 2013 and 2014, with trips before and after that. Karine worked very closely with a research assistant, Namgyal, whose contribution to the relationships that Karine formed, and the knowledge that she acquired is made visible throughout the book.

She also makes us aware of the physical and emotional challenges of doing fieldwork in a militarized border area; a place where the roads are closed in the winter; where the temperatures in winter reach minus 50, which require one to sleep under 50 pounds of blankets; and where food supplies are challenged for those who don't farm. So these help us

feel what it is like to live in this part of the world, and the strength and resilience of the people who make it their home.

So I focus on the book's contributions to environmental anthropology because Karine herself initially framed her study as being about Buddhist Ladakhis experiences of environmental change. And because topics such as climate change, which are essential to the book, are often framed as being most essentially about something we call the environment. As Karine highlighted, the recession of glaciers in the Himalayas is explained by many experts as being caused by planetary scale geophysical processes of anthropogenic climate change. That is, they locate the cause of change outside of the region.

However, like the best works in environmental anthropology Karine's book is about much more than human environment relations as they might be understood in a conventional materialist and secularist way. That is, to understand how Ladakhis engaged in mutually sustaining relations with glaciers, mountains, animals, fields, and pasture – and how these have been undermined – we need to pay attention to issues of cosmology, religion, ritual, state formation, war, and militarization.

While Karine's book provides us with a work of environmental anthropology, it is also much to teach us about the anthropology of the state, religion, Tibetan Buddhism, pastoralism, the political economy of agrarian change. As such, it demonstrates forcefully the artificiality of such distinctions between politics, religion, the environment, and the economy for Ladakhis, and serves as another powerful reminder of how such domaining practices arise from modern Euro-American habits of thinking.

Karine effectively straddles and mutes these distinctions by drawing on the anthropology of ethics and morality, and more specifically, by describing what she calls a "Ladakhi ethics of care", that arises out of their intimate engagement with land, animals, glaciers, and deities. She draws on writing in the anthropology of religion, that takes ethics as a field of practice that is socially located and culturally informed, and that people undertake with a conscious orientation towards a conception of what is good, proper, and virtuous.

Following Ladakhis themselves, and some anthropologists, she distinguishes ethics as practice from morality as that which involves collectively held obligations and duties. It also enables her to trace the way in which these ethics, though informed by Tibetan Buddhist precepts, are formed as much, if not more, through their affective and embodied engagements with animals in the land, and are focused more on ensuring their continuity rather than transcending them.

Karine's impetus to centre the anthropology of ethics and morality, and to write an ethnography about Ladakhi ethics of care is illustrated forcefully in her introductory chapter, by a story in which abi Lobsang, a resident of Ang, explains why her community is facing water scarcity. Although abi Lobsang begins her commentary by referencing a warming climate, she quickly moves on to explain that the problem more likely stems from the fact that villagers are no longer performing the ritual of taking charcoal from each household to the mountains to grow the new glacier called Kangri Soma. And "why not?" asks Karine. To which abi Lobsang answers that Ladakhis are now empty of heart.

It was conversations such as these, along with comments that Ladakhis had become careless, "tsana met kan", in their relations with glaciers and the deities who reside there, that inspired Karine to write about an ethics of care, rather than Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, or other feminist scholars who use this term. Providing an ethnographic account of Ladakhi ethics immorality enables Karine to unfold Ladakhi explanations for why they have become careless and empty of heart, but demonstrate how seemingly secular political events have cosmological consequences.

For example, Karine found that her questions about the causes of environmental change produced accounts about the India and Pakistan war which they referred to with the term, arthalis, or Hindi for 48, the year Ladakhis in Sham experienced it. This leads to her trek across Sham to speak with elders about these events, many of whom witnessed the massacre.

Fellow villagers, Pakistani raiders, and animals in chapter two – which is called Arthalis and Beyond: a Crack in the Landscape – Karine describes the distress caused by witnessing and participating in such acts of violence, which violate the Buddhist ethical precepts that Ladakhis follow.

These acts of violence both committed and witnessed fundamentally changed people, elders say. And Ladakhi's immoral acts may have led to karmic retribution, now evident in the form of deteriorating environmental conditions. "This was a critical event", Karine writes, referencing Veena Das. That is, one that overturned the existing order, annihilated previous modes of thinking, and created new ways of being in the world.

On the one hand, attention to ethics and morality helps Karine unpack Ladakhi accounts of the origin of environmental change in political events; on the other, it helps connect the past to the present and the way that the changing political economy of the region, and Ladakhi's engagement with it, is making it harder and harder for them to fulfill their moral obligations, to provide labor for farming.

This is because many have moved away to towns to work or to serve in the military as their vision of the good life has changed. In Sham, successful farming requires that all people contribute their labor, and that prayers and rituals involving the monastic community are performed to ensure that deities such as sadak, the lord of the soil, yul lha, the god of the mountain, lu, the god of the underworld, and zhidak, the owner of the land, cooperate. Karine describes how the performance of rituals has been shortened and curtailed because those who return to provide labor cannot stay long enough for the full rituals to be performed.

These issues were discussed in chapter 4, called Father White Glacier: Incommensurable Temporalities and Eroding Filial Bonds, is one of my favourite chapters because it illustrates the tension between different generations' ways of practicing Buddhist ethics; the consequences of these for the discontinuation of a ritual, and the challenges of trying to revive this ritual.

The chapter is therefore very much about what an ethics of caring for land actually is, and why it is so hard to maintain it in the present? Like other chapters, Karine's ethnographic narrative allows the reader to learn and to be surprised alongside her as she helps plant crops, worries about water, converses with elders, finds out about the discontinued skyin jug ritual, and traverses the land in search of knowledge holders who might perform it.

So I would like to recount a little bit of Karine's narrative for you: Karine learned about the skyin jug ritual from elder Nawang Gyalton in the village Tingmosgang, when discussing the threat of water scarcity and the fact that Tibetan winter almanacs predicted no rainfall anytime soon.

He began by insisting that glaciers were not receding because of climate change – one of the few people Karine heard used the term – but because villagers were not caring for the mountain deity and the underworld deity. Deities, like people, have personalities. And the owner of the land in Tingmosgang, according to Nawang Gyalton, is stubborn and refuses to let villagers farm unless they pay the right tribute.

The right tribute is the skyin jug ritual which is no longer formed, but which some elders hope to revive. Disappointed that young people have no interest in this type of activity, Nawang Gyalton asked, "But how can old folks like us climb this mountain?" When Karine then tries to find out from another villager about whether the ritual will be organized, no one seems to know so she sets off to the local monastery.

However, the resident monk knows nothing about it – not only because he's only recently arrived, but also because he was trained in a more often orthodox Buddhism, that rejects rituals like skyin jug as heretical. Seeing Karine's disappointment, another villager recommends that she visit grandfather Nyima, who had once been a monk at Tingmosgang's monastery, but was living in another monastery 40 kilometres away. This time Karine is in luck.

Grandfather Nyima describes the ritual in detail, which requires the participation of monks, musicians, children, and laypeople. All of whom, should climb the steep mountain at the upper part of the Tingmosgang village. The ritual was performed on the summit, which allows a full view of the village's main glacier, which is the abode of the land god. The worshippers appeal to him by shouting, "Father white glacier, ju hey! Mother mapam lake, ju hey! Zhidak of the village, sacred owner of the land, ju hey!" Karine explains that this resembles a ritual performed during wedding ceremonies.

The community is like the bride leaving her birth community, and saluting her father and mother in doing so. Villagers affirmed their affiliation with a glacier and a lake, and here I quote Karine, "...because they are sources of fresh water, life's most fundamental resource, the glacier and the lake symbolize a father and a mother who take care of their children. Through the ritual, villagers acknowledge that they live under the patronage of the local land god. Without whom, they would be at a loss.

In the end however, this skyin jug ritual was not performed. Grandfather Nyima has no successor, there are no people who would pay for the ritual, or few people. Ladakhis' filial

links with glaciers have been eroded, and with them, what Karine calls "landscape kinship": a mode of dwelling, sustained by moral obligations between people, land, and glaciers.

So just a couple of words to finish. I dwelt here in on the particulars of Karine's ethnography because her careful storytelling and descriptions show us how a Ladakhi ethics of care can speak to and against global narratives about climate change and the charismatic mega concept of the anthropocene – which is moving to the forefront of environmental scholarship in anthropology and in other disciplines.

What I like about Karine's book is the way it stays close to Ladakhi practices and thought. Her use of the anthropocene and climate change make very brief appearances at the beginning and the end of the book. This means that we are able to see that while Ladakhis and anthropocene scholars share a sense that humans have caused the change. They differ dramatically in their understanding of how and why this change occurred, and what actions need to be taken to reverse it.

Like all good ethnographies, Karine and the people she writes about, abi Lobsang, Nawang Gyaltson, Grandfather Nyima, show us ways of being, and knowing, and relating that can open up and enrich metropolitan environmental scholar's understanding of a changing world. And I hope they take the time to read this book, so thank you.

Karine Gagné:

Thank you, Tanya. That's very generous. And now I would like to welcome please, Sara Shneiderman.

Sara Shneiderman:

Great [clears throat] Sorry, great. Thank you very much. Let me just take a sip of water. It's early morning here in Vancouver, so I'm sorry – the coffee is still doing its work. Thank you, Karine for having me here as part of this panel. And to colleagues at CIRCLE, and Guelph in general, I had wished I could join you in person. It would have been my first trip to Guelph, but perhaps we'll be able to do that at some future date. And thank you, Tanya for laying out some of those ethnographic details so beautifully, and that really helps me make some of the points that I want to make as well.

Before going further, I'd like to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you from Vancouver, British Columbia which, perhaps should instead be known as the unceded ancestral territory of the Halkomelem-speaking Musqueam people. And I say that in part, because it's an important part of our practice here, to recognize whose land it is on which we are privileged to live and work. But also, because I think it resonates very strongly with the themes of the book that we're here to discuss today, and that's something that I would like to come back to a bit later in my comments.

Although the book is not framed around concepts of Indigeneity, and there are many good reasons for that, given the particular valences of that concept in South Asia. I think that many of the ways in which Karine describes relationships with land have a lot of resonance

with some of the concepts and ways of thinking about these issues here in Canada, and I think that might be an interesting comparative discussion for us to consider.

So, I'll come back to that a little bit later.

Before I do that, let me introduce myself and situate my own work in the Himalayan region. For over 25 years I've worked in Nepal and Northeast India in Nepal, primarily in the regions of Mustang and Dolakha, and in India, in Darjeeling and Sikkim. And I just wanted to share a map of the Himalayan region with you here, to give you some sense of the full span of what we're talking about here. Sorry – let me share that with you. Can you see my screen now?

Great, thank you. So you'll see this is a terrain map, just from Google Maps, and you can see in the upper left hand corner Leh, which is the major city in Ladakh about which Karine writes in her book. And then much further east here, is the region of Mustang in Nepal, a former Himalayan kingdom, now part of the nation-state of Nepal. And then here is the district of Dolakha. Further east is Sikkim and Darjeeling, and these are the regions in which I've spent my time as anthropologist over the last 25 years.

But I wanted to show you the map to suggest the forms of connectivity that exist across the full range of the Himalayan region here. And I'm echoing our colleague Pasang Yangjee Sherpa, who makes the point in her book review of Karine's book, in the journal of Asian Studies, that: although the ethnographic material that Karine so gracefully and poignantly shares is particular to Ladakh, many of the themes that are raised are really pan-Himalayan. And that's in terms of both the transformation of the environment, the transformation of social relations, and the transformation of political experiences.

So as I was reading the book, almost on every page I would stop and just say, "yes, that is so true!" I really feel what is being communicated here, I feel it in the voices of the elders, and it connects very strongly to the community members with whom I've worked – over such a long time as well – even though the people with whom I work reside in a very different political space.

And that brings me to the next point I want to make here, and let's see if we can shift to the political view on Google Map... You'll see that what appeared as an interconnected mountain range across this region, is in fact subdivided by national borders between Nepal, India, Bhutan and then of course, in the contested area which forms the subject matter of this book, between India, Pakistan, and China.

So it's that criss-crossing of political boundaries on territorial space which in the environmental sense, knows no boundary, which is really the crux of the matter, in terms of the experiences of many of Karine's interlocutors that we meet here. So I'll just stop sharing that now.

So I visited Ladakh only once actually, in 1995 – 25 years ago now – at the beginning of my time working in the Himalayas. I've never returned, but even then I could see both the similarities and contrasts with the Himalayan regions that I was more familiar with further east, which I just showed you. The main thing that I noticed at that time were the roads.

And the roads figure prominently in many of the ethnographic descriptions in this book, what Karine draws out so beautifully, is the fact that these are spaces in Ladakh which are... on the one hand, in the high mountains and could be seen as remote; yet on the other hand are very deeply interconnected with the body of the nation state, and then of course more broadly with global networks. Through that network of roads, and at that time when I had first visited the area in the mid-1990s, that was simply not the case throughout most of Himalayan Nepal.

That's now transformed radically as well, and there are- there's a huge influx of road building across the Himalayan regions of Nepal as well. But the point I want to make here is that that form of connectivity had come much earlier to Ladakh than to many other Himalayan regions. This, I think, is primarily a feature of Ladakh's importance as a border region. Which brings me to the first major point that I'd like to make, as I try to situate *Caring for Glaciers* within the larger frameworks of Himalayan anthropology, as well as South Asian studies.

In the book, Karine portrays Ladakhis as both fully political and fully environmental subjects entangled with historical and natural transformations at local, national, and global scales. This multi-dimensional approach makes caring for glaciers a critical departure from many earlier works about this region as well as other parts of the Himalayas, which tend to take either- sorry... which tend to take an "either or approach". Either historical and political or environmental.

And that has been a kind of a critical challenge I think in conceptualizing this region – how to bring these two frameworks together – and that's something that I think this book does in just a remarkable way, which really shows the way forward. Residents of high Himalayan regions like Ladakh, or Mustang in Nepal, which is where I did my own first ethnographic research in the mid-1990s, were often represented earlier as "...mountain people living their own ecologically attuned lives apart from the ravages of the national political experiences that shape the states in which they happen to be situated", whether that be India, Nepal, or China.

This is a tendency that I have argued against in my own work. Simply because people maintained agrarian livelihoods in high mountain terrain does not mean that they were not also engaged with the state or in many cases, such as the one that Karine describes, multiple states at the same time.

This book demonstrates such entanglements beautifully through the historical ethnography of Ladakh's experience of partition and the ongoing militarization of the region as a sensitive border space contested between India, Pakistan, and China. Not to mention, the ongoing Kashmir freedom struggle as well. This geopolitical positionality is as relevant now as ever with heightening border tensions in this very region over the last several months, which Karine also alluded to in her opening remarks.

Just yesterday I read a piece in the diplomat.com online forum titled "The India-China Ladakh crisis: Why So Silent World?" And I thought that that title was very telling, because the question that it asks comes back to this issue of flattened representations of mountain

communities as somehow outside of political time. And that is what this book does so much work towards correcting.

In so doing, Karine further argues that the transformation of agro-pastoral livelihoods and the loss of filial relations with the mountain deities that make up the land, glaciers and otherwise, is neither a result of mountain dwellers own insufficiencies or lack of knowledge; and yes, this is the very demeaning argument that scholars who advanced the once popular theory of Himalayan degradation, made in the 1980s, on the notion that Himalayan people simply didn't know enough about the impact of their actions on the land, and that's what was leading to deforestation and erosion.

So in Karine's view, this is very clearly not the case or the driving- the main driving factor behind environmental transformation, nor is it the unfortunate but unavoidable collateral damage of mountain dwellers incomplete integration into global capitalism, due to their impossibly remote location.

Rather, she argues that the rapid rate of environmental transformation is largely the result of nationalist developmentalism, that has required people to step aside from their own land in order to make space for the military, that's required to secure international borders. Seen in this light, the sense of deep loneliness that the elders portrayed in this book hold, is not only poignant but really unforgivable.

Their children and grandchildren have been told that in order to be successful citizens of the Indian nation state, they must go elsewhere – to Punjab, Delhi, and beyond. But this is not because the land on which they were born is worthless, rather precisely the opposite. It is so valuable within the national imaginary and within the national strategic repertoire, that its own inhabitants must be evacuated to make way for the state.

And this is where I want to come back to the resonance with our current discussions here in Canada, at a moment that we might conceptualize reconciliation about the relationship between the state and its people. Particularly its people who are the inhabitants of territories, which are seen as valuable for expansionist state purposes.

And I think that's very much the scenario that we encounter in Karine's book, in terms of the kind of diminishing capacity for Ladakhis themselves to determine their own futures in relation to the land. And I think that is also the experience of many Indigenous peoples here in Canada, over time.

Therefore, there's a real need to think through what it means to critique this sort of state expansionism in a place like India, in relation to the kind of knowledge holders in its own territory, and what it means to do to make similar kinds of critiques here for instance. And I think that that would be a conversation worth pursuing.

There's also some mention in the book about the educational migration which is common throughout the Himalayas, where people- young people leave their home in order to be educated, either in Leh or of course, much farther afield, in the places that I've already mentioned.

And I think at some point, I didn't know the page number - Karine, you actually use the term "residential school" for this kind of experience. I've also often heard that used in the South Asian context, and it's interesting because there it still holds a very positive valence, I think, in many local people's minds on the idea that, "my child is going to go to boarding school and receive an education they're going to become, in a sense, cultivated as a citizen of the nation state".

But of course that term here, residential school, has come to take on a very different meaning, and I think it would be interesting to think through some of those differences in perception – and how they work, and why.

So with the departure of young people from the land, it is only the elders who are left remembering what once was in Ladakh; using their limited physical and financial resources to maintain individual relations with territory in its embodied form, rather than the communal forms of relationship that once were prevalent.

And that comes back to what Tanya was saying about the rituals invoking mountain deities, and so forth, and the sense of challenge that Ladakhis currently hold in terms of how to actually mobilize the communal resources to bring those rituals about. But I think it's very clear in the book, that those individual relationships remain, but they're in a sense a skeletal form of what used to be a more wholesome social structure.

It's the deeply situated knowledge through which such relations between individuals communities and the land, must be maintained that sing out from every page in this book. Rather than portraying these elders as somehow locked in traditional ways of life, unable to understand science or modernity, Karine succeeds in showing how they, in fact, hold the most relevant knowledge for the place that they are in.

And I think that's really critical. It's in this sense, that relationships with glaciers are the "barometer for morality", as it's so beautifully put in the book. Appropriately situated knowledge is ethical knowledge in the deepest sense, and for me, that argument about the power of situated knowledge is just so important.

This leads to the final point that I want to make. Karine situates for interlocutors as deeply ethical actors in the Buddhist sense. But not because they are following a rigid textualized notion of what "Buddhist ethics" in a formal sense looks like, rather, they are embodying the principles of right action in their everyday relationality with the full range of beings that they encounter, human and non-human. Exemplifying interconnectedness through their lived reality.

This begs the question of how they themselves theorize the relationship between knowledge and action, and how such a framework might be a valuable model, not only for their own community and its younger generations, but for people all over the world who seek to live life as both fully political and fully environmental subjects, wherever we are.

This seems to be one of the critical challenges facing us today – how to do that – and *Caring for Glaciers*, provides some ways to think forward by bringing us into the world of deeply situated knowledge and action that the elders of Ladakh hold.

And so I just wanted to conclude, by reading a quotation from the book review of *Caring for Glaciers* in the journal of Asian Studies, written by our colleague, Pasang Yangjee Sherpa, who articulates this very beautifully. She, herself comes from a Sherpa community in Northeastern Nepal, and really makes the case that I've just tried to make here as well: that this book has global importance. And I think I really strongly agree with that.

So, Pasang writes, "As a result, the Himalayas can no longer be seen simply as a geological massif. Gagné demonstrates that the region becomes meaningful through the entanglements of land animals and humans. In *Caring for Glaciers*, readers learn that the ethics of care, which maintain these entanglements, are reverting. It is therefore a sobering gift". And that's the end of the quote. I very much share that feeling, and would like to thank you deeply, Karine for sharing that gift with us.

Karine Gagné:

Thank you. Thank you, Sara for this. Yes, many things to think about here and on that, I would like to introduce Travis Steffens.

Travis Steffens:

I'm sorry, maybe I was introduced, but my connection is terrible. So if my signal drops, my apologies, but I'll just hop back on. That was a fantastic overview by- I'm assuming that it's my time to go? Yes, okay thank you. I didn't hear because my connection dropped. But that was a fantastic overview of the book from Tanya and Sara. The framing this in an anthropological context and with other perspectives in anthropology, but also situating the book in the broader context of the Himalayas and Canada, is really fascinating for me.

I actually come at this book from a very different perspective. I'm a lemur researcher and I work in Madagascar. Now, the connections to India are clear, because 90 million years ago, India and Madagascar were once attached.

So there's definitely some similarity and obviously many differences, and reading this as a primate researcher first – who looks at the interaction of primates with their environment and people – and then also who's interested in applied conservation and looking at how people are coping with conservation activities who live in a shared environment with lemurs – I felt this book was extremely compelling.

I, even outside of just a traditional of anthropo- from anthropological perspectives, I was thinking of it even just from someone who's a lemur researcher who's trying to understand the relationship between animals and the environment, and the relationship between peoples and those animals in their environment.

What I loved about what Karine did is she would give personal reflections on every concept. That helped me as also a field worker, engaged with the landscape she was describing, and it helped me understand how people there would conceive their landscape, and how they situated themselves there, and how they situated themselves within a broader context of that- the world that they lived in.

I also loved, and this was touched upon by both Tanya and Sara, is about how we got a sense of the change in those perspectives and ideas through history and time. And this is something that very much relates to what I see in Madagascar.

You know, I don't study people in Madagascar, I typically study lemurs for the most part. But I've lived with people in remote places in Madagascar, and I've come to understand them, you know, as a- you know, as colleagues, as friends, as people who work together towards similar goals.

And I noticed many parallels in *Caring for Glaciers*, that I see when I discuss and meet with people in Madagascar, say over tea or over fire. And one of the main things I really found fascinating, was how animals are very- they're perceived in very different ways in different places. I think I should probably just share my screen because it's worthwhile showing. I'm gonna see if I can do that... hopefully this works out for the best.

I just wanted to give an example about how people perceive- I hope everyone can see it, can I get a thumbs up? Yeah, great. I got- this is an injury. This is a lemur, and they call it Babakoto. Babakoto means "the ancestor of people" in Madagascar.

There's a fantastic story of how this lemur, who's one of the furthest jumping animals in the world, can leap from tree to tree, crossing gaps of up to 10 metres, bouncing majestically through the forest, one day discovered a young boy who was trapped up in a tree because the vines he had crawled up had been cut by some villager who needed the vines for growing- for building material.

While Babakoto was worried about this child, [he] put the child on his back and flew through the forest to bring him to the safety of the village. When they brought the- when he brought down this child, the villagers were quite happy that their ancestors were still looking out for them. Now, in this country there's over 100 different lemur species, so the relationship to animals isn't uniform.

This next species here is called an aye-aye. If you've ever seen one, it's probably the most outrageous creature on the planet. And they have these ridiculous fingers which you can see in the bottom; it's a middle finger with a ball joint. The same people that regard and revere Babakoto consider this animal to be evil.

So the spirit- if this animal is seen in a community or a village, there's different approaches. But some will feel that the village itself has now been tainted and they will evacuate the village, sometimes permanently. In some cases they feel seeing the species will bring a bad fortune or death, so the only way to overcome that would be to kill it.

So I found that when you read Karine's book you see there are many similarities between how in some ways in Madagascar, and how that relationship to animals is not simple. It's more than just one way of viewing animals and obviously many of the differences [are] born out of some of Buddhist ideologies.

We're in Madagascar, they have their own animistic versions of their own religion, that has been strongly influenced by Catholicism. But that is another parallel I found reading the

book, you know, there's a historical context for how people perceive animals and how they live their lives.

And then I really enjoyed looking at how landscapes in Ladakh were conceived, versus say, landscapes in Madagascar. So I'm going to go back to sharing my screen, because we would imagine Madagascar is well, quite forested, and that's what often people perceive. But it actually suffers from a severe amount of deforestation.

And we would perceive this landscape as- one thing we would see it as, is all the destruction of forest. But many people in Madagascar would see this as an opportunity for grazing cattle. Where this was once forest, this is now a place that they can bring cattle. And to them, cattle are very important as a source of wealth and so this is where a conflict occurs between conservation and local interests, and in concepts of their landscape.

Now, on the flip side, the same people that would see this as important, also agree about the importance of forest to those same cattle because forest provides shade, provides access to water; so it's not- it's not a dichotomy, it's built on a continuum. That is something that's difficult when you're doing a science to try to understand. Because if you're looking at it from a scientific perspective, it's not clean and it's not clear.

That was something that I- I heard in Karine's book, is that these situations that we see in these landscapes are not simple. I hope- my apologies, I clicked the wrong button. And these landscapes that which we see, are now deforested and empty, are actually potentially beneficial.

However, there's repercussions to these changes as this erosion, that we start seeing occurring on this landscape, continues. It creates a situation that's a new type of landscape, that now has different perceptions by people in these communities. Because now you cannot graze your cattle here – the forest is not providing watershed or shade – and this is the repercussions of converting forest to usable habitat for cattle.

So there's a continuum, even people recognize that when they go too far themselves, they know they need to pull back on how they engage with their environment because they know the environment engages with them. And so they're very attuned with it, and so reading Karine's book just from- almost as a person who's concerned about conservation, I realized this- excuse me stopping the share ...this helped really situate for me that.

Some of these ideas that- I don't see the screen anymore, okay I think it's good – are in some ways, common between two very disparate types of climates and places in geopolitical context, but in some cases, completely different.

I had some notes that I've lost track of, but the ways of, for example, bringing ceremonies back to bring back rain and to improve weather is something that a lot of community members that I speak with talk about when I ask them about: what type of conservation measures should we bring to your community? What type of conservation measures are you interested in bringing to projects that we're working with you on? And often, there's a commonality in the interests.

And what also I find encouraging, is that in the past they were very concerned about how forest operated and how forest existed, and they would use ceremony to work with that. But as things have changed, as economies have become more cash driven, as people have moved to the cities, these are all things that happen in Ladakh as well. There's been a distance of people losing connection to those ceremonies that used to root them in their landscape, and so there's a plea by many of the older people in the communities to bring back these ceremonies.

They may see that as the reason why the forest is not healthy anymore and that the landscapes are eroding but that may not be obviously- we would consider the scientific reason for the erosion in that landscape. But they are connected, and I think it's important to acknowledge those people which Karine's book does dramatically. And I was very interested to hear about how the similarities occurred in these groups in what are, completely different places.

Although the differences were fascinating as well, regarding the people, I found it quite almost humorous when I was reading about how the Ladakhis would consider themselves like sentinels of their landscape, but how the British didn't perceive them this way. Yet, they perceived other groups like in Tibet – they'll come to me in a moment – but Karine mentions it, and there's a similar pattern in Madagascar.

Where the tribe that I work with are very proud of the fact that they were the last tribe to fall in a great war that occurred amongst the 18 tribes, and they consider that very important. To them, this [is] the value they place on themselves, and this landscape is- they're tough, they're able to handle this landscape.

When this invading group came, they couldn't handle the landscape like they could and so they were able to resist much longer than other groups around the area. I found that an interesting similarity to how Ladakhis perceived themselves, with regards to their ability to tolerate their- the elevation in their environment that they live in. Although, it's the opposite situation where I work, it's plus 45 and no rain, as opposed to minus 45 and high elevation- it's much lower elevation.

I think those that are looking to understand, especially if you're looking to do conservation from the animal side of conservation, you must situate how people are involved. It's unquestionable that people are important to the equation of conservation, and I once [have] given a presentation at a conference where the keynote speaker said we have to wrestle conservation away from social scientists and bring it back to ecologists.

To which I thought "what if?", that must be the craziest idea in the world because although we can understand all we want about the biogeography of where lemurs are and how they're impacted by humans, without understanding why humans are impacting them and how they perceive the impacts to lemurs, we're not going to be able to solve any of the problems.

It's obviously something where we need to work in direct connection to the people who live in direct connection to the wildlife, and the landscapes that we're interested in protecting. So I thank Karine for giving me a perspective about that, that I found fascinating.

And I keep the book up here with my lemurs, to try to get them to remind themselves that other animals are considered in various ways around the world. I think this is a- for anyone that's interested in how people relate to their landscape, this would be a book to read. Thank you very much Karine.

Karine Gagné:

Thank you Travis, again for this, and then for the many interesting parallels between two very different places. I think I will come back to this later on. So on this, I would like to introduce David Borish, who's going to speak a bit about his own experience as it relates to human and animal relationship.

David Borish:

Great, so yeah I'm just gonna share my screen. Maybe you can give me a thumbs up if you can see walking caribou? Okay, great.

Well first of all, thank you very much for having me on this discussion. Thank you to all the other speakers for all of your insights, and thank you to Karine for putting out this very important piece of work. I think similar to Travis, I'm coming at this discussion from a very different perspective.

I'm going to be talking about a project called "Herd: Inuit Voices on Caribou," which talks about the relationships between Inuit well-being and caribou in Labrador, so North-eastern Canada. Obviously caribou, Inuit, Labrador, it's a very different contextual background to the people- the glaciers of Ladakh.

But while reading this book, I couldn't help but notice some of the fundamental similarities in some of these concepts around human-environment relationships, and notions of care and responsibility on the context of social and environmental change. So I hope that in the next few minutes you'll be able to see how some of these overarching ideas that Karine talks about in her book, are really- they really resonate with different communities lived experiences including here, in Canada.

So, before I start I'd just like to mention that this project is led by a steering committee that includes both Inuit and non-Inuit members, in particular we're working with the Inuit regions of Nunatsiavut and NunatuKavut. So to provide some brief contextual background to this story, Inuit and caribou have shared a deep relationship for many generations, and so this animal is considered to be completely intertwined with many aspects of Inuit life and Inuit well-being, including food security, livelihoods, cultural well-being, mental health, spirituality, and many other types of connections.

Labrador is an interesting case for caribou because in the- oh sorry, I don't know if my computer froze there... But in the early 90s the George River herd was considered to be one

of the largest caribou herds in the world, numbering somewhere around 800,000 animals. Just gonna try playing that again, okay there we go.

So yeah, I guess the main point here is that not too long ago, several decades ago, there were really a huge amount of caribou in this region. In fact, the George River herd was considered to be one of the largest caribou herds in the world at the time. But since then, this George River herd has been on a steady and rapid decline.

The George River herd is now estimated to have declined by about 99% since about 2001. Meaning that this herd is somewhere around 5000 animals. There isn't any consensus on why this herd has declined so dramatically, but some of the overarching factors are related to both natural and unnatural factors.

The main point here, is that in a very short amount of time there has been this extremely large change in an ecosystem related to a species. With this context in mind, the government of Newfoundland and Labrador enacted a total hunting ban on this George River herd in 2013.

So that means that no one, not even Inuit, are allowed to hunt this animal anymore. So this combination of this dramatic change in a species population, in combination with the hunting ban, has resulted in an alteration to the way that Inuit are able to interact with this species and with the landscape, that is surrounded by both Inuit and caribou.

So the purpose of our project is to work in partnership with Inuit from these regions to understand the ways that these social and ecological changes are affecting Inuit well-being. We're doing this all through documentary film, so before I get into some of the things that we actually found, I'd like to come back to the book for a moment and talk about a particular quote that resonated with me.

So this woman said, "to care for the glacier, you have to see the glacier, you have to know the glacier, like you know a friend", and to me this was such an interesting way of communicating this human-environment relationship. Because right away, you understand that kind of intimacy behind this relationship, on how this person felt with the glacier. This also stood out to me because it sounded very familiar.

This is a man who is talking about his experience and his feelings towards caribou in the context of dramatic changes, "It's just part of the people and to lose that, it's like losing a friend. Losing something that, you know, you wonder someday will ever come back?" So, I hope you were able to hear that. Pretty much, people from completely different parts of the world that are relating their experience and their relationship to a natural feature of an ecosystem to a friend, to this friendship.

In my point of view, this is where you can start to understand how people can really feel embedded into the ways that they understand responsibilities to these natural ecosystems, to these animals, to these glaciers, and these responsibilities of care. Now what are some of the implications of what this loss of caribou, what this loss of a friend means? Well, there are a range of different social well-being and cultural implications and I'm going to share a few of them with you today.

This man said that, "I feel less of an Inuit hunter than I ever did because of all these restrictions that's been placed onto me", and I think this shows how this alteration in caribou populations has led to an alteration in self-perception, and the way that people see themselves as embedded within the landscape and see themselves as individuals.

The loss of caribou and the loss of this friend has also become deeply emotional. This woman says that, "I think it affects anyone emotionally and mentally. In a sense too, your whole lifestyle has changed", which highlights how the decline in caribou, the decline of a species has also affected the emotional landscape that is completely intertwined with this species.

Crucially the loss of caribou has meant that there are disruptions to the connections between generations. An entire generation of youth are growing up, not knowing what caribou tastes like, not knowing what the cultural practices and values and customs are associated with this animal, and they're also not knowing about the knowledge of not only the animal, but the land, as caribou was a way for people to connect the land in different ways.

Now, they're not experiencing those kind of shared experiences, and as an example of this disconnection, here is a photo of two Inuit youth looking at past caribou hunting trips with their father. This reminded me of a section in *Caring for Glaciers* as there was also a section that talked about how youth were looking at photos of their local glacier for the very first time.

So I think that this shows what kind of disconnection youth can have when they aren't gaining those lived experiences themselves. When they aren't going through these lived experiences on a daily, or a somewhat regular basis, then it's hard to develop those kinds of identity and emotional attachments that their parents, as well as their grandparents and everyone else before them, had and subsequent to this.

It can be difficult to develop the deep empathy and love and friendships to these people and- or sorry, to these animals and places if they aren't living through these experiences themselves. So just to bring it back to this quote, "To call someone or something a friend, it suggests that there's this deep relationship that is probably sustained through engagement, through interaction, through memory.

If you can't see your friend, and if you don't know your friend, then how can you truly care for your friend? And better yet, how can you even call something a friend if you don't have a connection to it?" So whether talking about the caribou declines in Labrador, or the receding glaciers in Ladakh, or any kind of other environmental changes going on right now, there are clear alterations to the human dimensions of well-being and life that are following these ecological changes.

And I think that what this book does so well, and actually links with my own research, is that it's not only important to understand how human culture and well-being and society is being affected by these changes, but it's integral that we prioritize these connections so that

future generations can continue to see these animals in these places as a friend. A friend that they know well and deeply, and that they want to continue to support.

So I hope that this brief talk has provided just one example of how Karine's work really goes well beyond Ladakh, and resonates with communities in different parts of the world, including communities here in Canada. So thank you very much for the time, and I look forward to I guess the rest of the discussion. Thank you very much.

Sharada Srinivasan:

Yeah thanks, Karine that was an absolutely fascinating panel. Four great presentations, two of them providing an excellent overview, actually a very in-depth overview of Karine's book, *Caring for Glaciers*. I hope many of you are inspired to borrow or buy a copy of Karine's book.

And then we have had two excellent presentations, which actually relate Karine's work to other parts of the world. As I kept thinking very often, especially when David was using the quote to illustrate some of his findings, that we live after all, in such a small world, right. These connections are there, and if we actually try and make those connections.

We have about 18 minutes left, what I want to first do is invite Karine, the author of the book to see if she has- if she would like to share any thoughts. If you would like to respond to some of the comments that have been made by the four panellists? So say about four or five minutes Karine.

Karine Gagné:

Yes, perfect thanks Sharada. Well, I'm extremely grateful, thank you so much everyone for these beautiful comments and all of the things that you've pulled from the book, to bring this into a very interesting conversation. And I think it's so great to see that we have four panellists from different disciplinary backgrounds.

But we like it, we're able to like it. It's bringing this very lovely conversation. There are so many points where things are converging, I don't want to take too much time. But I want to say that my depth is now bigger than it was at the beginning of the panel. I acknowledge that, thank you.

But there is one thing that kept on animating my thoughts while everyone was talking. So, Sara you were putting the material here, and then you asked this question about "how do we bring this into a conversation perhaps with what is going on now, here in Canada?" And I think this is an issue that has, in different ways, been recurring in many of the presentations here.

It took the form of conservation in Travis and David's presentation, but it's also about the relationship between the state and its people, and what do we do with the land. I think that yes, Travis, you mentioned something about people in a panel thinking through conservation only in terms of biology, and not in terms of the social science.

But if we are thinking through all of these development projects, and the way that people are relating to the land, whether we are thinking through development or militarization. Of course we have to recognize that, once you remove the way that people are relating to the land and then to all of these other beings, it becomes an issue.

So instead of I think- There is a certain discourse, as we all know, which is development and then resource management. But too often still, after all of these writings, and then people studying and fighting for that. We are forgetting, many are forgetting I should perhaps say, the sort of underlying power relations which are at the core of all of these development intervention and how they are sort of conceptualized.

So preserving species preserving landscape is also about preserving people, and how people are sort of envisioned and conceptualized. So if you are doing programs that focus on caribou conservation, the first question to ask is how Indigenous populations in that land are relating to the animals? It can take the way of reconfiguring the land for different state projects, [it] can take many forms, development military.

As I mentioned in my opening, I sometimes think of the militarization of Ladakh as a form of slow violence because it's slowly over the years, sort of severing certain connections that people have with the animals and the land. I think all of this starts to say that yes, it's a real danger to sever these connections from the beginning, so then it should be at the core of any intention.

It's not only preserving the land, preserving animals, it's not only about preserving these non-humans, and that. But it's also about preserving human beings, and then it's often is very central as well. And although we are in this turn when we are trying to focus away a bit from anthropocentrism, we should remember that this is important as well, I think. And this is- those are some of the issues that are raised with the notion of the- I think Tanya mentioned the charismatic notion of the entropy, and we should be careful of that.

Maybe one last thing I felt it was, Tanya in your introduction, in the beginning, when you mentioned that the way of caring is an idea that Ladakhi have. That does not necessarily have to do with- it's not framed within the philosophy of Donna Haraway and Bruno Latour. I think it's very interesting because for me, this idea of caring for the land, although I read their work, this is what I offered to say to my students in my theory course: you're not going in the field to test a theory, but you want to be theoretically informed, to be- to have this sense of awareness for what people are saying.

And I think this is a really interesting thing and I must say, even myself, it took me some time to understand this notion of care that people were foregrounding. It was very confusing in the beginning to have comments about the changing environment that were framed within a historical element. But it's, again, very important how it says a lot about how sometimes we are not as human beings. We're not framing in direct causality all the time.

One last thing that I want to say, with all of these interventions that we have with people from different parts of the world: there has always been this debate in anthropology, between universalism and the local and the particular. I think it's very interesting to see that

how we have these various connections, and then to- those are unresolved tensions. But it's always very interesting to hear that, so thank you. Then I think now, we can open the floor to questions.

Sharada Srinivasan:

Yeah, thanks Karine. Yes, now the floor is open for comments, questions. Please feel free to type your questions in the chat. Or if you would like to speak, Shirley please could you unmute everybody? Thank you, okay. The floor is open for questions, comments. Who would like to go first? The question can be for Karine or for the other panellists.

Philippe Messier:

Well I will if nobody's talking. Karine, I'm Philippe Messier, I'm an assistant professor in anthropology at the University of Prince Edward Island, and I have a question. I work in India as well, but I work in a very different area. I work in the south, in urban context. There's something that Sara Shneiderman mentioned during her comments that kind of caught my attention.

I was wondering Karine, if you could say something about that? She mentioned this idea of the Ladakhi ethics of care that you describe in your book, and I was wondering if you see that kind of care directed and oriented to the new infrastructure that are building in those areas? Is this something that is just in relationship to glaciers or it's kind of developing towards the new infrastructures?

And by the way, just to mention 10-12 of the audience members right now, are actually my students who are in a film methods class. The other class on Wednesday, an ethnographic writing [class]. So the book panel was just a great combination between our last class and today. Thank you.

Karine Gagné:

Thank you, Philippe. Should I reply? Yeah, I think we'll do this perhaps instead of collecting questions.

I think it's very interesting what you're asking Philippe, whether this ethics of care relates only to glaciers and animals? Does it relate to the new infrastructure? I never sort of thought about these things in that way. I don't know why you're asking this, but I think this is very interesting because I now do research in Zanskar, which is sometimes considered a part of Ladakh. But it's very difficult to reach Zanskar.

There's no- it takes about two days by road, through very, very difficult road, and then all of these roads are built to connect the small villages to Padum, the centre of Zanskar. And as you're saying this, one thing which fascinates me, every year when I return, is how people are stopping along the road to fix the road, on their own. If they see that something is sort of falling apart, and that it becomes very dangerous and difficult, people will stop and then they will work on the road to make it okay.

Yeah I will think about this, I think it's a very, very interesting question. I don't- it would take more of a conversation to think- to see if this is the same sort of ethic of care. But there is certainly something here.

Sara Shneiderman:

Can I just add something? I mean, wonderful way to phrase that question, and it makes me think too about the people with whom I work in other parts of the Himalayan region about that. And, I mean I do think that there are some ways in which that sense of the responsibility to repair, which Karine was just kind of indicating, can be there in relation to some infrastructural entities. But it depends which ones they are, and how they've been built and by whom, right?

But I was also going to say, I think there's a kind of competing ethics of care which probably- which has a very different ideological underpinning from for instance, the Indian border roads organization. Which builds all of these border roads and, you know, has these amazing signboards all across the Himalayan region, where of course, the acronym is "bro" B.R.O., which is also kind of playing on this notion of filial kinship or whatever, right?

The state and the military as big brother, which is building the infrastructure. But that the building of the infrastructure itself is kind of promoted as an act of care by the state. So I think there's a very complex set of dynamics, and that would be a wonderful question to consider further.

Sharada Srinivasan:

I don't see any questions in the chat, does any of the... okay Tanya, go ahead.

Tanya Richardson:

Since we're on this theme of caring, I was wondering actually if you could talk about a little bit more about the, you know, words that are actually used to talk to- to convey care? Because I'm sort of- I'm actually quite interested in care myself, because it's sort of used so often in conservation literature to talk about how people care for an animal.

I feel that sometimes we don't pay enough attention to what the words mean in the languages that we're working and what are the- oops. And one of the things for example, that I found- I keep getting muted! One of the things that I found just working in Ukrainian, that is an Indo-European language, is that there are so many different words with so many different kind of other semantic meanings that don't all map onto this English word care, which has this Latin root.

So I was actually going to ask you, you sort of cite this word for careless so I was just wondering if you could talk about the kind of the meanings of the word, or the if there are more words than just that one that you cited to talk about this. So in other words, can you kind of pull apart that translation process between the word- the language you're working and this English word, care, that we kind of use as a concept.

Karine Gagné:

Thank you, Tanya for this. Yeah, I think there are many layers to that, care and careless. I mean, in Ladakh people will say "tsana met kan" which is like, there's no sort of care. It's basically that "tsana met kan," there is nothing like that, but the way that they will use it is really...

So if the people are talking about the way that the state is relating to Ladakhi, in terms of development project, in terms of infrastructure building, people will often feel neglect. For instance, if you're thinking of the internet connection in Ladakh, it's always disconnecting. And then it's two things, when people are- if they are referring to that they will use the same expression as them, how they are treating glaciers as non-human.

Which yeah, is interesting in a way. Then sometimes, if I know that careless- when people, because I often have conversation with people in English as well, and then they will say, they will use the word careless very interchangeably.

Also the other notion I see that people when they are talking about themselves in relation to the state, is that "we are third class citizens." They will often say something like that, which sort of sometimes parallels these notions of care when they are talking. And it's also a very often the type of wording which will be used to refer to the treatment by the Indian bureaucracy.

"They're careless, they don't care." It's in between something, which has a deep sort of root and connection, but it has become my understanding, that it has become something more. Almost like an expression, it's just like, "well we're just third class citizens", "oh, they are careless", "oh, because they are careless when they're doing this" and I feel like there's many of these expressions. It would be interesting to study that a bit more, that have sort of religious roots in Ladakhi that are overtime becoming expressions.

So for instance, in Zaskar, where I'm working right now, like people, Ladakhi of that area, will say very often, if there's a locust invasion and the crops are lost for that year, or if there is not enough snow and they cannot cultivate, they will say "afa tama," it means it's the end of an era.

Which sort of, if you're thinking in Buddhist times, it has some relation, but the idea that it's a local interpretation of that, because it would not be exactly like that. But *afa tama* has these deep religious roots but it's employed like on an everyday life. "What is happening, people are cooking these instant noodles these days, *afa tama!*" but it's the same thing for a locust invasion destroying the field for an entire season.

So I think this is an excellent question, there is something of the philosophical notions and religious notions that are coming into the very expressions and vernacular. I hope it answers a bit.

Sharada Srinivasan:

On that note, I'm going to close this session. Thank you very much, Karine. Thank you very much to all our panellists. I hope all of us feel inspired to pick up Karine's book and read and engage in ethnography. This is a great start to CIRCLE's fall series of webinars.

Our next webinar is titled- is by Dr. Heena Mistry, who is an equity diversity and inclusion training specialist at the Wilfrid Laurier University. It's titled the Repatriation Debate After the Abolition of Indenture. This will be on 7th October, Wednesday. 7th October, at 11 a.m., and you will receive an invitation so if you're interested please do register for the session.

I also want to thank Shirley, our admin support, and Gihan our tech support, for a smooth zoom webinar session. Thank you very much, and have a wonderful rest of the day.