

Setup Lessons Learnt for the Nomadic Hub of New Genre Arctic Art Education

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New Genre Art Education in the Arctic is a development project aimed at creating a hybrid implementation model (both digital and on-site) for international seminars and workshops targeted to art educators, researchers, and master's and doctoral students in art education at four universities. The network is organised as a collaboration between the University of Lapland, Nord University, Umeå University, and Siunissaq, at the beginning of the project a part of the Ilisimatusarfik–University of Greenland, and is now an independent research and art-and-community association. The development project kicked off a broader New Genre Arctic Art Education (AAE) initiative among the partners. The goals and methods of the AAE collaboration were guided from the outset by the fact that the initiative was a partnership between two thematic networks of the University of the Arctic: Arctic Sustainable Art and Design (ASAD) and Children of the Arctic. These thematic networks joined their disciplines, interests and forces.

The project's goal was to develop preliminary content and an approach for long-term interdisciplinary partnerships between Arctic universities and organisations in the fields of education, the arts, the humanities and the social sciences to meet the emerging challenges of changes in the Arctic caused by megatrends such as urbanisation, globalisation and consequences of climate and environmental changes for the social and cultural life in the local communities.

Our approach involved applying dialogical and participatory methods in the workshops and seminars. Our approach aimed to support networking, knowledge sharing and collaboration in Arctic art education by establishing a network structure that benefitted our long-term goals: fostering connections, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and ideas, and promoting collaboration in practice. Through this type of network, we aimed to support sustainability, social justice and wellbeing for all

citizens, including children and young people in local communities in the North and the Arctic.

In this publication, we have outlined the theoretical background of the project and presented the activities we have developed in a manner that is visually natural for our field. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of what we have realised and learnt and how our insights will guide the next steps of the AAE initiative. The development of AAE activities can be described, examined and evaluated on many different layers, as there are numerous encounters – spaces and situations of co-formation – that occur with children, young people, teachers, communities and various organisations. However, the time for impact studies will come later. In this chapter, we focus on reviewing the results of the first two-year AAE development project. In this case, the development work was carried out from the higher education perspective of universities by applying methodologies from arts-based action research.

Art-based action research (ABAR) is a research methodology that combines the principles of action research with creative, artistic practices. It is used to address real-world problems or issues while simultaneously generating new knowledge through the creative process. In our AAE project and our academic field of art education, the ABAR methodology can itself be seen as an area of development, as students have undertaken extensive study projects, master's theses, and texts integrated into doctoral research within the project. A crucial part of developing the ABAR methodology is also the agile, democratic planning and implementation of exhibitions that engage various participants and audiences.

Our AAE project has undergone continuous evaluation and development, from its inception through all stages of implementation – meetings, workshops, field schools, art works, exhibitions, academic writing, visual essays and publication layouts. Based on dialogues, reflective discussion and collected reflective data, we can make the following recommendations from the perspective of universities' research missions and the guidance of research-based teaching.

Universities and Curriculum-Integration of Art and Research

We need to work more to integrate art and research into university curricula, at least in art and craft teacher education programmes. Both university staff and students should learn how to adopt methodologies, such as ABAR, to merge artistic processes with traditional research methods to develop their work. Academic education should encourage students to use artistic expression as a legitimate form of inquiry that can provide unique insights into complex social, cultural and educational typical in rapidly changing Arctic.

Within art education at universities, we should design art-based research projects that involve participants as co-researchers, fostering collaboration between students, researchers, communities and other stakeholders. To make learning more engaging and impactful, we need to emphasise a participatory process that aims at collective problem-solving and empowerment.

We see ABAR as an effective method for emphasising change and transformation. We need to encourage action-oriented research that seeks to bring about improvements in educational settings, communities and or-

ganisations. We must focus on transforming practices, behaviours or conditions by integrating both research findings and artistic processes, ensuring that outcomes are relevant and applicable to real-world contexts in the North and the Arctic.

We need to encourage reflective practice and incorporate art-based reflection as a central element of research and learning. We must facilitate ongoing reflection on the artistic processes, actions taken and outcomes achieved, allowing students to refine research questions, artistic practices and methods throughout their projects.

We need to value multiple forms of knowledge and recognise and legitimise different ways of expressing knowledge. We must encourage students to produce artworks, performances or other creative outputs as part of their research contributions, valuing these as meaningful ways to address and understand research questions.

We need to adopt context- and situation-specific methods to encourage flexibility in art-research approaches, allowing methods and processes to adapt to the specific contexts and needs of research settings. We must support the evolution of research strategies based on interactions and outcomes that emerge during the project.

All the development areas and recommendations that we have presented for the further development of AAE have already been highlighted during our actions presented in this publication, and we see how these actions make academic education more dynamic and creative by integrating artistic practices into research. This approach fosters change,

generates new insights and engages students and participants in meaningful ways. We see that AAE has successfully bridged the gap between art making, research and social action, making learning more relevant and impactful.

We have, however, experienced a significant challenge with the apparent incompatibility between a flexible study module, such as AAE, and standard university curricula complicates students' study pathways and limits tutors' ability to allocate their working hours to participation. Currently, AAE studies have only been available in a flexible way to students at the University of Lapland, as their curriculum includes credits and a dedicated course for community project studies, which allows AAE activities to fit within students' study programmes. For this reason, we recommend that the university, perhaps with the support of the University of the Arctic, explores ways to facilitate their students' engagement in the study of skills and content that are important for the North and the Arctic. The first step could be to establish a common study model for AAE in partner universities' curricula.

Further Development of New Genre Arctic Art Education as a Subject Matter

The concept of AAE was created as a tool to approach the encounters between contemporary art and the Arctic in a new way. In our project, the theoretical and artistic foundations of AAE have been clarified, and discussion has been connected to the paradigmatic changes, new ontologies and epistemologies influenced by posthumanism in art, education and the sciences. The essence of AAE has been ex-

amined particularly in relation to research on Arctic sustainability and wellbeing.

Based on our reflections and analysis, we can outline some guidelines for the further development of AAE to ensure that the subject matter remains deeply connected to the lives, cultures and environments of Northern and Arctic communities.

In Arctic regions, collaboration should involve working with and further developing partnerships with local Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Since Northern communities are typically multicultural, it is important to avoid segregation. Preliminary knowledge of Northern ecoculture and material traditions should be ensured in collaboration with knowledge holders. AAE activities should involve elders, artists, craft makers, cultural leaders and local organisations to ensure that learning reflects community values and addresses significant issues, such as climate change, land rights and cultural preservation. This approach not only fosters active citizenship but also strengthens cultural identity and the transfer of knowledge between generations, ultimately supporting sustainability transformation.

We consider it essential to integrate social and cultural issues into AAE activities. The North and the Arctic faces specific social, environmental and cultural challenges, such as the impacts of climate change, cultural erosion and the exploitation of natural resources. Therefore, AAE should address these urgent issues, focusing on local and Indigenous rights, cultural diversity and sustainable development. Addressing these topics can help students understand the complexities of life in the Arctic while making awareness of social justice and

environmental protection central components of their education.

AAE should emphasise open learning processes (co-formation and intra-action) over predetermined learning outcomes. Given the diverse cultural backgrounds and varying needs in the Arctic, a flexible approach to learning is essential. Education should prioritise practical experiences, traditional skills and local knowledge rather than content based solely on conventional academic disciplines. This requires project-based learning, which allows students to immerse themselves in the subject while acquiring new skills relevant to their contexts.

A key starting point for AAE is the use of public spaces as learning environments. In the North and the Arctic, the land itself is an essential part of cultural identity and learning. Education can take place in natural settings – such as forests, riverbanks, coastal areas, tundra and mountains – where students can learn traditional ways of life and cultural practices through first-hand experience alongside art-based environmental studies. Community centres, cultural festivals and other public events can also serve as dynamic learning spaces that blend traditional and contemporary art and knowledge, reinforcing a sense of place and belonging.

Developing the AAE Field Course

The approach for the AAE field course was tested in two communities: Nuuk, Greenland and Karasjok, Norway. The Karasjok field course was preceded by a remote learning phase, which included familiarisation with the topic and co-design activities. Based on our experiences, some conclusions and recommendations can be

made for the AAE field course to be conducted in Indigenous, non-Indigenous, or multi-ethnic communities, ensuring that the activities are culturally respectful, educationally enriching, creativity-supporting and suitable for the Northern and Arctic context. During the Karasjok field course, we gave a name to our activities: Nomadic Hub of New Genre Arctic Art Education.

When planning a field course, collaboration with the community where it will take place is essential from the beginning. It is important to involve local stakeholders, Indigenous representatives, cultural representatives and elders in both the planning and implementation phases. This ensures that the course aligns with the community's cultural values, ecocultural traditions, needs and customs. It is crucial to prioritise co-design, in which the community actively participates in shaping the course content and objectives, leading to a more authentic and meaningful experience for all participants.

AAE integrates traditional Northern knowledge and material culture with contemporary art practices, and the course can include traditional art forms, such as carving, weaving and storytelling. These practices can serve as entry points for students to learn about cultural values and ecocultural traditions. This can be achieved by inviting local artists and craftspeople to serve as part-time instructors, allowing students to learn directly from knowledge holders and skilled practitioners. This approach also supports cultural preservation and revitalisation while recognising expertise within the community.

AAE emphasises place-based and experiential learning, using the Arctic environment as a living classroom where students can interact

with the land, water, plants, animals, seasonal features, weather and climate. AAE encourages outdoor activities, such as art-making, site-specific art installations and excursions that highlight the cultural significance of the landscape. Art-based learning can include experiential techniques, such as participatory art sessions or community-based performances, in which students collaborate with local residents on shared creative projects.

When working with Northern and Arctic (often Indigenous) communities, it is always important to respect cultural protocols and sensitivities. When travelling and working in other countries, as AAE does, guiding students beforehand to understand local customs, cultural protocols or the significance of possible sacred sites or practices can be challenging. It is crucial to ensure that artistic activities are culturally appropriate and do not distort or exploit Indigenous traditions. Ethically, it is also important to ensure that all documentation (e.g. photos, videos and artworks) is done with permission and used respectfully.

It is important to remember that Northern and Arctic communities are not museums, and there is a need to address contemporary social and environmental issues. This requires focusing discussions and integrating art projects on topics that are significant to the community, such as climate change, cultural revitalisation, resilience and land rights. This approach helps students understand the broader sociopolitical context in which Arctic people live in today. In line with its principles, AAE aims to use art as a tool for activism and dialogue, enabling participants to address these issues creatively while promoting shared responsibility and advocacy.

In the implementation of the AAE field school, it is crucial to create opportunities for reflection and dialogue, including with the host community. During the field course, it is essential to foster group discussions and reflective exercises that encourage students to critically consider their experiences and share their insights. This can help build bridges between different worldviews and promote intercultural understanding while also providing space for community members to share their perspectives on the course, offering valuable feedback and fostering ongoing dialogue.

Hybrid Course for Situational and Dialogical Learning

The AAE aimed to pilot a hybrid learning setting, and the first experiences already show the possibilities for learning that open when bringing into the dialogue participants from different Arctic universities, stakeholders and communities. We can recommend developing in the future the means to communicate, structure and organise shared events even further to deepen participation in art-based dialogues.

Today, the needed technology and connections are already available. The time zone differences that often challenge live online collaboration are still manageable from Greenland to Scandinavia and Finland. When the aim is to collaborate in field course activities in certain locations to create workshops and exhibitions, it offers a concrete need and topic for dialogue. Connecting the different stakeholders and actors is not easy to organise but is the only way to offer learning in real situations.

The digital equipment needed for sharing videos and photos is available for all, and there is a choice of platforms that support the dia-

logue online. In the feedback from the pilot, the visual tasks during the online teaching were seen as challenging, fun and motivating. Art-based summaries at the end of the course offered more personal comments and distancing frames to express reflections that were not said out loud but could be conveyed in the images. Experiments and work are still needed to develop a hybrid learning pedagogy for functional dialogue for collaboration with art-based activities. Based on the experiences from the project, we see the making of artwork as vital for offering a place to express emotions and different views, to give information in different ways and to become acquainted with the participants behind the screens. Thus, we can encourage the use and further research of visual tasks in online and hybrid courses.

The hybrid course in collaboration with University of the Arctic members, third sector partners and locals offers an authentic situation and environment in which to learn AAE as subject and method. Bringing together participants from different locations and backgrounds creates a fruitful starting point for dialogue to share expertise and experiences. In the Arctic areas, it is common to work in the liminal spaces between languages, cultures and different goals of collaboration. This mixture of backgrounds, also bringing participants from different fields for a multidisciplinary approach, initiates the dialogue for learning, to share and understand different viewpoints around the place, community and topic of the work. Thus, a shared hybrid course in the UArctic network would offer all participants a valuable experience of acting in those liminal spaces with art-based activities that aim to give space for everyone's voice.

Intra-action Calls for Rethinking Pedagogy

We have outlined a course structure consisting of preparatory online course and a field course conducted in a selected Northern community. The development project involved a multidisciplinary team, including art educators, design and craft educators, natural science teachers, social psychologists, museum staff, craftsmen and multidisciplinary artists. The range of subjects studied by the participating students was also broad. Traditionally, it has been thought that the strength of collaboration across different fields lies in integration, where each field contributes its expertise to a shared task.

During the AAE project, we adopted the term ‘intra-action’, which better describes the pedagogical nature of our activities. The concept, created by Barad (2007), goes beyond the traditional notion of interaction. It refers to the idea that entities do not exist prior to their relations but emerge through their relationships and continuous entanglements. Intra-action emphasises that components (such as students, teachers, materials or the environment) do not function as independent agents in a linear cause-and-effect relationship; instead, they mutually constitute each other through dynamic and reciprocal engagement. In Northern ways of acquiring eco-cultural knowledge, intra-action within an ecosystem is a central element. However, the same applies to the collaboration of the different academic and art disciplines represented in the project.

When we adopt intra-action as the pedagogical foundation of AAE, it means that learners, teachers, course content and disciplines are not separate, predefined fixed entities; rather, they come into existence through their entangled relationships and further interweaving with the

community and location where each course is conducted. The way the participants engage intra-actively creates a learning experience in which the roles and boundaries of the learner, teacher and content continuously change and evolve. Unlike traditional learning models, which see knowledge as something transferred from teacher to student, intra-action views knowledge as a phenomenon that emerges from the entangled relationships between different components. The AAE approach, based on the intertwining of Northern eco-cultural knowledge with subjects and art, is at the core of AAE pedagogy. It emphasises the idea that the educational experience is shaped by the intertwining of social, cultural and material factors.

Intra-action challenges the human-centred perspective in education by recognising the importance of non-human elements in the learning process. This dimension is particularly prominent in the AAE learning environments in relation to northern nature. However, it is also important to note that cameras, digital devices and spaces participate in the intra-actions that shape learning outcomes. Moreover, the digital learning platforms we use online are not merely tools used by students; they intra-actively interact with students, shaping the educational experience in real time.

The concept of intra-action reveals the multidimensionality of entanglements that must be considered pedagogically when setting up the Nomadic Hub of New Genre Arctic Art Education. •

References

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