



◀ **Figure 1. Left:** Sámi artist Outi Pieski's public artwork *Guovssat (Protective Forest)* in Lapland Central Hospital, Rovaniemi. In her work, Pieski has transformed traditional Sámi handicraft into a contemporary artistic piece. Photo: Timo Jokela, 2024.
Right: Antti Stöckell uses wood, combining elements with soundscape in his installation *A Drowning Ground*, which was exhibited in the *Shifting Ground* exhibition at the Korundi Art Museum, Rovaniemi, 2024. Photo: Timo Jokela, 2024.

Connecting the Steps for New Genre Arctic Art Education

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In this chapter, we outline and conceptualise the steps for developing the activities of the *New Genre Arctic Art Education* (AAE) initiative. We understand art education as a broad phenomenon that encompasses activities in schools and educational institutions, ranging from work with children to artist training. Alongside formal education and teaching, art education also takes place in informal environments, in organisations and unofficial groups, wherever individuals and groups engage with art for self and community development. From the perspective of educational institutions, the curriculum is a way to outline the aims and

pedagogical methods, which may appear as clearly defined progressions. However, the steps that we outline here are not separate, fixed entities. Advancing through them can be understood as states of entanglement, involving a co-formation where contemporary art encounters the Arctic. In these encounters, in the intra-action, steps emerge through which the goals and activities of the AAE can be outlined (Figure 2).

Our discussion in this chapter is informed by a research review, which clarified the inter-connections among the key concepts of AAE

and explored their relation to sustainability in the Arctic (Jokela & Hiltunen, 2024). Carried out as part of the AAE initiative of mapping 'the stage of arts', the review was based on research articles, visual essays, artworks and project reports within the Arctic Sustainable Art and Design (ASAD, 2024) thematic network of the University of the Arctic (UArctic, 2024).

The AAE initiative started when Jokela et al. (2021) presented the concept of *New Genre Arctic Art*, building on Lacy's (1995, 2008) framework of *new genre public art*. Lacy described her framework as a means for artistic interventions that would engage directly with society to tackle social and political issues, primarily in urban settings. In the Arctic, artists often focus on opposing the exploitation of natural resources, defending the rights of Indigenous peoples or addressing other local issues, using art as a tool to share understandings of the region's challenges (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020b). We recognise that the field of New Genre Arctic Art demonstrates a potential for a pedagogical shift towards art education aiming to promote decolonisation, revitalisation, resilience and sustainability in the region.

We see that art education in the Arctic, which has historical connections to colonialism, must now adapt to social, cultural and environmental changes occurring in the region (Jokela & Hiltunen, 2023). The relation between Arctic sustainability research and the emerging New Genre Arctic Art activities highlights the

necessity for art education that resonates with northern contexts. Educational systems should focus on raising awareness of challenging stereotypes and re-evaluating the roles of art education today. The importance of tangible, material experiences of Arctic children (Rautio & Stenvall, 2018) and the significance of land-based pedagogy in Indigenous cultures are vital educational factors (Wildcat et al., 2014).

Researchers, artists and educators of ASAD and Children of the Arctic networks have recently defined the AAE initiative (Jokela & Hiltunen, 2024; Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2022). AAE aims to foster sustainable art education, particularly for youth, and is supported by various funding sources. This initiative is based on long-term development of art-based environmental education at the University of Lapland (UoL), highlighting place-based learning and situational learning methodologies inspired by participatory approaches of new genre public art. We realised that in the face of rapid Arctic changes, AAE can serve as a leverage point for the sustainability transformation proposed by Meadows (2008).

New Genre Arctic Art as Intra-action of Contemporary Art and Traditional Skills

The Arctic has attracted international contemporary artists from outside the region to explore the evolving dynamics of art, media and aesthetics in its unique environments (Bloom, 2022; Marsching & Polli, 2012). In the

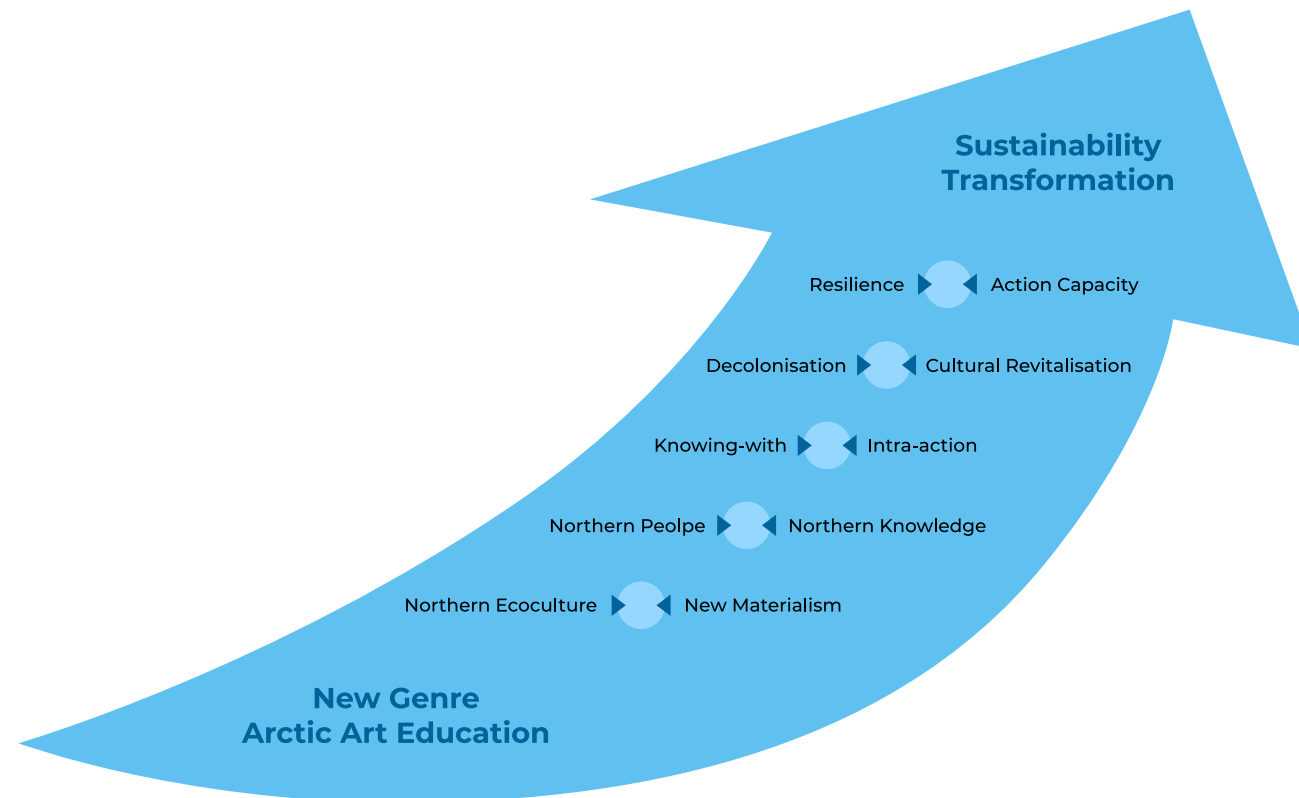


Figure 2. Steps of New Genre Arctic Art Education Towards Sustainable Transformation.
Graphic design: Rosa Kansala, 2024.

context of AAE, we find that it is essential to emphasise the agency of artists and communities living in the North. In the frame of the New Genre Arctic Art, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists increasingly utilise modern technologies – videos, photographs, installations, performances to transform traditions – employing creative skills to address questions related to the environment and society. These contemporary artworks could serve as inspiring examples for art education.

Notably, in art and design education, the New Genre Arctic Art often merges art, design and crafts, rejecting the dualistic and segregating tradition of Western art and education. Artists combine beauty and practicality, sustaining

and transforming local ecocultures through their contemporary artworks (figure 1.) (Jokela et al., 2021). This approach emphasises the material culture and craftsmanship of the Arctic region in the spirit of posthumanism and new materialism (Härkönen et al., 2018). When discussing sustainability, tensions also arise, such as in discussions about the use of traditional animal-based materials, for example, seal skin in art and design (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020b).

New Materialism and Fertile Mesh of Northern Ecoculture

Ecoculture is a central concept in the effort to understand AAE’s essence. It allows the exami-



Figure 3. Intra-action of northern material culture, seasons and artistic work outdoors.
Photos: Timo Jokela, 2001-2008. Photocollage: Kuutti Terävä, 2024.

nation of art education from a posthumanistic and new materialistic perspective, focusing on the coexistence of humans and non-human entities, including soil, water, plants and animals. Morton (2010) uses the metaphor of a “mesh” to describe the invisible interconnectedness of

human beings and nature, which extends from bacteria in the human body to carbon atoms in space. In the Arctic region, the intertwining of material culture with nature is particularly strong, highlighting the importance of recognising ecoculture (Ingold & Kurttila, 2000;

Valkonen & Valkonen, 2018). In AAE, ecoculture is viewed as a state of “baradian” intra-action (Barad, 2011) rather than an integration of separate ecological and cultural entities. There are no separate ecological and cultural aspects, but they shape and define each other in the space of Arctic co-existence, where AAE is created, often using local materials in the spirit of new materialism.

Traditional Arctic arts, such as Indigenous art and craft, are linked to materials from local ecosystems transmitting ecocultural heritage and knowledge from one generation to the next. However, climate change and resource exploitation have disrupted Arctic ecosystems, with impacts on livelihoods and social dynamics (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2011). AAE seeks to address these tensions by applying a posthumanist approach to understanding current northern ecocultures.

Ecocultural intra-action also serves as the foundation for Arctic sustainability transformation, having been studied in various art-based research projects related to snow, forests, natural materials and coastlines (figure 3.) (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2022b). The ASAD network’s Living in the Landscape summer schools have developed art-based research methods that connect ecoculture with sustainability, mainly social and cultural (Jokela & Härkönen, 2021). These art activities demonstrate how art-based research can act as a driving force for change, promoting Arctic sustainability in line with sustainability transformation (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2024).

People of the North and the Arctic

Discussions around sustainability in today’s posthumanist framework often highlight Indigenous cultures for their harmonious relationship with nature (Vadén, 2016). Nonetheless, the

Arctic should not be perceived as a uniform region although it is frequently associated with genuine Indigenous heritage. Stephen (2018) points out the challenges in defining who qualifies as Indigenous, a crucial aspect of the region’s ethnic identity. Alongside Indigenous groups, the Arctic is home to various other minority cultures that possess rich traditions. Chartier (2018) notes the Arctic’s multicultural and multilingual landscape, where the lifestyles of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples intersect. These dynamics have shaped sensitised and ethical approaches and theories in community-based art education (Hiltunen, 2010, 2023; Hiltunen et al., 2021).

In cultural discourse, Indigenous cultures often appear in dualistic terms. Stephen (2018) observes that Arctic Indigenous communities are perceived both as vulnerable to social change and as active agents in governance, legislation, research and the arts. Jokela (2024) advocates for an intersectional perspective to better understand the identities of Arctic inhabitants, acknowledging how they view their own identities. All kinds of framing can marginalise northern communities, which outsiders may mistakenly regard as isolated, despite their robust self-governance and cultural pride.

Rather than emphasising social, cultural or ethnic divides, AAE promotes for a contemporary art education that embraces all northern cultures. Various projects within the ASAD network have sought to enhance cultural sustainability while considering the intersectionality of the identities of the region’s inhabitants (Härkönen, 2021; Hiltunen, 2009, 2023; Hiltunen & Huhmarniemi, 2024). These initiatives have utilised a variety of media and

methods, including films, snow installations, self-portraits and Arctic design (Berliner & Enghoff, 2019; Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2022; Usenyuk-Kravchuk et al., 2020). AAE underscores the significance of intra-action of contemporary art with traditional Indigenous and other northern identities and ecocultural practices (Figure 4.).

Northern Knowledge: Knowing-with the North

Terms such as traditional, local and Indigenous knowledge are commonly used in studies related to northern ecocultures (Helander-Renvall & Markkula, 2017; Valkonen & Valkonen, 2018). Kuokkanen (2000, 2007) defines Indigenous knowledge as constituting the skills and practices transmitted through culture, emphasising the relationship between humans and nature. However, AAE adopts the broader term *northern knowledge*, which includes the ecocultures of all Arctic inhabitants, encompassing their traditions, social systems and resource management (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020a, 2020b). Northern knowledge comprises both material and spiritual aspects of culture and is fundamental to AAE. While northern ecocultural knowledge does not inherently ensure sustainability, it lays the groundwork for learning aimed at sustainability transformation. Posthumanist viewpoints, which focus on knowledge arising from intra-action between humans and non-human entities, challenge conventional notions of individualism and rationality (Ulmer, 2017). In AAE, knowing-with emphasises learning in relation to and intra-action with ecoculture, rather than merely about it. We clarify the intra-action of art education and northern ecoculture through two examples.

Figure 4. Sámi and Finnish children rejoice over their large snow installation in the schoolyard. The Great Bear snow sculpture, representing the constellation Ursa Major, is well-known in the northern night sky. The interactive installation reflects to the constellation and local ecocultural tradition and is a wonderful example of celebrating the connection between cultures and nature across generations. The piece is part of a week-long event in Utsjoki celebrating local reindeer herder Andaras Kittí (1844–1926), who was an astronomer specializing in the fishing culture, oral traditions of the Teno River, and stargazing. Photos: Mirja Hiltunen, 2024.



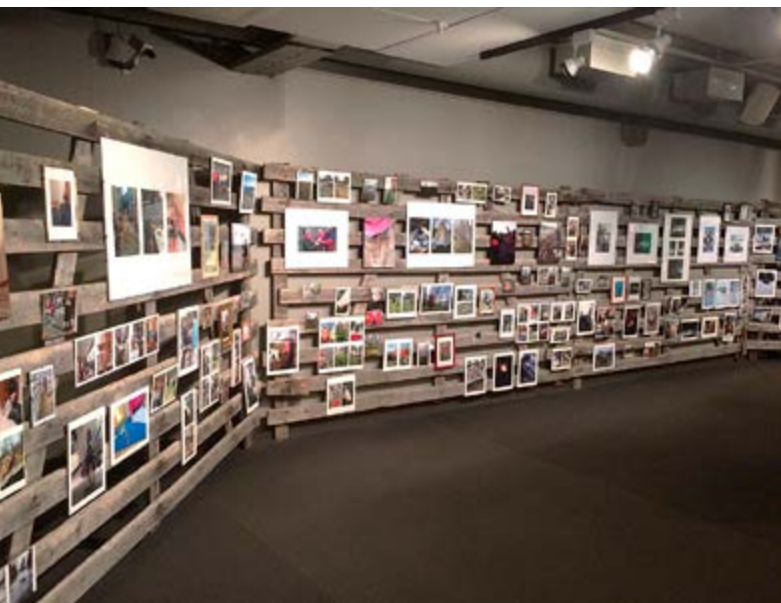


Figure 5. The installation *The Fence* along with the about 300 framed photos of Hilikka and Oula Sara's family in Sami Museum Siida *Boazoeallin* exhibition. Photo: Korinna Korsström-Magga, 2017. Right: Feeding reindeer. Photograph: Henrik Magga, 2017.

Korsström-Magga (2023) applied an art-based action research strategy using the photovoice method to highlight reindeer herders' daily lives and their connection to the local ecoculture. Five Sámi reindeer herder families took photographs of their everyday life over a year. Their lifestyle was characterized by sharing knowledge with the reindeer. The outcome was the *Boazoeallin (Reindeer Life)* exhibition at the Siida Sámi Museum in 2017, with photos and installation depicting key aspects of the families' daily tasks (Figure 5.). The art education activities empowered the families, leading them to later create a book on contemporary reindeer herding (Korsström-Magga, 2023).

Soppela's (2022) art-based research *Call of the Summer Barn – Art-based and Posthumanistic Perspectives on the Co-existence of Cows and Humans* was inspired by her research on the conservation efforts for the endangered Lapland cow. She created a public exhibition at the local heritage museum (Figure 6.). The

exhibition highlighted the connection between the Lapland cow, humans, and the Northern ecoculture, emphasizing the importance of a delicate mutual balance. Soppela (2022) saw that art education can build new ontologies and epistemologies of knowing with animals and can awaken people to phenomena that deviate from the mainstream, carrying the potential for change towards ecocultural sustainability.

Decolonisation, Revitalisation and Resilience towards Sustainability Transformation

Many art educators within the ASAD network have already explored how art can address social, political and environmental concerns, linking these themes to the art of diverse communities and raising questions about the integration of art education and decolonisation (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2022b). Research on Indigenous education,

including Sámi pedagogy, is vital for decolonisation, tackling the effects of colonialism on culture and language (Keskitalo, 2010). Decolonisation is particularly significant for Indigenous communities, including those in Alaska, Nunavut, Greenland and the Northern Sámi-Finnish regions. AAE advocates for the self-determination of Indigenous peoples, empowering northern communities to define their own art forms and traditions while resisting globalisation's threats to cultural

diversity. The ASAD network has engaged in reflection on how art education and artist training can respect the cultural backgrounds of Indigenous students (Beer, 2023; Leddy, 2023). Decolonisation in art education is critical for refreshing curricula, especially in the northern territories. While promoting cultural sustainability and understanding, AAE must not only consider the decolonisation process but also note that Indigenous, non-Indigenous and mixed communities in the North exhibit



Figure 6. Above: An overview of the exhibition, with the installation *The Passage of Time* hanging from the ceiling in the middle of the barn and photographs hanging in a separate stall. Photos: Päivi Soppela, 2022. Left: An unknown woman with her Lapland Cow, Photo: Matti Körkkö, (year unknown), Lapland Provincial Museum's collection. Right: Present-day farmer Rami Hiltunen and his Lapland Cow, Kummi. Photo: Päivi Soppela, 2020.

a variety of intersecting colonised identities. In AAE, decolonisation is understood in a broader way than the Indigenous mission only (Figure 7, 8).

AAE supports activism and resilience, equipping communities with the knowledge and skills to navigate social and environmental shifts while maintaining their traditions. At the heart of AAE’s mission is ecocultural revitalisation, which enhances resilience by fostering the cultural strengths of the

North. Expanding revitalisation efforts to include multi-ethnic and non-Indigenous populations is vital, and AAE influences social sectors, creative industries and responsible tourism (Burnett, 2017; Kravtsov et al., 2022). AAE could strengthen cultural identities in many ways, providing hope for Arctic youth and facilitating the transformation towards the region’s resilience (Priebe et al., 2023). In AAE, resilience is not understood as a passive phenomenon or mere adaptation to changes; rather, it is associated with supporting action

Figure 7. Timo Jokela’s art project Ounas – Our Free River realised a community -based environmental artwork in the spirit of AAE. The residents along the Ounas river participated in many ways in the creation of the artwork using their skills. Photos above: Aki Lintumäki, below: Timo Jokela, 2024.



Figure 8. The artwork erected with the villagers is a tribute to the river. The visual elements, old photos inside the ‘memory box’, and stories told around artwork refers to many meaningful aspects of the local ecoculture and traditions. The implementation of the project together with the residents and the river can also be seen as a revitalization that enhances resilience, the ability to act in situations of change. The piece is a statement in support of preserving the river’s cleanliness in the face of threats from mining activities. Photos above: Mirja Hiltunen, below: Timo Jokela, 2024.

competence and self-direction of individuals and communities.

Intra-action as Pedagogical Framework for AAE

In this short chapter, we have described and conceptualised the steps involved in developing AAE based on our research review and previous experiences. One important aspect, the driving pedagogy of AAE, still requires attention. Earlier, we mentioned situational learning and place-based learning as key guiding principles tested in the UoL community art-based environmental education activities (Huhmarniemi et al. 2021). During AAE activities, as well as in this chapter, we have adopted and used the concept of intra-action. How do these three concepts intertwine?

Intra-action is a concept developed by Barad (2011) in her theory of agential realism (Barad, 2007, 2011). It differs from traditional ideas of interaction (or integration of entities, such as academic or school disciplines) because it emphasises that entities (humans or non-humans, nature or culture, teacher or student) are not pre-existing and independent but emerge through their relations and entanglements. Intra-action reveals how relationships jointly construct the subjects and objects involved, meaning that individuals and the environment shape each other in a continuous process. This is precisely what is at stake in northern ecoculture, particularly in learning within it.

When we apply intra-action to situational and place-based pedagogy while working in northern contexts – in places, communities,

schools and the social sector – it provides a more nuanced understanding of how learning occurs in specific contexts and situations. Therefore, AAE pedagogy must recognise that learning is deeply embedded in the temporal specificities of situations and is shaped not only by people but also by the immediate environment and the materials used. Intra-action from the perspective of situational pedagogy occurs when learners, teachers and the environment co-construct and apply knowledge in real time. The *learning situation* in AAE intra-action is not just a background for the *lesson* but an active agent co-forming learning outcomes. This aspect is particularly evident in art education, where the outcomes of learning are not just increased knowledge, skills or abilities but, more importantly the ability to question and create meanings and symbols for oneself and one's community.

AAE's place-based pedagogy emphasises learning that is connected to the local environment, culture and history. Often, it involves using the geographical location as the foundation for teaching. Intra-action in place-based pedagogy means that the learners become part of the place; in turn, the place is shaped by the learners. The learners' understanding of the place evolves as they engage with its physical, social and cultural dimensions, and the place is simultaneously transformed by the learners' actions, reflections and interactions. This mutual influence between students and the environment, that is, the intra-action, creates a unique learning experience where both the place and the learner develop together.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have outlined our understanding of the fundamental elements and concepts of AAE and their interrelationships and intra-actions. We have underscored the entanglement of Northern and Arctic nature and cultures, referred to as ecoculture. This is not described as a harmony but as a moment to scrutinise ecocultures, particularly in light of the impacts of significant environmental changes, and to comprehend the effects of these changes on the region's social and cultural situations.

New materialism serves as an underlying framework, guiding the methodologies of art education by questioning traditional Western separations between art, design, craftsmanship and media. The concept of "knowing-with" in posthumanism emphasises the agency of ecoculture and the necessity of moving beyond anthropocentric limits, acknowledging our relationships with other species as foundational to our existence.

In many ways, AAE critiques Western knowledge, connecting art education to the sustainability objectives in the Arctic. Therefore, key concepts from Indigenous studies, art and education – including decolonisation, revitalisation and resilience – are woven into AAE practices, highlighting the contributions of northern knowledge to ecocultural sustainability. Through collaborative efforts in the Arctic, AAE tackles global challenges, linking local ecocultures with posthumanist intra-actions that encompass connections with animals, plants, water and the land itself. ●

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