



Figure 1. Photography students took a creative stand on climate change. Photos from left: Svetlana Larina, Nea Karhunen and Seila Haaga, 2023.

Photography Promotes Young People's Resilience to Climate Change

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In the winter of 2023, with the help of my friends, I lifted two hundred kilos of ice from Kallavesi, a local lake in Kuopio, Finland. We buried it in a pile of snow below the Puijo ski jumps. Every year, the City of Kuopio uses this huge mass of snow to create the first cross-country ski trail in the winter, to the delight of the most enthusiastic skiers. There, the ice was safe until the end of May, when it was needed once again.

I wanted to use ice in this study. It was just an artistic intuition. Ice is a challenging material to work with. It is sensitive to air temperature. It cracks easily in severe frost and turns to water in hot conditions. Ice allowed me to illustrate the effects of climate change to the photography students in a concrete way. It also helped me to inspire them to participate in the research process.

This art-based action research process was carried out in collaboration with the *On the*

Frontline of the Climate Crisis research project and Ingmanedu Vocational College for Cultural Studies in the late winter and early spring of 2023. Young photography students participated in the study.

The Study aimed to explore students' feelings and thoughts about climate change through art-based work, and to develop methods to help young people improve their resilience to climate change.

At the end of the process, the research team opened an exhibition called *IT'S MELTING - Photographs on Climate Change (SULAA - Valokuvia ilmastonmuutoksesta)* on 25 May 2023. The exhibition was open for four months.

The study consisted of five artistic tasks in which students explored climate change using different photographic techniques. We connected the artistic work with a place-based approach because we thought this would help students understand a broader phenomenon

"It will be easier for me to share my thoughts and feelings about climate change in the future."
– photography student

(Lintumäki 2023). In addition, we took the influences from New Genre Arctic Art, which combines socially engaged art practices with sustainable development (Jokela 2021 et al.,).

In the first task, students shared their favourite places through photography. In the second, they created provocative advertisements on social media. The third task was a socially

Figure 2. Ice inspired us throughout the whole art-based action research process. Photos: Aki Lintumäki, 2023.



engaged art process that culminated in the creation of photograms on natural materials (Collage 2). In the fourth task, the students created a digital photo series on climate change (Collage 3). On the exhibition's opening day, we brought the ice hidden in the snow close to the gallery. The fifth task for the students was an ice sculpture performance, which we combined with the creation of photograms (Collage 4). We invited local politicians to discuss climate change with the students and audience at the opening.

At the end of the day, we crushed the ice. For some of the students, it was a very empowering moment. These students felt that they could influence their lives through art. We organised a reflective discussion for the students at the

end of the study. Some of them said that the study had given them new perspectives to face climate change. At the end of the discussion, I interpreted that perhaps these young people will be able to promote their resilience in dealing with climate change in the future. I also thought that the artist-researchers should listen to their intuition, as I did at the beginning of this research. It may lead to interesting research results. ●

References

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Lintumäki, A. (2023). My Place: Building Young People's Future Using Art-Based Action in the North. In G. Coutts & T. Jokela (Eds.), *Relate North: Possible futures* (s. 50-73). InSEA Publications. <https://doi.org/10.24981/2023-RNPF>



Figure 3. The students experimented with different photographic techniques. Photos: Aki Lintumäki, 2023.

Figure 4. The Sculpting of the ice captured captured the public's attention. Photos: Aki Lintumäki, 2023.



"There should have been more of these tasks."
– photography student

"Best course ever."
– photography student

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The research was organised by artist-researcher Aki Lintumäki and senior researcher Jarmo Rinne from South-East Finland University of Applied Sciences and photography teacher Tuire Kurikka from Ingmanedu. It was a part of *On the Frontline of the Climate Crisis* research project, coordinated by the Youth Research and Development Centre Juvenia of South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences and the University of Lapland. The project started in 2022 and will continue until the end of 2025. The project is funded by the Kone Foundation, and it is carried out in Lapland, Eastern Finland, and the Tampere region.