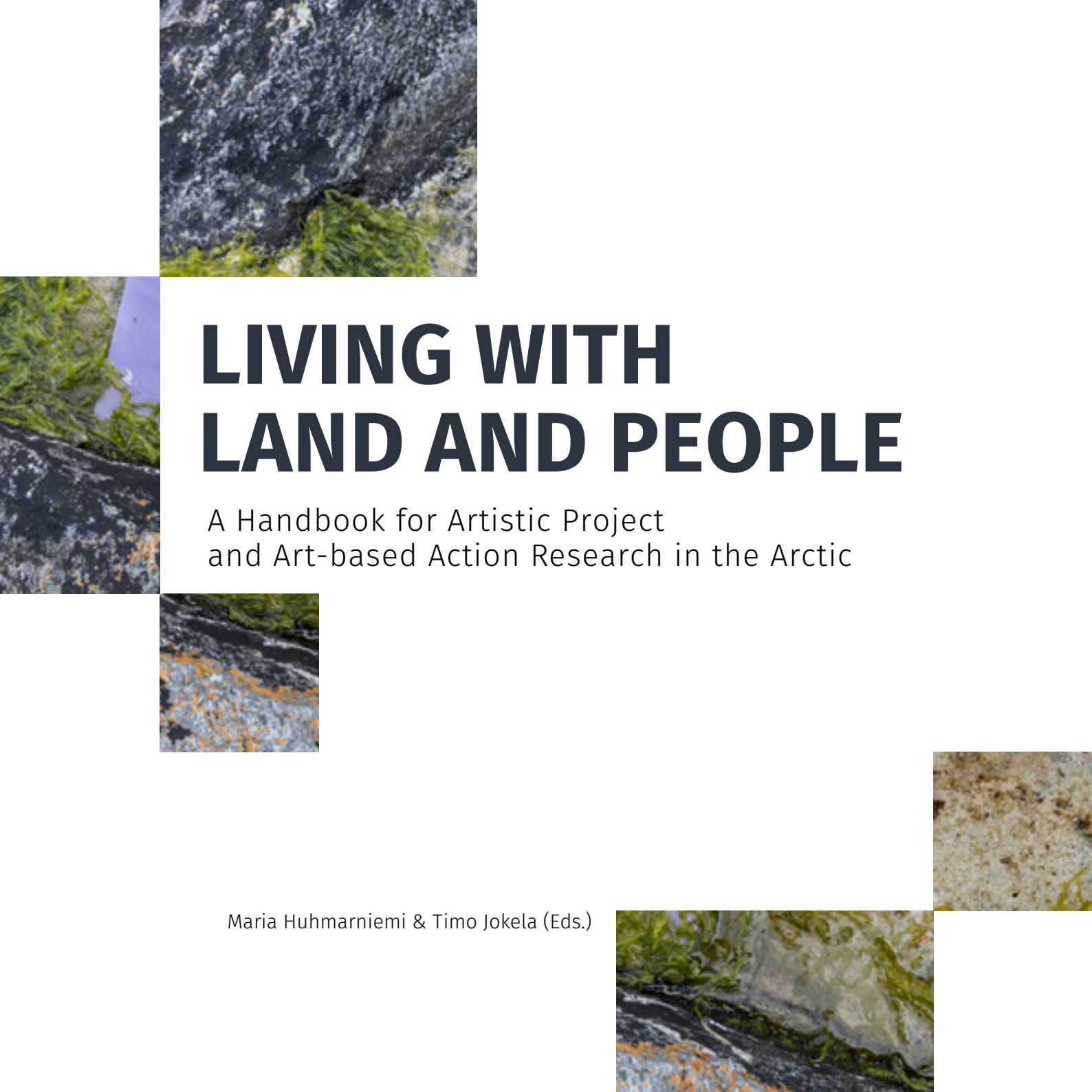




LIVING WITH LAND AND PEOPLE

A Handbook for Artistic Project
and Art-based Action Research in the Arctic

Maria Huhmarniemi & Timo Jokela (Eds.)

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A Handbook for Artistic Project
and Art-based Action Research in the Arctic



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LIVING WITH LAND AND PEOPLE

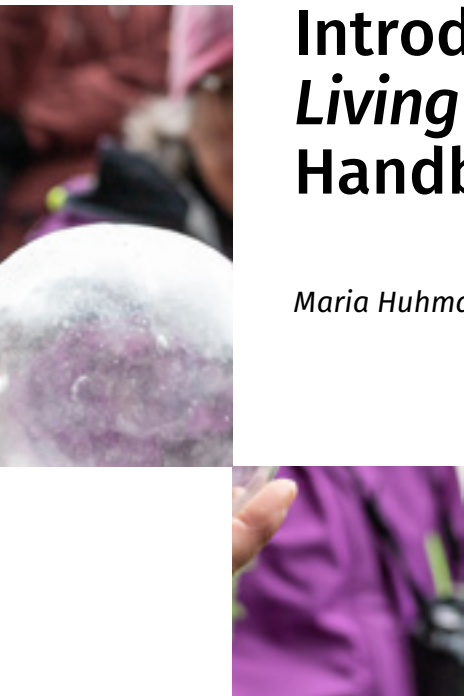
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Contents



Maria Huhmarniemi and Timo Jokela	
Introduction to the Living with Land and People Handbook	6
Timo Jokela, Maria Huhmarniemi and Mirja Hiltunen	
Project Design for New Genre Arctic Art and Art Education	20
Timo Jokela, Maria Huhmarniemi and Mirja Hiltunen	
Take a Closer Look at the Stages of Project Planning and Action	30
Timo Jokela and Maria Huhmarniemi	
Art-Based Action Research as a Tool for Developing Practices in Art Education	52
Timo Jokela and Elina Härkönen	
Living in the Landscape in the Time of COVID-19.	84
Karn Stoll, Wenche Sørmo and Mette Gårdvik	
Understanding Landscape through the Interconnection of Different Forms of Knowledge: Three Examples from Living in the Landscape 2021.	108
Contributor Details	132



Introduction to the *Living with Land and People* Handbook

Maria Huhmarniemi and Timo Jokela

The international Living in the Landscape (LiLa) summer school has been an ambitious initiative aimed at developing art-based research methods that combine hands-on engagement with interdisciplinary research and philosophical reflection in the context of Arctic art and of Arctic art and design education. Each LiLa programme in recent years has been implemented as a project, and the research methodologies emerging from the programme similarly rely on a project-based approach. These approaches involve artists and art educators working closely with northern landscapes, Land and communities.

This handbook introduces both the key steps for planning and implementing art and education projects in Arctic contexts, referred to as *the new genre Arctic art education* (AAE) and *the art-based action research* (ABAR) *methodology*. ABAR provides a framework for deepening the processes and outcomes of land-based artistic projects through a research perspective. It offers tools for analysing and reflecting on artistic and educational activities, enabling participating students and scholars to generate knowledge grounded in lived experience, practice and local context.

The first chapters of this handbook will guide you into the collaborative and often transformative process of making art together with Land and people, while cultivating supportive, inspiring and joyful partnerships in the Arctic. These chapters provide practical guidelines for designing and carrying out sustainable, socially and environmentally responsive projects that honour both people and place.

We offer a model for project planning that integrates all the essential elements of an art or education initiative – such as intentions, goals, methods and evaluation strategies. These guidelines have been developed at the University of Lapland and have previously been published in Finnish (Hiltunen & Jokela, 2001; Jokela et al., 2024) and English (Jokela et al., 2016). Research articles on project-based learning in art education have also contributed to the foundation of this work (Jokela, 2008).

In this book, these project guidelines have specifically been adapted for the Arctic context. Some of the guidelines have been previously stated in the books *Mapping the*



Figure: Moment in an event. Photograph: Mari Parpala, 2022.

New Genre Arctic Art Education (Jokela et al., 2024a) and *Creating Arctic Sustainability Portraits* (Jokela et al., 2024b). We hope the guidelines will support artists and educators in respectfully engaging with the Arctic land and its people, and that they will encourage scholars from diverse research fields to collaborate in ways that contribute positively to Arctic futures and sustainability transformations.

LiLa Summer Schools

This handbook is one of the outcomes of the international and interdisciplinary LiLa summer school series. The summer school has been held six times. Each iteration has brought together students and scholars at MA and PhD levels from Nord University (Norway), the University of Lapland (Finland) and Umeå University (Sweden). While the locations, teaching strategies, scale and partner institutions have varied, the shared aim has been to develop the summer school as a platform for learning and collaboration in the context of Arctic landscapes, places and cultures.

LiLa has sought to integrate research methods for landscape inquiry from diverse disciplines, including the natural sciences, environmental humanities, anthropology, arts, media technology, digital pedagogy and education for sustainability. Partner institutions have contributed expertise in art and teacher education, natural sciences, literature, cultural and Arctic studies, fashion, anthropology, creative media practice and art as social practice.

In 2018, the summer school combined methods from the arts, humanities and sciences in the village landscapes of Komi, Russia. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 spring school was held online, with participants joining from Nesna (Norway), Rovaniemi (Finland) and Syktyvkar in the Komi Republic (Russia). Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Arctic Sustainable Art and Design (ASAD) network members from Russia were excluded from participating in collaborations. That year, LiLa was organised as a hybrid school that combined online learning and fieldwork in Træna in Norway. The participants were from Finland, Sweden, Norway and Scotland.

In 2023, the hybrid model continued with activities based in Umeå and the High Coast region of Sweden. Students and scholars joined from several ASAD partner institutions: Umeå University (Sweden), the University of Lapland (Finland), Nord University (Norway), the University of the West of Scotland (Scotland), the University of the Highlands and Islands (Scotland), Yukon School of Art (Canada) and the University of Alaska Anchorage (USA). The participants represented a range of fields, including art education, general teacher education, fine arts, creative practice and clothing design.

The fifth LiLa, in 2024, featured a hybrid approach, combining online collaboration with locally situated activities in each participating country. The programme culminated in intensive, in situ fieldwork along the hydro and green energy riverscapes of Finnish Lapland. In 2025, LiLa took place online in March and onsite in May in Nesna, Norway, hosted by Nord University. This edition of the school had a celebratory tone, inviting both new students and returning alumni to reflect on LiLa's development and its impact on their studies and professional lives.

Across the six LiLa schools, approximately 100 participants have contributed to this growing community, sharing not only knowledge but also moments of connection, discovery and reflection. The outcomes of their work – installations, performances, films, soundscapes, visual art, MA theses, visual essays and scholarly papers – are as diverse as the Arctic landscapes themselves. Yet all are united by a profound attention to place, ecology and the human relationship with the more-than-human world.



Figures: Carving antlers. Photographs: Ante Jalvela, 2024.



Figures: Photographing in nature. Photographs: Riitta Attila, 2018.

The processes and artistic outcomes of LiLa have been presented in exhibitions and catalogues (Härkönen et al., 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024; Jokela et al., 2018; Lundstedt & Härkönen, 2025). Teaching and collaboration strategies have also been analysed in research publications, such as those by Härkönen and Stöckell (2019), Jokela and Härkönen (2021) and Stoll et al. (2022). The articles listed second and third above are republished in this handbook.

New Genre AAE

The concept of new genre AAE has emerged within the ASAD network as a collaborative and evolving framework that brings together contemporary art, education and critical sustainability discourses in Arctic contexts. It draws from the idea of *new genre Arctic art*, introduced by Jokela et al. (2021) to describe contemporary artistic practices – such as place-specific interventions, public art and performance – that engage with current social, ecological and political issues in and about the Arctic. This term builds on the tradition of *new genre public art*, which refers to participatory, socially engaged art practices situated outside traditional art institutions.

In the Arctic context, new genre art can be seen as a pedagogical turn in contemporary art. Artists actively share alternative and often underrepresented perspectives on the North and the Arctic, engaging broader publics in conversations about place, identity, culture and resilience. This turn marks a significant shift from representing the Arctic as a romanticised landscape, a shift towards more grounded, lived and critical perspectives.

New genre AAE integrates this artistic approach with educational intent. It explores how art and design education can critically respond to environmental and socio-cultural challenges by working collaboratively with communities. These educational artistic projects often take place in Northern localities and Indigenous territories that are deeply affected by the consequences of climate change, extractivism and the green transition. AAE foregrounds justice, agency and the rights of more-than-human nature through creative, participatory and dialogical engagement.

A central principle of AAE is the recognition that sustainable art education in the Arctic must be rooted in respect for local cultures, Indigenous or local knowledge systems and Northern ways of knowing. It is inherently future oriented, envisioning art education as a force for cultural resilience and social transformation. Through ABAR, artists and educators conduct projects that empower communities, support cultural revitalisation and contribute to the decolonisation of artistic and educational practices.



Figure: School community. Photograph: Mari Parpala, 2023.

In sum, AAE is a pedagogical approach that aims to decolonise art and education in the Arctic. It is also a methodological and ethical commitment. It positions artists and educators as active agents in shaping more just, inclusive and sustainable Arctic futures through art that listens to, responds to and co-creates with Land and people.

ABAR as a Methodology for Digging Deeper

If project learning is integrated into research studies in university curricula and doctoral research, it forms a broad framework for in-depth exploration, through which students develop artistic, pedagogical and production-related skills and research competence. To support research based on art or art education projects, the ABAR methodology has been developed (Jokela, 2019; Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2025). This approach guides



Figure: The art of making Campfire Coffee, Saltfjellet, Northern Norway. Photograph: Mette Gårdvik, 2023.

students in conducting research as an integral part of their project work. ABAR shares similarities with artistic research, art-based research, action research, development research and design-based research. Developmental and design-based action research is a cyclical process based on planned interventions. It aims to solve practical problems while generating functional theories.



Figure: Campfire Coffee on the main street of Bodø City. Photograph: Wenche Sørmo, 2024.

ABAR responds to the practical knowledge interest of broad-based art education. This transformative knowledge interest emerged through a multidisciplinary project and research collaboration at the University of Lapland in the 1990s. Art education research was viewed as a dynamic and future-oriented, with a typical aim being to develop effective working and teaching methods and to address identified challenges. Research goals were defined together with stakeholders. In art, research and development processes, members of communities act as co-agents. Numerous research projects and doctoral dissertations have been conducted using this methodology. This chapter is an English revision of a research article (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2025) published in the Finnish language that evaluated the use of methodology in the University of Lapland.

This chapter provides background and theoretical grounding for the methodology of ABAR, aiming to support the use of this approach in theses and research projects in

the field. The ontological and epistemological foundations of the method are connected to participatory and dialogical contemporary art, community-based art education, co-agency, co-researching and Indigenous research. ABAR generates both knowledge and practical competence for change: researched, practice-based knowledge in art education that is also recognisable and relevant beyond the field itself.

Development Enabled by the ASAD Network and Multiple Funders

This handbook, LiLa summer schools and the development of AAE have been carried out in the ASAD thematic network of the University of the Arctic. Partners of the ASAD network have initiated, produced and explored artistic productions that engage with Land and people in Northern communities. Various funding has contributed to this development, such as funding from the Nordic–Russia Cooperation Programme in Education and Research, the Arctic University of Norway (through UArctic), the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education and the program Nordplus Horizontal 2022.

The first project in the new genre art education in the Arctic framework was funded by the Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education and represented by the University of the Arctic. This was followed by a second undertaking in the form of ‘The Sustainability Portrait Project – Art, Location, and Social Responsibility for Sustainable Development in the Arctic’, funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Nordic Arctic Co-operation Programme and represented by the Nordic Institute in Greenland. This project involved planning, implementing and evaluating an art-based sustainability workshop for young people. The third project was the ‘New Genre Arctic Art Education: Development Project’ (2023–2025), funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers Nordplus Horizontal 2023. This project made it possible to combine lessons learnt from the previous projects in order to form guidelines serving higher education in arts and art education.

Two ongoing projects have also contributed to the content of this handbook. The first one is focused on sharing the results of AAE initiatives and educating students and scholars in the Arctic in documenting and spreading art and art education through various media. The project is called Community Art-based Sustainability in the Arctic (2023–2025), funded by the University of the Arctic via the Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science. The second, still ongoing, project is the ‘Lessons of the Land: New Genre Arctic Art and Land-Based Learning’ project (2024–2025),



Figure: Crafting
in an art gallery.
Photograph:
Tanya Kravtsov, 2022.

funded by Memorial University's Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development. The centre supports the Lessons of the Land through the Global Arctic Leadership Initiative's fund for Indigenous and Northern collaborative research and education engagement. The Lessons of the Land projects foster land-based learning in art and art education.

How to Use this Handbook

This handbook is intended for a wide range of practitioners in the Arctic: professors and university lecturers in universities, doctoral researchers, degree students and independent artists and art educators. These actors may undertake projects with their local community partners or collaborate in large, externally funded development initiatives. Project team members – ranging from leaders to students – may work together on various aspects of the process, such as mapping locations, engaging with communities, facilitating artistic and pedagogical activities, documenting, communicating, evaluating and reporting.

While project leaders may find the handbook useful for supervising students and artists, students can also benefit from the guidelines in taking responsibility for smaller sub-projects, specified tasks and project-based learning. The project work guidelines presented in this book are intentionally broad and adaptable. They can be applied in different parts of the Arctic and tailored to projects of varying scale. We encourage practitioners to freely adopt the recommendations and advice in ways that best suit their intentions, circumstances and communities. Also, we hope that various project partners, including local museums, school and cultural associations, will find this book useful.

We hope that this handbook offers not only practical tools but also sparks inspiration, enthusiasm, decolonisation and critical, ethical reflection.

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Project Design for New Genre Arctic Art and Art Education

Timo Jokela, Maria Huhmarniemi and Mirja Hiltunen



This chapter will guide you on a journey of creating art together with Land and people and, through that, fostering supportive, inspiring and joyful Arctic collaborations for living in harmony with the Land and people. We hope these guidelines will support you in planning and carrying out sustainable and inspiring new genre AAE projects. The plan also justifies the relevance and significance of your project. The aim is to ensure that all participants and collaborators understand the project's goals and ways of working and that they share a common vision and language when discussing the intentions and plans of the project.

The project plan, prepared at the outset of the process, consolidates all the essential elements of the project, including its intentions, purposes and working methods. The plan also justifies the relevance and significance of the project.

A solid foundation for project planning includes familiarisation with the location, Land, involved communities, community leaders and knowledge-holders and, where necessary, the relevant stakeholders and socio-cultural realities of the region. When international teams design AAE projects, it is common for the mapping of knowledge to be based on various types of publications, including maps, books and museum exhibits. Whenever possible and appropriate, the planning phase includes visits to key locations and meetings with community partners. These interactions, often carried out by the project partner living in the region closest to the local community, provide opportunities for dialogue, helping to clarify wishes, needs and shared objectives.

It is essential to remember that in Arctic contexts, communities – predominantly Indigenous or local communities – are not only stakeholders but also the holders of unique knowledge systems. These systems may guide the project's ethical, methodological and creative directions. Respect for local leadership and self-determination is a foundational principle of all AAE projects.

A good understanding of the project's thematic content requires a multidisciplinary approach. This process is similar to research, where prior studies, existing projects and theoretical frameworks provide insight and guidance. The project team



Figures: Snow sculpting. Photographs: Antti Stöckell, 2024.

shares these learning tasks, agreeing on intermediate deadlines for presenting and gathering findings. Often, the planning phase accounts for up to one-third of the total project workload.

Well-planned and contextually appropriate artistic and educational activity is at the heart of an AAE project, enabling site-specific, situational and phenomenon-based learning.

The project plan should outline the team's views on learning and art – for example, in terms of equality, inclusion, accessibility and decolonisation – as well as outlining ecological, social and cultural sustainability. The plan also needs to reflect sensitivity towards the Arctic context, including the seasonal rhythms, ecological constraints, Indigenous and Northern knowledge systems and the lived realities of local communities. Recognising the ongoing impacts of colonial histories and extractive industries in the Arctic is essential for ensuring that the project avoids cultural appropriation and promotes ethical collaboration.

THE PROJECT TITLE

The title should clearly and concisely capture the nature and idea of the project, making it easy to refer to in communication. If necessary, an acronym or abbreviation may also be created.

WHAT IS THE MAIN IDEA AND PURPOSE?

Summarise the project's main idea and purpose: what will be done, with whom, when and where?

WHERE?

Describe the location(s) where the project will take place. Justify the choice of location, considering its opportunities and potential challenges. Will the project – or parts of it – be conducted online or remotely?

Consider using public spaces and natural surroundings as learning environments. In the North and the Arctic, the Land itself is an essential part of cultural identity and learning. AAE can take place in natural settings – such as forests, riverbanks, coastal areas, tundra and mountains – where participants 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.

THE TEAM

List the members of the project team and outline possible areas of responsibility. For example, responsibilities for documentation or communications may be assigned to specific team members.

WITH WHOM?

Identify the organisations and individuals involved in the project and describe their roles. Name experts, supporters or funders and clarify their contributions and interests. It is essential to clearly outline the goals, expectations and motivations of all partners.

AAE activities should involve Elders, artists, craft makers, cultural leaders and local organisations to ensure that the lessons learned reflect community values and addresses significant issues, such as climate change, land rights and cultural preservation. Preliminary knowledge of Northern ecoculture and material traditions should be ensured in collaboration with knowledge holders. This approach fosters active citizenship, strengthens cultural identity and facilitates the transfer of knowledge between generations, ultimately supporting a sustainability transformation.

THE SCHEDULE

Plan and outline the timeline: when does the project start and end, and what are the intermediate milestones by which certain sub-goals should be achieved?

WHY?

Justify the project's relevance from both community, environmental and Arctic perspectives. Explain why this project is meaningful for the development of AAE, Arctic sustainability and your personal and professional growth. The rationale should address a specific challenge that the project responds to or a vision of the new possibilities it opens up. Consider how the project acknowledges and supports the cultural sovereignty of Arctic peoples and communities

and how it contributes to the decolonisation of knowledge, practices and representations.

It is essential to integrate social and cultural considerations into AAE activities. The North and the Arctic face social, environmental and cultural challenges, including the impacts of climate change, cultural erosion and the exploitation of natural resources. Therefore, AAE should address the urgent issues related to local and Indigenous rights, cultural diversity and sustainability. Addressing these topics can foster a deeper understanding of the complexities of life in the Arctic while raising awareness of social justice and environmental issues.

GOALS

Define a central goal: what kind of impact does the project aim to achieve? This may involve revitalising cultural heritage, animating ecocultural traditions, empowering communities and making public artworks. Goals might also include supporting intergenerational knowledge transfer, honouring storytelling traditions or fostering respectful relationships with the Land. If you work with people, consider the community's visions for their future, not just the project team's assumptions. You may also set sub-goals related to knowledge, skills, attitudes and social learning. Generating discussion and public awareness may also be one of the aims. Goals should be realistic and concrete. If the AAE project is carried out at school, the curriculum may guide goal setting; in community projects, goals should be shaped through dialogue with the community.

It is important to involve local stakeholders, Indigenous representatives, cultural representatives and Elders in both the planning and implementation phases of AAE. This ensures that the AAE 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 AAE project plan and objectives, leading to a more authentic and meaningful experience for all participants.

MEANS AND WORKING PRACTICES

Describe the practical methods to be used: what will be done, and how? Careful planning of the methods, working practices and content increases flexibility in practice.

In Arctic projects, the methods may also need to be adjusted to local seasonal conditions (e.g. light, weather, migration patterns) and cultural protocols (e.g. times for community gatherings or ceremonies). Participatory and co-creative approaches are often recommended to ensure that the community's voice shapes not only the outcomes but also the process itself. In larger projects, the methods may be organised into so-called work packages to break the project into manageable parts.

AAE combines traditional Northern knowledge and material culture with contemporary art practices. The practice may include traditional art forms – such as carving, weaving and storytelling – as entry points to explore cultural values and ecocultural traditions. Local artists and craftspeople can be engaged as part-time instructors, enabling students to learn directly from community-based knowledge holders. This approach supports cultural preservation and revitalisation while recognising local expertise. Outdoor activities, place-specific art and collaborative projects with local residents are central, encouraging direct engagement with the Land, water, plants, animals and seasonal rhythms through art-based methods. Digital tools and online activities can be applied to AAE projects.

THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Briefly describe the key theories related to art and learning that inform the project and introduce the relevant concepts. Justify the project idea and working methods by referencing previous Arctic art projects and relevant research in AAE. Read more about the theoretical background below.

THE PLAN FOR EXPLORING THE PLACE AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

A variety of methods can be employed to explore the chosen location and its ecocultural context, including multisensory observation, site-specific artistic activities, interviews and digital tools. In the framework of AAE projects, the notion of *community* is understood broadly, encompassing human inhabitants and more-than-human beings, environments and material agencies. Read more about this phase below.

THE EXPECTED RESULTS AND IMPACTS

Evaluate the potential results and impacts of the project as an extension of its goals. Consider why this project is important. In art education, especially in rural Arctic communities, outcomes are often more qualitative than quantitative. Reflect on the anticipated effects on participants, the local community and the environment. The project's impact may extend beyond its immediate scope, influencing future activities or perceptions of Arctic art and AAE.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is central to increasing the accessibility and impact of the project's actions and outcomes. A communication plan outlines guidelines for both external communications and internal interaction, including outlining the principles for creating a safer space. The team should agree on communication practices, such as channels and meeting schedules. Some communication targets local communities and stakeholders, while other communication addresses broader audiences via media platforms. Specify who should communicate what, to whom and when. Use appropriate tools and media. Read more on communication in the guidelines below.

BUDGET AND FUNDING PLAN

Outline the project's anticipated costs and available resources. List the facilities, equipment and tools available to you.

SUSTAINABILITY

Reflect on the sustainability dimensions of the project. Does the project contribute to sustainability transformations, and does it have an impact on social or cultural sustainability? Is the project carried out sustainably, limiting the ecological footprint and avoiding harm to nature?

PROJECT ETHICS AND GIVING CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Ethics in art and art education projects are closely tied to the project's goals, methods and relationships. Ethical practice encompasses how artists or educators plan and execute their work, engage with participants and acknowledge authorship. This includes reflecting on power dynamics, inclusion and responsibilities in both privileged and marginalised contexts. In AAE projects, it is essential

to clarify roles and consent. If a project is intended to be evaluated and presented in a research context, ethical practice includes defining the anonymity and role of participants. This is especially important when working with vulnerable individuals, who must be offered anonymity if they wish. From the beginning, participants should be informed about whether they are involved as named artists, credited contributors or anonymous participants.

When working with Northern and Arctic (often multicultural and/or Indigenous) communities, it is always important to respect cultural protocols and sensitivities. It is essential to respect local customs, cultural protocols and the significance of any potential sacred sites or practices. 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.

A SAFER SPACE

AAE practices should foster inclusive and safe environments where participants can express personal experiences, emotions and social concerns through artistic means. These projects can be viewed as performative situations that invite diverse forms of participation and facilitate dialogue aimed at healing and strengthening community resilience. While sustainability is a global concern, art-based engagement with these issues can also promote individual mental well-being by offering meaningful channels for self-expression and social reflection. This is particularly relevant in Arctic communities where art can play a significant role in addressing mental health challenges – often linked to the impacts of colonial histories – and in supporting emotional and cultural recovery.

DOCUMENTATION PLAN

Who is responsible for documentation? What will be documented, how and for what purpose? Confirm if there is consent for photography, video and potential research use. Formal agreements may be necessary if materials are to be published. Think about the kind of materials to produce: will there be a publication, an exhibition, an online presentation or social media content? This will guide what is recorded and when. Read more about photo and video documentation below.

Figure: Timo Jokela,
Journey of Kuer, 2018.
Wood sculpture.
Photograph: Santeri
Happonen, 2018.



Figure: Timo Jokela,
Journey of Kuer, 2018.
Wood sculpture.
Photograph: Santeri
Happonen, 2018.





Take a Closer Look at the Stages of Project Planning and Action

Timo Jokela, Maria Huhmarniemi and Mirja Hiltunen



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ay these guidelines encourage you to create art education projects that are meaningful, decolonial and sustainable.

Explore the Socio-Cultural and Ecocultural Context

In the framework of AAE projects, the notion of *community* is understood broadly, encompassing human inhabitants and more-than-human beings, environments and material agencies. This approach encourages considering how humans, more-than-humans and their surroundings co-shape and influence one another within ecocultures.

If physical presence at the location is not possible in the initial phases, remote and digital methods can be used creatively, such as engaging with local social media groups or conducting online participatory mapping. The project plan should clearly describe the chosen methods, intended participants (humans and/or more-than-humans), schedule and forms for presenting the results. Outcomes may take various formats, including text, images, video works, installations or web platforms.

Preliminary exploration is crucial as it helps articulate the project's relevance and refine its scope. In ecocultural and community-based projects, meaningful directions often emerge from dialogue and attentive intra-action with the local context, including the landscapes, ecosystems, species and human actors involved. Therefore, sensitivity to place and an openness to unexpected forms of interaction are essential for responsible and responsive project design.

Learning from Earlier Art and Art Education Projects

When planning an AAE project, it is essential to engage with what has come before. This means familiarising oneself with earlier projects, artworks and pedagogical initiatives that have addressed similar themes, places or communities. Such contextual awareness



Figure: Bark Boat. Photograph: Mari Parpala, 2018.

honours the work and knowledge of previous artists, educators and community members, and it helps to both extract lessons learned and build upon existing relationships, methodologies and narratives.

Researching local and regional art histories – including Indigenous artistic traditions and other Northern artistic traditions, land-based practices and past community art projects – can reveal important cultural meanings, symbols or protocols related to the place or topic. It also allows for respectful continuation of art and education rather than disrupt-

tion. In Arctic communities, where histories are often transmitted orally or through lived practice, this process may involve direct conversations with Elders, Northern knowledge holders, artists and educators in addition to studying published materials.

Situating a new project within a broader landscape of past and ongoing work fosters continuity and dialogue across time. It supports ethical practice and helps ensure that projects contribute meaningfully to existing cultural ecosystems rather than appropriating or isolating them. This also strengthens the project's relevance, resonance and potential for impact, both locally and more broadly, when fostering the impactfulness of art and art education.

Decolonial Research as a Foundation for AAE Projects

It is essential to engage with research literature specifically grounded in Arctic art and art education. Such literature provides culturally and environmentally relevant perspectives that reflect the unique conditions, values and worldviews of Arctic communities. Relying solely on global or mainstream art and art education sources would risk overlooking or misrepresenting these specific contexts. By reading Arctic scholarship, you will gain a deeper understanding of local practices and knowledge systems and contribute to the decolonisation of research and education by valuing regionally rooted ways of knowing, making, teaching and researching.

Concepts and literature worth visiting include the following: Arctic art and design practices, land-based education, decolonisation, eco-cultural resilience and community-based art education frameworks. Relevant authors may include Indigenous Arctic scholars, Northern cultural theorists and artists whose work emerges from the specific contexts of the Circumpolar North. Incorporating such theoretical grounding helps the project to resist extractive or outsider-driven perspectives and instead supports place-sensitive, culturally sustaining and ethically grounded artistic and educational practices.

The book series *Relate North* has been published annually since 2014 to identify and share contemporary and innovative practices in teaching, learning, research and knowledge exchange in the fields of arts, design and visual culture education in the North.

Education in the North is a journal that publishes research findings, comments and critiques on all aspects of education. This includes formal and informal educational settings, as well as compulsory, community, further or higher education and allied professions (such as psychology, social work and librarianship).

The key literature on the concepts of new genre Arctic art and new genre AAE includes the following:

- Hiltunen, M & Korsström-Magga (Forthcoming). Nomadic antlers. New genre Arctic art education and activism. In A. Sohns (Eds.), *Artistic dialogues with the Arctic North: Environmental change and identity in transition*. Routledge.
- Jokela, T., Berliner, P., & Manninen, A. (2024). Introduction: Creating sustainability portraits in the Arctic. In T. Jokela, P. Berliner, & A. Manninen (Eds.), *Creating Arctic sustainability portraits* (pp. 8–12). Lapin yliopisto. <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe20241209100493>
- Jokela, T., Manninen, A., & Berliner, P. (2024). Introduction: a journey with new genre Arctic art. In T. Jokela, A. Manninen, & P. Berliner (Eds.), *Mapping the new genre arctic art education* (pp. 8–13). Lapin yliopisto. <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2024120599888>
- Jokela T. & Hiltunen M. (2024). New genre Arctic art education as a way of knowing with the North. In T. Jokela T., M. Huhmarniemi & K. Burnett (Eds.), *Relate North: New genre Arctic art education beyond borders* (pp. 12–37). InSEA Publications.



Figure: Wool Innovation project. Photograph: Lola Cervantes, 2024.

Figure. Artistic process. Photograph: Mari Parpala, 2022.

- Jokela, T. & Huhmarniemi, M. (2022). Arctic art education in changing nature and culture. *Education in the North*, 29(2), 4–27. <https://doi.org/10.26203/55f2-1c04>
- Jokela, T., Huhmarniemi, M., Beer, R. & Soloviova, A. (2021). Mapping new genre Arctic art. In L. Heininen; H. Exner-Pirot & J. Barnes (eds.), *Arctic Yearbook 2021: Defining and mapping sovereignties, policies and perceptions*. Arctic Portal. <https://arcticyearbook.com/arctic-yearbook/2021/2021-scholarly-papers/400-mapping-new-genre-arctic-art>
- Ruotsalainen, J. (2024). Discursive frameworks of Arctic art. *Arctic Yearbook 2024 – Arctic relations: Transformations, legacies and futures*. <https://arcticyearbook.com/arctic-yearbook/2024/2024-scholarly-papers/526-discursive-frameworks-of-arctic-art>

Arctic Art and its New Genre

An AAE project may draw from a wide range of creative traditions, using tools, materials and methods that span from natural dyes to media technologies, poetry and performance. However, Arctic art diverges fundamentally from the dualistic and colonial traditions of Western art. It does not separate art, design and craft, nor is it created solely for art's sake. Artists in the Arctic often blend different means of expression – combining beauty and functionality, cultural meaning and practical use – while engaging with Northern knowledge systems and natural materials.

Artists may gather materials directly from nature, live and create in relationship with the Land, collaborate with ecosystems and carry forward traditional crafting practices. In such cases, art becomes a way to maintain, reinterpret and transform local ecocultures and ways of life. Arctic art encompasses a broad range of creative expressions – including craft, design and cultural production – that carry the heritage of Arctic ecocultures across generations and cultural boundaries. It embodies both tangible and intangible heritage – material knowledge embedded in making, visual languages and symbols rooted in lived traditions.

The revitalisation of crafting skills and traditional knowledge often focuses on Indigenous heritage and other Arctic cultural practices. Such efforts must be grounded in cultural respect and cannot take place without the involvement and consent of cultural members. When revitalising craft heritage through AAE projects, cultural appropriation must be consciously avoided, especially in cases where communities choose not to share certain knowledge or practices.



Figures: Snow sculpting. Photographs: Antti Stöckell, 2024.

In many cases, AAE projects focus on forms of knowledge and skills that emerge from participation in local ecocultures and that can be shared with newcomers and guests. Projects may also explore cultural practices that are held in common across multiple Arctic cultures or traditions from minority Indigenous groups that have formed over generations of living in close relationship with the Land.

The need to preserve, revitalise and take pride in cultural heritage is shared by both Indigenous peoples and other communities living in the Arctic. AAE projects can support this by fostering cultural continuity, intergenerational learning and ecoculturally rooted forms of expression.

The concept of new genre Arctic art refers to contemporary artistic practices – such as interventions, performances, installations, media art and community collaborations – that are participatory, activist and responsive to urgent social and environmental issues. These practices reflect a shift from object-based public art toward socially engaged and often politically motivated forms of expression. In the Arctic, they frequently address topics such as climate change, natural resource extraction and cultural self-determination.

This kind of contemporary Arctic art is increasingly shaped by local voices. It engages with ecocultures, politics and identities from within the region. Arctic communities – both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities – create art that challenges colonial narratives and reflects lived realities.

AAE builds on these approaches by integrating local ways of making, land-based learning, environmental awareness and community engagement. Art educators in the North have developed methods – such as snow and ice sculpting – that support cultural resilience and revitalisation by drawing on local nature, crafts and ecocultural knowledge. These methods aim to strengthen cultural identities, foster pride and support sustainable ways of living.

New genre AAE recognises the importance of materials, landscapes and relationships in learning. It is informed by ecological thinking, land-based pedagogies and the lived experience of Northern communities. Art is seen not only as a form of expression but also as a mode of inquiry and activism – one that helps to imagine and create more hopeful and sustainable futures.

AAE projects call for culturally sensitive and ecologically grounded educational practices that value Northern knowledge, participation and collaboration. By connecting contemporary art with community, nature and culture, AAE contributes to creativity, empowerment, resilience, decolonisation and meaningful change.

Documenting AAE Projects

In the context of AAE, documentation plays an essential role as a tool for learning, reflection, motivation and representing process and artistic productions. In remote and culturally rich northern contexts, documentation becomes both a pedagogical approach and an ethical responsibility. Recording participants' voices, questions and reflections – alongside visual documentation – helps to make transformations, interconnections and artistic growth visible. In AAE, documentation should honour the unique knowledge systems, languages and environmental relationships of Arctic communities.

Documentation and evaluation should create lasting benefits that go beyond the duration of a single project. These may include educational resources for schools, materials supporting cultural heritage preservation, archives for community memory and tools for designing future initiatives. When documenting art and art education in Arctic contexts, it is essential to respect the seasonal rhythms, Indigenous knowledge systems and the interconnection of Land and community.

In every AAE project, it is necessary to consider how the documentation represents the core of art and art education. Does it primarily present the artworks as finished objects, or does it highlight artistic, communal and transformative processes? Does it reflect the spirit, cultural context and social environment of the place in which the art was created? In many AAE projects, documentation is often the primary means by which wider audiences can experience the artwork. Projects may take place in remote locations or natural landscapes that are difficult to access, and many artworks are ephemeral, existing only for a short time and experienced by a small group of participants. Thus, documentation is not merely supplementary, it is central to extending the work's reach, honouring its context and preserving its connection to place, culture and community memory.

Documentation must always be guided by the project's purpose, goals and theoretical framework. In AAE, art is often understood as a process deeply related to Land and people. Therefore, documentation should emphasise this evolving and relational nature – one that resists extractive or colonial ways of seeing.

What Should Be Documented in AAE Projects?

- **Land and people should be depicted in a decolonial manner:** Avoid repeating colonial representations or romanticisations of Arctic landscapes and communities. Emphasise respectful presence and relationality.
- **Relating Land and people:** Document how the project team comes to know and respect the Land, its cultural significance and the people who live there. This includes engagement with local knowledge, stories and traditions.

- **An inclusive community that includes more-than-human agencies**
- **Creative processes:** These include sketching, theme development, stages of making, problem-solving, learning moments and emotional responses.
- **Artworks and events:** Completed works should be documented in their environment (close-up, distant views, different angles and, when possible, across seasons and times of day). Capture audience and community engagement, as well as the natural disappearance or intentional decay of the artwork.
- **Project goals and impact:** These include, for example, evidence of collaboration, active participation, intergenerational dialogue or reconnection with Land and heritage

Documenting Diverse Perspectives

- **The Land in its changing conditions:** Arctic environments are dynamic. Shifts in light, temperature, snow, water and seasonal rhythms shape an artwork and its perception. Documentation planning should account for this, for example, it should consider whether it is possible to revisit the site at different times or document melting, freezing or other transformations.
- **Wide shots:** Depict artworks in their environment and groups interacting with the Land and each other.
- **Medium shots:** Depict working methods, gestures, and the use of tools and materials.
- **Close-ups:** Depict details of the materials, facial expressions, hands at work and symbolic or meaningful objects.

Ethical Documentation in Arctic Contexts

Documentation in AAE projects must follow ethical and cultural protocols, particularly in Indigenous and local communities. Photos, videos and audio recordings should reflect respectful relationships with the Land, people and traditions – not external assumptions or narratives.

When projects involve sensitive cultural practices, traditional knowledge or sacred places, documentation must not reveal information the community wishes to keep private. Ask:

What is appropriate for public visibility? What should remain within the community?

Purposeful and Context-Sensitive Documentation

The resulting materials may be used for communication, exhibitions, visual essays, research publications, evaluation, funding reports or future planning. These purposes may shift over time, so documentation should be intentionally planned – especially in large-scale projects involving entire schools, villages or institutions.

For example, when time and resources are limited, one group may be selected for deeper documentation. A camera should be easily available to capture fleeting northern light conditions and spontaneous moments.

Documentation Methods and Tools

Choose tools based on their intended use: Will the documentation be shared in community gatherings, websites, exhibitions or archives? If the documentation also serves as research data, it is important to record conversations and process stages consistently.

Recommended tools:

- Photography
- Field notes and diaries
- Sketches and idea maps
- Short video clips (especially useful for capturing atmosphere and the unique qualities of the Land)
- Documentary movies, augmented reality, podcasts and other media can also be applied if resources allow it

Consent and Ownership

In Arctic and Indigenous contexts, informed consent is essential. Always seek permission before documenting individuals, cultural knowledge or sacred spaces. For children, guardian approval is required. Written agreements are highly recommended and should clarify the following:



Figure: Documentary film making in Greenland. Photograph: Niko Väistö, 2025.

- Who owns the documentation?
- Where and how will it be stored and used?
- Who has access?

Designating a documentation person or team can help ensure consistency. However, the documenter should not be a total outsider – they must understand the project’s values and the cultural and ecological context. Ideally, local or community members should be involved in the documentation process. This promotes community ownership and cultural continuity. Internationally known participatory methods, such as photovoice, can be applied in AAE projects too. Ideally, communities should also retain access to and rights over materials that represent their stories and ways of knowing. When sharing documentation, prioritise local, community-led archives when possible. These ensure long-term access and cultural sovereignty more effectively than distant or institutional repositories.

Communicating about an AAE Project

In Arctic contexts, communication must be designed with special attention to linguistic, cultural and geographical considerations. Local and Indigenous languages may play a crucial role in ensuring that messages are accessible and meaningful to community members. Whenever possible, consider producing key communication materials (such as posters, invitations or project summaries) in local languages alongside national or international languages.

Involving community representatives or knowledge holders in shaping the communication content can improve cultural relevance and appropriateness. This is especially important when communicating about sensitive cultural topics or local knowledge.

In the North, physical distances and digital connectivity may shape communication choices. Not all Arctic regions have stable or affordable internet access; therefore, traditional and place-based media (such as community radio, village noticeboards and word-of-mouth promotion via local events) remain valuable tools.

When sharing outcomes externally – such as in exhibitions or publications – ensure that you acknowledge and, where appropriate, obtain consent from community partners whose voices, images or knowledge are featured. This helps to uphold the principles of ethical collaboration, cultural safety and co-authorship.

Consider how the results will be shared after the project ends, for example, in exhibitions, online galleries, publications or seminars. Artworks and events live on in various



Figure: Public art by school community in Utsjoki. Photograph: Mirja Hiltunen, 2021.



Figure: Presenting public art at school in Utsjoki. Photograph: Mirja Hiltunen, 2021.

forms, including articles, documentation and memories. Thoughtful communication planning can extend the project's influence to broader discussions about the role and significance of art and art education. Thoughtful communication planning also contributes to the project's decolonising potential by ensuring that the community's perspectives, stories and interpretations are represented authentically and not overshadowed by outsider narratives. When possible, community members should be invited to co-present the results, artworks or findings, whether in local exhibitions or international forums. Creating and exhibiting artworks are important for initiating dialogue. Sharing artworks online with other groups adds a new dimension to the dialogue and allows new audiences to interact with the works.

Also, leverage the channels of partner organisations and the university to reach relevant audiences. The social media platforms of the ASAD network are offered to expand the communication in the Arctic art and design education networks. You can tag the

Instagram account @asad_network (as a collaborator of your post) and the Facebook account @ArcticSustainableArtsAndDesign or share in the Arctic Sustainable Arts & Design Facebook group.

Celebrating the Results of the Project in AAE

An AAE project culminates in a meaningful closing phase. As the work progresses, participants often become increasingly committed to the process. Seeing a community contribution – whether material, symbolic or conceptual – can evoke feelings of cultural pride and inspiration. In successful projects with well-crafted outcomes, participants often experience joy, empowerment, increased capability and a sense of belonging. Through the unveiling of the final artwork, they may literally or symbolically have their voices heard and recognised.

In the university context, students are expected to not only celebrate the learning process, their and others' contributions, and the project's overall progress, artistic quality and social impact, they are also expected to critically reflect on theme. In AAE, this includes reflecting on how local realities, Arctic ecologies, Indigenous or community-based knowledge systems and collaborative dynamics shaped the artistic and educational outcomes.

Within the pedagogical model of project-based learning, this final phase is often referred to as a 'closure moment'. It includes evaluation, shared reflection, and giving and receiving feedback. This process helps clarify and give meaning to experiences that may only become fully visible and understandable in hindsight, when the creative and collaborative journey can be viewed as a whole.

The goal of an AAE project – and the way its quality and effectiveness are measured – often extends beyond the institutional setting. Art seeks to be seen, felt and shared. In Arctic regions, final presentations or celebrations are shaped by the nature of the project, the community's cultural practices and the participants' wishes. These may take the form of artwork unveilings, exhibitions, seminar presentations, public conversations with artistic interventions, seasonal gatherings, village festivals or other local events.

Such events might welcome families, local residents, community leaders, Elders, knowledge keepers and other relevant audiences. When shared publicly, the value of the artwork increases in the eyes of its creators, and the moment of celebration can strengthen community bonds and the shared experiences of success and recognition.

Media – including local newspapers, radio and social platforms – can be powerful tools for appreciating and amplifying the project. Through increased media visibility,



Figure: Showing video art. Photograph: Aki Lintumäki, 2022.

Arctic art and design projects can gain broader recognition and contribute to public discourse on the role of art in sustaining cultures, ecosystems and traditional ways of life in the North.

Reporting the Project for Study and Scholarly Purposes

Project reporting is an integral, planned and shareable part of the overall project process – just like other stages of project work. Reporting depends on the scale and funding of the project. This guideline is generally written for students and doctoral candidates to use in project-based learning.

The project report should focus on providing an analytical and reflective account of the activities carried out, as well as on presenting the project's outcomes and potential ideas for further development. It is essential to highlight both the successes and the

challenges encountered and to propose constructive suggestions for improvement. This openness allows future projects to build upon the experiences of their predecessors, fostering continuity and increasing the cumulative impact of short-term projects.

In the report submitted for academic credit, each student must also reflect on their role and learning within the project team, demonstrating how they contributed to and grew through the collaborative process.

In Arctic contexts, project reporting may also partially occur through the public sharing of results – such as sharing in seminars, exhibitions, community events or project publications. In these cases, particular attention should be given to ensuring continuity and broader impact, recognising that one-off projects can contribute to longer-term community benefits, knowledge sharing and cultural sustainability.

Moreover, when working in Arctic communities, it is crucial to reflect on how the voices, knowledge and interests of local partners have been represented and respected in the project outcomes and reporting. This includes acknowledging any local or Indigenous contributions, shared authorship and consent to publish or exhibit local cultural expressions or knowledge. Reporting thus becomes not only a documentation of the process but a part of the project's ethical responsibility and its contribution to the decolonisation of research and art education.

THE AAE PROJECT REPORT IN A NUTSHELL

You must clearly state the context, focus and purpose of your project. When working in Arctic contexts, this includes recognising the specific cultural, social and environmental characteristics of the region. This summary should be approximately half a page in length.

STATE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROJECT

You are expected to justify your focus not only in terms of your personal or professional interests but also in terms of its relevance to Arctic communities, cultural sustainability or local art education practices. This justification should reflect an awareness of the distinct challenges and opportunities of working in Arctic or Indigenous contexts, including potential contributions to community well-being or cultural continuity.

KEY LITERATURE

Your literature review must engage with existing research, ideas and theories that are relevant to Arctic art, design and/or art education, where applicable. Using global or general literature alone is insufficient; you should demonstrate an understanding of regionally grounded scholarship and knowledge systems to ensure cultural relevance and to support decolonising research approaches.

THE APPROACH

You are expected to describe your chosen research or project methodology and to justify it in the Arctic context when stating the purpose of your work. Suppose community involvement is part of your project. In that case, you should explain how you have ensured that the project employs ethical, respectful and participatory approaches that allow local voices to be heard and considered.

OUTCOMES

You should clearly describe the outcomes of your project, which may include artwork, workshop results, community feedback, photographs, drawings or video records. When appropriate, ensure that the community's perspectives or interpretations of the project are reflected in these outcomes.

ANALYSIS

You are expected to reflect on and critically analyse the project, considering how the Arctic context, local knowledge or community engagement may have shaped the process and results.

COMMUNITY VOICE

Include quotations from feedback provided by participants or stakeholders of the project.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Your conclusions must be well-grounded in the evidence you present and should reflect the significance of your work for Arctic art and AAE or community development. Where relevant, discuss how the project outcomes may support or impact on the local community and how community voices have been included or represented in your findings.

A REFERENCE LIST

Ensure that your references include appropriate Arctic and Indigenous sources, in addition to any global or general literature used.

EXPECTED QUALITIES

The report should be a coherent, legible, tidy and well-structured text file with images.

The identity of any individuals or communities involved in the study should not be disclosed without prior informed consent. Anonymity must be maintained unless explicit permission to identify persons or institutions has been granted.

In Arctic community-based projects, ethical considerations – including respect for local knowledge, cultural protocols and the right of community members to review or comment on how their voices are represented – are essential.

Evaluating AAE Projects in Arctic Contexts

The role and purpose of evaluation in AAE projects vary depending on the scope and nature of the project. In small-scale art initiatives, evaluation may focus on artistic processes, community engagement or immediate outcomes. In contrast, broader ABAR projects often require more systematic and multi-layered evaluation strategies as they aim to generate new knowledge, support long-term development goals and inform policy or education practices.

In AAE projects – especially those situated in Indigenous or multicultural Northern communities – evaluation is a continuous, relational and participatory process. Evaluation encompasses both ongoing reflection and mid-project adjustments, as well as a summative reflection upon completion. In AAE, this process often unfolds in two stages: the first, immediately after the project ends, when memories are still fresh; the second, some time later, when participants have had the opportunity to process and situate the experience in broader life or cultural contexts.

Participants' perceptions and lived experiences form the foundation of any meaningful evaluation. This necessitates collaborative and culturally appropriate methods such as feedback discussions, talking circles, story-sharing, interviews or written reflections. These approaches honour local ways of knowing, oral traditions and community-based

dialogue. Self-evaluation is also essential, especially in relation to one's learning, actions and their alignment with community values, cultural protocols and the ecological realities of Arctic life.

In Northern settings, the action research model is especially suitable. It allows for reflection in action, values iterative learning and honours the contributions of all participants – including Elders, youth, artists, educators and land-based knowledge holders. It also makes space for Indigenous worldviews, non-linear time and communal interpretations of meaning. Evaluation should be embedded in the project's relationships with people, place and cultural traditions, and it should be carried out in accordance with local protocols and permissions.

Key Dimensions of Evaluation in AAE

Evaluation should address both the process and the outcomes of a project, while foregrounding its cultural, social and ecological relevance. Specifically, AAE evaluations should consider:

- **Multiple dimensions and goals:** How well were the project's aims achieved, including its cultural, educational, artistic and environmental goals? How successful were the collaboration, communication and documentation processes?
- **Tangible outcomes:** What events or public gatherings occurred? What physical, digital or ephemeral artworks were created?
- **Quality and cultural relevance:** Do the artworks or events reflect the creators' intentions and resonate with local traditions, stories and identities? How were they received by the community or audience?
- **Social, cultural, environmental and transformative impact:** How did the project influence intergenerational dialogue, Indigenous or minor language use, environmental awareness or cross-cultural relationships? Did it contribute to cultural revitalisation, resilience or a sense of belonging?
- **Personal learning and role reflection:** What did participants, facilitators and artists learn about themselves and their roles? How did their understandings of art, place or community change through the process?

Culturally Responsive and Place-Based Evaluation

Evaluation methods must be adapted to the realities of Arctic and Indigenous communities. Projects in the North are deeply influenced by seasonal variations, geographic remoteness and oral traditions. Evaluation should acknowledge this, and methods should be flexible and respectful of timeframes that do not necessarily align with institutional calendars.

In addition to traditional artistic evaluation criteria – such as those related to form, technique, and material use – AAE projects require culturally responsive frameworks. These should consider the following:

- **The dialogue between artwork and Land:** In many Indigenous and Northern cultures, Land is a living presence and artworks are in dialogue with that presence.
- **The relationships formed through the project:** Artistic value includes the connections fostered between participants, Land, ancestors and future generations.
- **The visibility and invisibility of outcomes:** Not all impacts are visible or immediate. Sometimes, a project plants seeds that bloom later – in a conversation, a remembered teaching or a new sense of agency.

Power, Representation and Ethics

Evaluation is never neutral – it is always shaped by perspective and purpose. The project team should approach AAE projects with humility, cultural awareness and a commitment to co-learning. In many cases, local co-researchers should be involved in the interpretation and analysis of outcomes.

Evaluations can critically address questions of power, representation and voice. Every community holds internal hierarchies; therefore, it is essential to ask the following:

- Whose voices are included in the evaluation?
- Who defines what is considered valuable, beautiful or successful art?
- Are marginalised perspectives actively sought and respected?
- Are dominant narratives being reproduced or challenged?

These questions intersect with social dimensions, including those related to language, class, gender, age, religion and mental health. AAE evaluations should aim to not just describe what happened; they should also challenge and expand understandings of value in art and art education.

The Role of the Artist and Facilitator

Artists and facilitators play multifaceted roles in AAE projects – they act as listeners, collaborators, cultural connectors and catalysts for dialogue. Their contributions must also be evaluated: How did they relate to the community and the Land? Did they act with humility and openness? Did they centre Land and community voices or impose external visions?

Quantitative indicators, such as audience numbers or media visibility, can supplement this evaluation, but they should not overshadow qualitative dimensions, such as

trust-building, cultural humility and fostering respectful relationships. In Arctic contexts, long-term relationality is often more meaningful than short-term visibility.

A Holistic Evaluation Framework

A meaningful evaluation in AAE contexts integrates the following multiple dimensions:

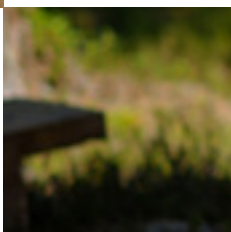
- The intentions of the project
- The aesthetic, educational and transformative experiences of participants
- The cultural and environmental significance of the work
- How evocative are the artworks
- The social and emotional outcomes for individuals and communities

In Arctic Indigenous and multicultural settings, art must work both aesthetically and socially. It should honour and strengthen the relationship between people, place and culture. AAE evaluation is not simply a measure of success – it is a way of deepening understanding, accountability and care in Northern creative practices.



Art-Based Action Research as a Tool for Developing Practices in Art Education

Timo Jokela and Maria Huhmarniemi



The need for new research strategies and methods emerged within the recently established art education degree programme at the University of Lapland in the late 1990s (see Jokela, 2006, 2019). As a relatively young academic discipline, research and research training in art education had, at that time, commonly borrowed qualitative research methods from other fields, such as education, the social sciences and the humanities (particularly art history). At the same time, an autoethnographic approach was typical of artistic research.

Within the university-based art education programme, it was recognised that the field's knowledge interest is transformative: research was expected to look ahead and develop more effective practical working and teaching methods while addressing identified challenges through scholarly means. There was a growing demand for the integration of research and practice, as well as for critical discussions that deepen understanding and empower practitioners and communities to promote social and cultural well-being and broader sustainability more effectively.

This solution-oriented approach characterised the research interests in art education at the intersections of education, training and art encounters with the well-being and health sectors, cultural services, nature-based tourism and participatory community planning. Collaboration within the university and regional and international development project funding enabled by the European Union helped sharpen the research profile of art education. This collaboration, alongside artistic research, brought a stronger emphasis on evidence-based knowledge of the impact and potential of art education, in line with academic research conventions. In the spirit of action research, a method was developed that produces research whose results can be simultaneously applied in practice and in which art, artistic components of research and the presentation of research processes and outcomes as art are all integral elements.

ABAR was developed to address the practical knowledge interests of art education simultaneously within MA-level research studies, doctoral training and research projects. This development work itself took the form of ABAR as the method was tested

and refined – especially in externally funded projects – while considering the potential of contemporary art (Hiltunen, 2009; Jokela, 2013, 2017, 2019; Jokela et al., 2015a, 2015b; Jokela & Hiltunen, 2023; Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018, 2020). The method was developed within these studies as a working mode for both multidisciplinary regional development and international circumpolar cooperation, particularly within the thematic ASAD network of the University of the Arctic (Huhmarniemi & Hiltunen, 2022; Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2021; Jokela et al., 2024a, 2024b).

This article provides the background and theoretical framing for the research-strategic and methodological foundations of ABAR while also highlighting its practical implementation. Based on a scoping review, the aim is to offer an overview that simultaneously serves as methodological guidance for researchers and students planning and conducting ABAR.

The research data for this article consists of doctoral dissertations completed in the field of art education at the University of Lapland that have applied and developed ABAR (Ainalinpää, 2019; Griniuk, 2022; Heinonen, 2025; Hiltunen, 2009; Huhmarniemi, 2016; Härkönen, 2021; Korsström-Magga, 2025; Luostarinen, 2023; Manninen, 2021). These article-based dissertations include dozens of peer-reviewed research articles. The data also includes research articles intended for inclusion in three ongoing doctoral theses (Lintumäki, 2023; Oinas & Huhmarniemi, 2024; Stöckell, 2018, 2025; Stöckell & Luostarinen, forthcoming). In addition, our article draws on material accumulated through development projects in art education and the research integrated within them (e.g. Hiltunen, 2023; Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2021, 2022; Huhmarniemi et al., 2021). Moreover, the supervision processes of research and theses have themselves been subject to continuous reflection in the spirit of ABAR. Within these supervision processes, the method has been adapted to various research designs, generating valuable material that evidences its practical functionality.

The analysis of the data began with a close reading, paying special attention to research designs, methodological choices and the phases of research processes. The close reading also focused on the artistic components of the material, not only the written texts; this distinguishes our approach from traditional content analysis. Interpretation was guided alternately by theory and the material itself, as well as by comparing the material to research methodology literature. We have aimed to highlight the theoretical and methodological factors that characterise the method and the stages of research progression.

The methodology has been previously examined from various perspectives in several research articles (e.g. Jokela, 2017, 2019; Jokela et al., 2015a, 2015b, 2019). Its

practical implementation has been described in handbooks produced to support art education studies (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018, 2020). ABAR has also been adopted internationally, serving as a methodological framework in European Union–funded research (Hiltunen, 2023; Kárpáti, 2023) and in studies on Arctic art which have involved collaboration with Indigenous communities (Jokela et al., 2024b, 2024c). Furthermore, ABAR has been employed in approximately 50 master’s theses, a selection of which are listed as representative examples in a project pedagogy handbook (Jokela et al., 2024a, pp. 111–113).

Our article, based on a scoping review, is part of ABAR’s long-term development work. Drawing on research, we update the methodology and its practical guidelines to align with current paradigms and practices in the field. We aim to support education in the discipline by providing an overview of the method’s development in a format valid to both researchers and students. This article brings together two perspectives: we aim to theorise about the research strategy and methodology while also describing the stages of practical implementation, based on relevant literature and our scoping review.

In this chapter, we do not address the diverse contexts and situations in which ABAR can be applied, nor the interdisciplinary dimensions or the ethical questions related to research and artistic practice that are, in themselves, also methodologically important. Instead, our analysis focuses on the processes and phases that emerge from the material. We aim to distil and clarify the method’s core features so that the processes and theoretical dimensions of ABAR become clearer. While this is a translated version of a research article published in Finnish, we hope that this article will support researchers and students in adapting the method’s processes to their own unique contexts and situations.

Starting Points for Developing the ABAR Methodology

To begin, it is essential to contextualise the emergence of ABAR, drawing on relevant literature and our mapping of the field. At the heart of its development has been a small group – initially just two art educators, researchers and artists (Hiltunen & Jokela, 2001; Jokela, 2006, 2021). This core group has since expanded to include doctoral researchers, alumni and international collaborators. The Northern Art, Community and Environment Research (NACER) group is the primary research community where the method is actively developed and applied.

The primary objective of developing ABAR at the University of Lapland has been to provide students, as well as artist-teacher-researchers, with a functional research approach that supports their efforts to address identified challenges and advance the field’s

practices and impact. Methodologically, the roots of ABAR partly lie in the tradition of action research and partly in artistic research and its offshoot, art-based research. In the NACER group, ABAR is understood as a guiding research *methodology* rather than a single, isolated method.

The need to develop ABAR is linked to a discussion that began in the late 1970s about the potential of the arts within qualitative research methods in education (Eisner, 1976). When art academies and universities, such as the University of Lapland, began investing in doctoral degrees in the arts, an active debate emerged about research methodologies that would acknowledge the distinctive nature of art and design disciplines. Artistic research has been widely discussed internationally under various terms (see, e.g. Borgdorff, 2011; Gray & Malins, 2004; Sullivan, 2005) and also in Finland (Hannula et al., 2005; Mäkelä & Routarinne, 2006; Varto, 2009).

Within the NACER group, it was recognised at the turn of the millennium that these approaches were not yet sufficiently developed to serve the needs of students in art education research and doctoral training. Ontologically and epistemologically, many aspects of artistic research appeared paradigmatically fragile when examined from the perspective of either science or art. However, this liminality of the research – existing between art and science, expression and research, emotion and analysis – opened the door to the possibility of a new paradigm alongside qualitative research (Leavy, 2009, 2017). Simultaneously, interest grew in artistic research methods, especially visual research methods, within the social sciences, such as visual ethnography (Pink, 2007) and photovoice methodology (Delgado, 2015). All these phases are equally relevant to ABAR, in which artistic practices and ways of working are integrated throughout each stage of the research cycle.

The underlying knowledge interest guiding ABAR is generally practical in orientation. Anttila (2006, p. 475; 2007, p. 23) categorised the knowledge interests of different research strategies along two axes: objectivity–subjectivity and theory–practice. Figure 1 presents Anttila’s four-field framework, supplemented here to illustrate the goals that shape research orientations. Typically, objective-theoretical research is grounded in quantitative methods such as surveys. On the other hand, subjective-theoretical research generates interpretations, understandings, meanings and theories. For example, artistic research in which artist-researchers develop and reflect on their work can be described as subjective-practical research. In this framework, the knowledge interest of ABAR is primarily located in the objective-practical quadrant but may also draw on elements from other quadrants.

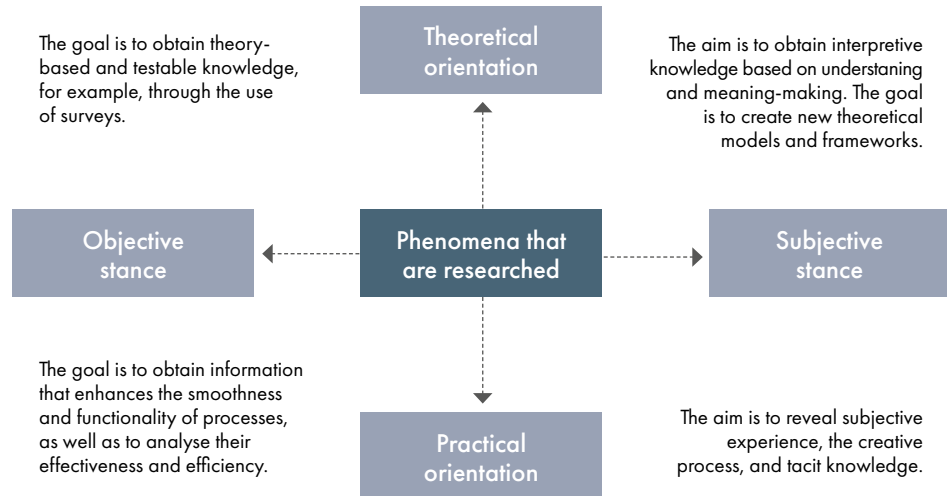


Figure 1: The objectives of research approaches (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2020, p. 44). Anttila's (2006, p. 475; 2007, p. 23) four-quadrant model of research approaches, supplemented by input from Jokela and Hiltunen.

In long-term action research, which generates diverse data sets and publications, the emphasis may shift between interests and research orientations – data can be collected from participants, subjective reflection may take place and both practice and theory can be developed in tandem. In funded research projects and article-based dissertations, ABAR appears as a methodology whose effectiveness in relation to its goals is further refined throughout the research process. In a master's theses, it is usually applied more narrowly as a single-cycle process tailored by the student to suit their specific research context. This typically involves straightforward phases of planning, implementation and evaluation, leading to, for instance, recommendations for improving the quality of art-based activities and for continuing research in the field.

Developing the Process, the Product or Both through Research

Next, it is important to recognise that ABAR can be applied in the following two distinctly different ways: it can be applied with a process-oriented focus or a product-oriented focus (see Figure 2). In both cases, the approach is cyclical in nature, but the or-

Process-Oriented Action Research in the Field of Art Education	Production-Oriented Action Research in the Field of Art Education
• Development of pedagogical methods in art education • Development of operational models, organisations, pathways, and strategies within the field of art education • Development of various organisations through art interventions or art-based services • Promotion of well-being and interaction through art and art education • Empowering art and art education • Art and art education that revitalises and renews culture • Creation or renewal of operational models and cultures • Expansion of the scope of art education and applied arts • Broadening the sphere of community and empathy • Development of reflexivity and research-based practice within activities	• Artistic and art education productions, such as art productions, exhibitions, performances, events, and workshops • Publications, such as handbooks, educational material packages, and media productions • Operational, product, and service concepts • Art-based products and services

Figure 2: Aims in process-focused and production-focused ABAR.

ganisation of the research, the role of co-researchers, data collection methods and the expected outcomes vary significantly (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2020).

A process-oriented approach emphasises the development of working methods and operational models within organisations, groups or communities. The aim may be, for example, to support participants’ learning, empowerment, strengthening of their identity and other activities that enhance well-being, work ability or social functioning. In some cases, the goal may be to create entirely new and innovative practices or to renew existing models for new contexts. While the process may generate new art productions or similar outcomes, the primary emphasis of the research remains on developing the process itself. This ensures the sustainability of the results and supports their transferability and application in other contexts. Thus, the outcome is rarely a fixed organisational practice but rather an evolving concept or model that can be adapted elsewhere.

In the field of art education, this approach can be used to develop, for example, art pedagogy.

ABAR can also be employed as a method for product development research or design research within thesis work. In this application, the aim is to achieve the best possible outcome within the given timeframe and resources rather than to establish a final, absolute truth (see Anttila, 2007). The development of a product or an art production typically involves collaboration with users, experts or both. The research cycles consist of planning, testing or evaluation and improvements made based on feedback. In development research and design research, these iterative cycles are often referred to as *iterations*.

Our research shows that ABAR can be used to create artworks, art events, art-based services and learning materials in a research-informed manner. In these outcomes, particular emphasis is placed on themes such as community-based art education, placing empathy, interdisciplinary artistic expression, environmental and political statements, and phenomena within the field that rely on interaction and dialogue.

The Multiple Roles of Art within ABAR

Within ABAR, art is always present in multiple, interconnected ways: it is simultaneously an art education process and an artistic process. The outcomes of such research are improved processes, new productions, a combination of both and, most importantly, a deepened understanding of these processes and their development. The research process typically leads to an evolving process and to a product, such as an exhibition or learning material, through which the process is communicated. Whether the emphasis is on the process or the product depends on the research interest, the chosen art form and, above all, the intended audience and context in which the research is presented.

Art serves multiple functions within ABAR: it is not only the subject of development or the final result but also a tool for data collection and analysis. According to Leavy (2009, 2017), art-based research methods are used to access experiential knowledge from participants that may not be captured through conventional spoken or written research methods. Our findings show that art-based approaches can bring, for example, the tacit knowledge of local communities into the research process and its data. In addition, research outcomes can be communicated through artistic means – in other words, through forms of expression that go beyond traditional written academic publications.

From Reflection to Criticality and Impact in Action Research

Next, we highlight key features that support the use of ABAR in developing teachers' professional competence and in advancing teacher education within the field. Hine (2013) and Heikkinen et al. (2006) noted that action research offers teachers a systematic, collaborative and participatory process for acquiring knowledge. Moreover, action research equips teachers with the skills and insights needed to bring about positive change in classrooms, schools and communities (Stringer, 2008). In the field of visual art education, action research also provides tools for the continuous development and inquiry of one's artistic practice (Ainalinpää, 2019; Griniuk, 2022; Huhmarniemi, 2016), workplace cultures (Oinas & Huhmarniemi, 2024) and pedagogical practices (Heinonen, 2025; Härkönen, 2021; Luostarinen, 2023; Manninen, 2021).

In education, action research is not a single, uniform method; rather, it encompasses a range of branches, ranging from personal professional development to striving for societal change and activist research. In the educational context, the idea of the teacher as a self-developer has deep roots. Clarke and Bautista (2017) emphasised that the international teacher-researcher movement underlines the importance of combining self-awareness with action research to develop a reflective and holistic approach to teaching practice. They identify two significant branches of reflective action research. Autoethnographic research focuses on presenting an open-ended, emotionally resonant and discussion-provoking research narrative. For this reason, it shares similarities with forms of artistic research where artistic expression functions as a pathway to alternative learning skills. Self-study action research also overlaps with a/r/tography (arts-based research as enacted living inquiry) (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004).

The other branch of reflective action research recognised by Clarke and Bautista (2017) is analytical ethnography. Here, action research may include emotional aspects, but it also provides analytical and theoretical perspectives on development. This also applies to the ABAR cases reviewed here in which practical and theoretical inquiry run in parallel and research topics are situated at the intersection of education, art and research.

Critical participatory action research (Fine & Torre, 2021; Kemmis et al., 2014) is an approach that often aligns closely with the aims and methods of ABAR. This approach seeks a more just society and emphasises the action research process as a means for communities to shape their lives and future visions (Fine & Torre, 2021). ABAR also has parallels with service design processes in which artist-designers and practitioners of applied art aim to solve community and environmental issues through collaborative and

participatory methods (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2020; Jokela et al., 2015a, 2015b; Miettinen & Vuontisjärvi, 2016). At the University of Lapland, the method has been further developed in projects where the interests of service design and art education intersect (Hiltunen, 2023; Huhmarniemi & Hiltunen, 2022).

When examining the characteristics of ABAR in relation to other similar approaches, its nature as a learning process involving art becomes especially clear. This is particularly evident when visual art educators reflect on the outcomes of their research. The learners include facilitators, participating individuals, organisations and communities. The method also aligns with transformative action research, which emphasises that the researcher initiates change processes and, through reflection, also transforms themselves (for example, by adapting their practices to the era of ecological crises) (Bradbury, 2022). Bradbury (2022) is among the theorists who highlight the role of action research in driving transitions towards sustainability: addressing the climate crisis, achieving global sustainability goals and strengthening social justice. A focus on initiating a sustainability transition is evident in studies by Ainalinpää (2019), Huhmarniemi (2016), Luostarinen (2023), Lintumäki (2023), Korsström-Magga (2025) and Stöckell (2018, 2025), which use art to engage participants or audiences with ecological and environmental issues.

All forms of action research are sometimes critiqued for a perceived lack of repeatability, scientific objectivity and evidence-based outcomes. However, action research practitioners and theorists respond to this critique by emphasising its necessity. For example, Guba (1996) argued that it is not essential to follow the conventions of traditional research but rather one can adopt a democratic, empowering and humanising approach that helps communities expand their understanding of their situations and find solutions to the problems they face. McIntosh (2010) also emphasised that reflection itself is a form of research and, within education, it can enhance evidence-based inquiry. In ABAR, art is not merely seen as a means of producing positive change, it is also understood as a dialogical tool for critical reflection (Hiltunen, 2009; Härkönen, 2021). A hallmark of ABAR is the dialogical space created by the researcher which allows for multiple voices – a feature already present in Hiltunen's (2009) doctoral research on community-based art education which laid the foundations for the approach and has since been expanded to include more-than-human actors as well.

In Finland, action research has been the primary method of the teacher-researcher movement since the early 1980s, often linked to narrative methodologies (Heikkinen et al., 2007) which bring reflection closer to emotions and artistic writing. In educational research, Clarke and Bautista (2017) and Heikkinen et al. (2017) viewed narrative

and art-based storytelling as particularly meaningful as they enable both the researcher and the audience to engage with experiences and emotions that are often inaccessible through purely theoretical research. Heikkinen et al. (2007) proposed validation criteria for action research – such as criteria for the capacity to provoke and have an impact – that are similar to those proposed by Jokela (2012, 2017, 2019) for ABAR.

Within action research more broadly, critical reflection is usually mainly understood as the writing of research publications. In contrast, ABAR has developed contemporary visual art methods to support reflective practice so that reflection is also embodied in the processes of making art and in artistic productions. Our material shows that art (both art processes and artworks) functions as part of reflective research directed toward development – as described in the dissertations of Manninen (2021), Oinas (Oinas & Huhmarniemi, 2024) and Heinonen (2025) – or toward activism, as emphasised by Huhmarniemi (2016) and Lintumäki (2023). Multimodal approaches to visual art have attracted interest and have also been applied in other research fields (Mikkonen, 2024).

According to Leavy (2009), qualitative research is inherently value laden and art-based research is political, consciousness raising and emancipatory. This characterisation also applies to activist forms of ABAR. ABAR can be socially or environmentally political, just as the art it produces can be. The researcher's and community's values, attitudes and even political views influence the aims and implementation of the research. These underlying factors are openly acknowledged during the research process and in its reporting. The researcher must clearly explain their relationship to the topic and articulate their research intentions.

The researcher is always a key participant and learner in their research process and, in art-based research, also in the artistic process. ABAR does not aim to study the experiences of a community or phenomenon from an outsider's perspective. Quite the opposite: the aim is often to influence experiences as part of the research process, with visual art education as a natural mode of engagement. Visual art educators who use ABAR for developing their practice are often multi-skilled professionals whose expertise naturally integrates artistic skills, pedagogical competence and the ability to develop methods through research.

From Dialogic and Participatory Art to Posthuman Co-Research

To identify the research strategy of ABAR and its possible applications, we next turn our attention to how the theoretical-artistic framework of the research guides the use

of the method. The theoretical framework of international arts-based research also depends on the research topic. For example, phenomenology, feminist theory and theories of contemporary art have contributed to the emergence of a/r/tography, which is well known in the field of art education (Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Springgay et al., 2008). At the University of Lapland's art education programme, the research methodology has been developed in relation to environmental and community art, place-based research, community-based art education, situational learning and theories of project-based learning. Influences have come from, among other sources, social pedagogy (such as sociocultural animation), place-based methodologies, visual anthropology, and critical pedagogy (Hiltunen, 2009; Jokela et al., 2015b; Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2020). Based on these background theories, the development goals of ABAR at the University of Lapland relate to strengthening the community (Hiltunen, 2009, 2025), driving social change and increasing environmental responsibility (Huhmarniemi, 2016), promoting cultural sustainability (Härkönen, 2021), supporting eco-cultural sustainability (Jokela & Hiltunen, 2024), fostering social justice (Hiltunen, 2010; Jokela et al., 2015a), exploring place relations (Luostarinen, 2023; Stöckell, 2018; Stöckell & Luostarinen, forthcoming), researching with Indigenous people (Korsström-Magga, 2023; Hiltunen & Korsström-Magga, Forthcoming), and viewing art and art education as leverage for sustainability transformations (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2025).

When the focus of research shifts from artist-teachers' self-inquiry toward communities and participation, ABAR aligns with the tradition of participatory action research on contemporary art, which emphasises dialogue. Bourriaud (2002) views art as a process that fosters connections and dialogue between people, grounded in the principles of relational aesthetics. The same theoretical premises mark the relational conception of contemporary art, contemporary art education and ABAR: contextuality, processuality, and dialogicity (Granö et al., 2018). In the early stages of developing this research strategy, many contemporary art researchers – such as Kester (2004), Lacy (1995), and Lip-pard (1997) – who emphasise participatory methods highlighted the spatial and dialogic aspects of art and their connection to everyday life. As a foundation for ABAR, relational contemporary art calls for a situational method for investigating and understanding connections between people, spontaneous networks and shared aspirations, the art acting as a counterforce to extreme individualism, individual centrality and consumerism. This provides the field of art education with a perspective for re-examining the connections between contemporary art, traditions, popular culture and education from a decolonial viewpoint (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2022).

ABAR enables the use of art-based, creative and visual methods to support reflective practices in research (McIntosh, 2010) and to develop art education and relational, applied visual arts (Jokela, 2013). Thus, the research strategy is also grounded in the theory of inclusive and socially engaged contemporary art. Its aims focus on strengthening communities, driving societal change and promoting environmental responsibility and inclusion (Jokela et al., 2015b).

Our mapping shows how participatory contemporary visual art is understood as a toolkit for ABAR, offering a dialogic space for reflection that all development requires. Glammer (2015) emphasised that rethinking and reimagining the relationship between art, culture and development is necessary. He highlighted the significance of art education for the advancement of social justice and advocated for the values of art in achieving sustainable cultures, alleviating poverty, promoting self-compassion, and stimulating creativity and social imagination. These impacts of art education can help push toward social change. In recent years, these themes have emerged in discussions about ecosocial civics (Salonen & Foster, 2021), eco-cultural sustainability (Jokela & Hiltunen, 2024; Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2025) and in art education and research rooted in Indigenous epistemologies and encounters with contemporary art, a discussion which has also been central in the ASAD network (Beer, 2023; Hiltunen & Huhmarniemi, 2024; Leddy, 2023).

When the ABAR at the University of Lapland has particularly focused on the rapidly changing North and Arctic regions, as well as the eco-culture and multiculturalism of its resident communities, new artistic-theoretical and ontological-epistemological questions have recently emerged that are closely linked to art education. These include the encounter between Indigenous cultures and contemporary art (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2021, 2022) and the sustainability transition (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2025). In turn, these are connected to posthumanist ideas that have gained relevance, such as Deleuzo-Guattarian and Baradian intra-action and ‘entangled’ ways of knowing (Barad, 2007, 2014). ABAR was not originally created as a method for posthumanist research, but it has been successfully applied in the field to expand notions of agency and researchership. Examples include art and art education involving garden and plant art and pollinators (Ainalinpää, 2019); reindeer herding families and reindeer (Korsström-Magga, 2023; Korsström-Magga & Jokela, 2022); and a study of Lapland cows and their caretakers (Soppela, 2022). Posthumanist ABAR has also been developed in contexts involving technology, the body and performance (Griniuk, 2022), as well as in the context of the visual arts classroom (Heinonen, 2025). Co-researchership,

co-formation, intra-action and many other concepts and approaches highlighted by posthumanism have expanded agency and become an integral part of ABAR (Jokela et al., 2024b, 2024c).

Participatory and Arts-Based Research Data and Its Analysis

In this section, we will examine the types of research data used in ABAR, focusing on how they support both the development work within the process and the validation of the research (see Figure 3). A key feature of this method is its diverse, process-generated data, which is often referred to as *reflective data*. This term highlights its purpose: enabling the continuous assessment and improvement of the process. Reflective data allows researchers and participants to revisit insights and developments as the project progresses.

The research data can be created and analysed collaboratively with participants using arts-based methods (Leavy, 2009; 2017). For example, participants may reflect on their experiences through visual and verbal means, either individually or in groups. Arts-based data often includes drawings, collages, photographs, videos, environmental artworks and other creative outputs made by co-researchers. This material conveys knowledge that may be difficult to express verbally but is nonetheless valuable for the research aims.

Researchers typically conduct participatory observation and document their observations in a research diary. Keeping a research diary systematically is important; it should include, for example, feedback received and emerging thoughts. The diary can be maintained either digitally or by hand. In participatory research, data collection is often a shared task among multiple contributors. Data is also reviewed during the action phase so that methods can be adjusted if needed.

‘The process is commonly documented using photographs, video recordings, sketches, plans, artworks and meeting notes that are systematically stored. Researchers may also interview participants or record various feedback and evaluation discussions. Arts-based methods and other qualitative methods can be combined, for instance, by using visual material to support and enrich discussions.

The data is typically multi-modal and includes observations gathered with traditional qualitative research methods. Thematic and group interviews, as well as questionnaires, are often used in action research. However, similar insights can be gained by documenting the activities themselves, such as recording discussions. For example,

Typical Research Data for Process-Oriented Development	Typical Research Data for Production-Oriented Development
• Documentation of the process, such as a research diary, meeting minutes, sketches, and photo and video documentation • Documentation of reflective practice, such as recordings of discussions • Participants' artworks, portfolios, learning journals, or reflective essays • Interviews, such as thematic group or individual interviews • Feedback surveys related to the activities	• Mapping of development needs • Mapping of best practices and solutions • Documentation of the design process, such as sketches, prototypes, and models • Documentation and description of the production, for example, through images and written accounts • Feedback on the piloting or iteration of the product or service from participant groups, users, and partners

Figure 3: The research data in process-oriented and product-oriented ABAR.

reviewing visual documentation together with participants during discussions can serve both as a method of data collection and as a way to share the research process.

A distinctive feature of this method is that data analysis takes place during the on-going process. The researcher evaluates interaction, engagement and the functionality of the process in order to make adjustments as needed. A deeper analysis, however, is carried out after the action phase. The researcher may categorise, theme and organise the data, using either a data-driven or theory-driven approach.

Reflective data enables researchers to return to specific phases of the process, significant insights and situations that led to changes. Often, the analysis stage resembles traditional academic writing: it engages in dialogue between the data and existing literature. However, arts-based methods can also be integrated into the analysis. For example, the researcher may create a collage from photographic material, as Manninen (2021) did in her doctoral thesis, or curate an exhibition, as Luostarinen (2023) demonstrated. This approach also supports the artistic representation of the research and allows for sharing findings through multiple channels. Visual materials, such as photographs, are also used for communicating and reporting research results.

When research is conducted closely with a community, it is recommended that the community also be involved in analysing the data. Furthermore, if the results of the analysis are presented as an artistic production, the outcome may align with a production created through a community art process. Evaluating such artistic productions is an in-

tegral part of assessing the effectiveness of the method. Completed works illustrate how successful, empowering and meaningful the process has been. Criteria for evaluating the impact of an art production include its ability to evoke thoughts, emotions and reflections on values, as well as its ability to foster a sense of empowerment that strengthens participants' trust in their agency (Jokela, 2012).

Mutual listening, respect, joint reflection and returning knowledge to the community are all part of the ethical principles of ABAR. Such principles are being further developed – for example, in Sámi research (Laukkanen, 2023) – to guide the social and cultural sustainability of research activities. Arts-based methods provide a range of tools for conducting and sharing research in socially and culturally sustainable ways, as well as in ethical ways.

The Phases of an ABAR Process

Each ABAR project is unique, shaped by its research design. However, certain common phases can be identified. Below, we outline the general process in a concise form.

The **first phase** involves familiarising oneself with the chosen phenomenon, defining the goals and research questions, organising the research, planning activities and conducting theoretical and artistic background work (see Figure 4). The artistic activity typically occurs during the **second phase**. Research data is gathered alongside the art activities or in a subsequent phase. In the **fourth phase**, the data is analysed, conceptualised and the next research cycle is planned.

ABAR is always situational and context specific, meaning that the aims and interventions emerge from the researched phenomenon and its context rather than solely emerging from the researcher's interests or perspective. After defining the phenomenon and preliminary research goals, the process begins with background mapping – typically a place and community mapping exercise – where the researcher familiarises themselves with the research environment using suitable methods. Such mapping practices have been described, for example, in a guide prepared at the University of Lapland to support art projects (Jokela et al., 2024a). Already at this stage, mapping can employ arts-based and visual methods. Examples of these developed approaches include place mapping (Jokela et al., 2024a) and established visual methods, such as applications of visual ethnography (Pink, 2007; Jokela, 2018), the photovoice method (Wang & Burris, 1997) (where community members photograph their surroundings) and videography (Rokka & Hietanen, 2018).

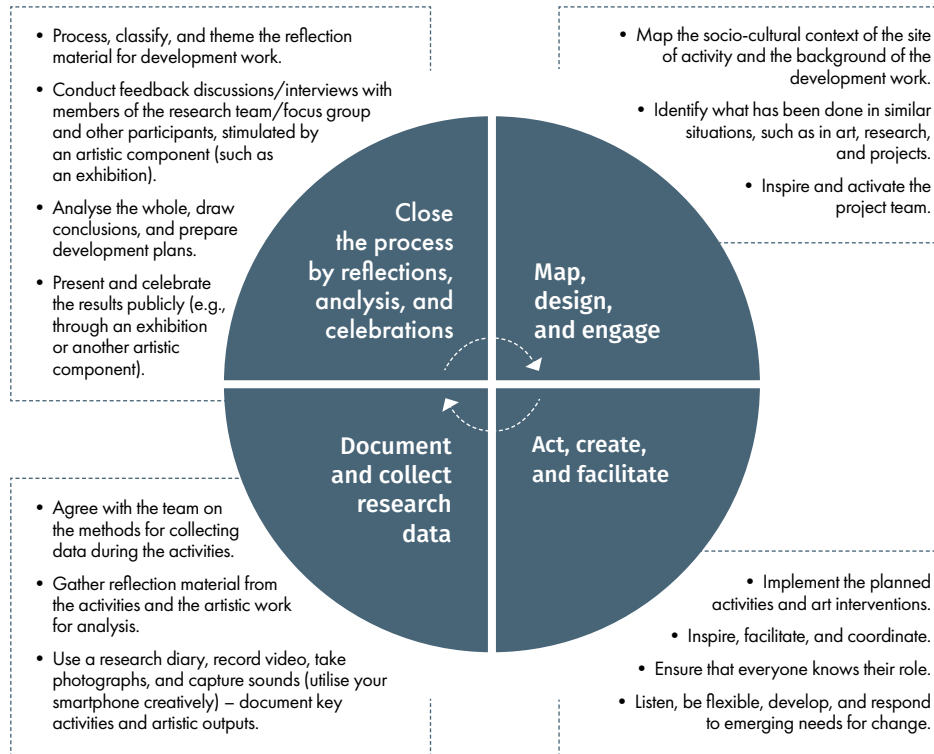


Figure 4: The stages of one cycle of ABAR defined by Jokela and Hiltunen (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2020, p. 57).

Only after developing a multi-layered understanding of the place and its socio-cultural situation can the need for intervention, its aims and appropriate arts-based methods be justified. An initial research plan is often developed in participatory interaction with the project's stakeholders, drawing on the mapping phase.

From an ethical perspective, conducting thorough background, place and community mapping is essential, especially when the target group includes multicultural or minority communities or when cultural tensions may be present. This aspect of community involvement is crucial when the researcher is an outsider to the community in some sense. From the perspective of cultural sustainability, communities must define, identify

and express their significant cultural features, as well as the needs for change and knowledge production. This is particularly important when working with local communities (Härkönen, 2021; Jokela, 2018) and in research conducted in Sámi areas (Hiltunen, 2009; Jokela, 2020; Korsström-Magga, 2025; Oskal, 2008).

Following the place and community mapping, the research activity begins either through practice-led activities or a literature and theory review. Such a review helps the researcher understand what is already known about the topic, how other researchers and artists have addressed similar themes and what knowledge they have produced. This identifies the best practices while also clarifying knowledge gaps and concepts that help refine the research task into specific research questions.

Ethical considerations are present in every phase of arts-based research. They relate to defining the research aim, the role of the target group and co-researchers, formulating research questions, the methods used in the artistic work, data collection and presenting the results (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018, 2020). These ethical choices should be identified and communicated in a transparent manner. Researchers should follow good scientific practice (Keiski et al., 2023) and the ethical principles of art, particularly as discussed in the context of community art (Kantonen & Karttunen, 2021b). Special attention should be paid to authorship, ownership and anonymisation when these aspects might conflict with each others in community-based work.

An ABAR project can be carried out in many ways, and the researcher may join the development cycle at any stage (see Figure 4). In other words, the researcher may become involved in an ongoing process. However, the most common form of involvement involves the researcher initiating the cycle. In this case, the process includes background work, organising the research, planning and implementing an art intervention, analysing reflective data and reporting the results (see Figure 5).

In practice, ABAR also leaves room for not knowing, curiosity and the courage to experiment with something not yet mastered. As is typical of action research, research questions often evolve and are refined through the progress of the research and its cycles. The process may include detours and missteps, which are also common in creative artistic work. Jokela (2008) described the process as partly intuitive, messy and based on experience and tacit knowledge; thus, the aims and chosen methods are initially indicative, and the topic and questions become clearer as the research proceeds. However, the artist-researcher does not navigate this alone. Development work is generally carried out within a team or community wherein reflecting on intuition helps steer the process towards a shared and articulated goal. Therefore, the process is not rigid, even

1. Background Work
• Identify the phenomenon, define the problem, and set preliminary objectives. • Be aware of the ethical principles of research and obtain the necessary research, documentation, and publication permissions. • Map the socio-cultural and visual context of the community and the place related to your research. • Review existing research literature and relevant artistic practices addressing the phenomenon. • Define the key concepts you will use and build the theoretical foundation of your research through literature, previous studies, and artistic practices. • Clarify the research task both theoretically and practically. • Formulate possible research questions. • Select and justify the research methods and data collection strategies based on the nature of the phenomenon, the research interest, and the theoretical framework.
2. Organising the Research and Initiating Teamwork
• Identify potential project partners, their roles, and functions (users, clients, target groups, and the team you will work with). • Create a project or research team and draft a preliminary schedule. • Define the goals and practical development actions together with the team to pursue the research task. • Distribute responsibilities among the participants, either in parallel or hierarchically. • Ensure a shared understanding of the project implementation: value-based, concept, and the theoretical foundation of the artistic or applied artistic approach.
3. Prepare a Research / Intervention Implementation Plan
• Plan the activities or intervention together with your team in the form of an action research or design cycle. Plan how research data will be collected and how the process will be documented (journals, researchers' or artists' folders, interviews, questionnaires, etc.).
4. Conduct the Research / Intervention
• Carry out the planned activity or intervention. • Collect the planned research data during the activity and document the process. • Celebrate and share the outcomes of the artistic intervention already during the process (exhibition openings, meetings, etc.).
5. Analyse the Reflective Data and Report the Results
• Organise the multimodal research data into a usable and analysable form. • Create summaries from the documentation material to facilitate feedback discussions, stimulate group interviews, and otherwise reflect on the activities with your team to deepen interaction in the analysis phase. • Categorise, theme, and analyse the collected research data. • Analyse the results and make suggestions for developing the activities or the created production. • Write a written report of your research as a kind of development narrative structured by the research cycle. • Present the artistic results of the research in a manner suitable for the topic and meaningful for the field of art education and the research community.

Figure 5: The stages of ABAR (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2020, pp. 56–58).

though diagrams are used to clarify it. At the University of Lapland, theses using this method are often linked to various art, education, development and research projects conducted in a project-based manner. Students are supported by a handbook on visual arts education and applied arts which describes the stages of a contemporary art project in detail, from background work and planning to implementation and reporting (Jokela et al., 2024a).

The publication of results concludes the action research cycle. ABAR is usually presented both as artistic productions and as a written research report. The research process often includes an art production, which can be a piece of work, an event or a site- and time-specific process presented, for example, in a dissertation or thesis. University-specific degree structures and study guides define whether a study can include an artistic component and how art should be defined and assessed. At the University of Lapland, the artistic parts of dissertations are evaluated as separate entities, while in master's theses, an artistic production can be presented as part of the written report.

In written reports, such as master's theses, the traditional format is usually followed, often complemented with visual elements. The report's introduction explains the relevance and significance of the research, its context and its aim.

Differences and Connections Between ABAR and Parallel Research Strategies

In this section, we examine the significance of this review study and reflect on the positioning of ABAR within broader research landscapes. As discussed earlier, ABAR has been developed to address the practical knowledge interests of visual art education. It has been shaped simultaneously within MA-level research training, doctoral education and larger research projects. Alongside this development, it has been essential to clarify the strategic, methodological and procedural similarities and differences between ABAR and other artistic and arts-based research approaches used in the fields of art and art education. This comparison further highlights the practical character of ABAR and the kinds of knowledge interests to which it is well suited.

ABAR shares certain similarities with *artistic research*, where the artist's practice is understood as research or as a research method (Huhmarniemi, 2016). Both approaches are driven by a desire to transform and develop professional practices. They also share a cyclical research process that involves planning, practical action, reflection and evaluation. Typically, artistic research aims to advance artistic expression or techniques: the

research focus is often the artist-researcher's creative and practical process, which may involve technical-material or conceptual-artistic dimensions (Borgdorff, 2011).

A related phenomenon is so-called research-based art, where artist-researchers explore themes from different scientific disciplines through their artistic productions and accompanying texts. Ontologically and epistemologically, artistic research is often characterised by its openness and fluid boundaries in terms of knowledge domains, research interests and methods (Jokela, 2019). Although all the developers of ABAR at the University of Lapland have also worked as practising artists, the main goal has not been to develop the artistic expression of the artist-teacher-researcher or to deepen self-reflection. Instead, the emphasis has been on enhancing skills for interaction and teamwork in collaboration with teachers, artists, researchers and participants from various disciplines and communities. This same emphasis is visible in educational and collaborative action research (Stringer, 2008) and participatory action research (Kemmis et al., 2014; Whyte, 1991).

In parallel with the rise of artistic research, many educational researchers have integrated the practices of artists and art critics into their research processes. Researchers have conceptualised the role of art in research strategies and processes in various ways (see Eisner, 1976; Barone & Eisner, 2012; Irwin & Cosson, 2004; Leavy, 2017). To distinguish this from artistic research, many scholars from different disciplines have described their research strategies as *arts-based research* (Leavy, 2009, 2017, 2018; McNiff, 1998). While artistic research is often connected with professional artistic practice, arts-based research is applied across diverse fields, including education and the social sciences. For example, in education, students' drawings and paintings can be used as research material to gain insights into their experiences. Similarly, in the social sciences, arts-based methods have been adopted for participatory data collection. Scholars have highlighted the potential impact of artistic activity on education and learning (Barone & Eisner, 2012), on the development of art education and teaching (Irwin & Springgay, 2008), on health and well-being (McNiff, 2013) and on applied arts practice (Jokela, 2019; Jokela et al., 2019).

Recently, there has also been growing discussion about *art-based education research* and the role of arts-based methods and visual approaches in doctoral research in art education (Sinner et al., 2018, 2019). Navigating the space between art and science, expression and research, and emotion and analysis has opened up debates about new forms of inquiry (Leavy, 2009, 2017). One key strength of arts-based research methods is their capacity to explore non-verbal, tacit, sensory and embodied knowledge and experience, dimensions that are relevant across many disciplines.

One widely recognised and practised strand of arts-based research is a/r/tography. Originating at the University of British Columbia in Canada, a/r/tography has been theorised under the leadership of Rita Irwin. In addition to artistic research and action research, it draws from phenomenology and feminist and contemporary art theories, particularly relational aesthetics (Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Springgay et al., 2008). ABAR and a/r/tography share an emphasis on the parallel development of practice and theoretical inquiry, with research topics situated in the contexts of teaching, art and communities. Whereas phenomenology, feminist and contemporary art theories have shaped a/r/tography, ABAR at the University of Lapland initially drew from environmental and community art practices, site-specific contemporary art and community-oriented art education. Thus, participation, interaction and collaboration are central to ABAR. In contrast, autobiographical reflection and self-study tend to be more central to a/r/tography than to ABAR, which more often focuses its analytical reflection on diverse data collected from the activities rather than primarily on the researcher's experience.

In Finnish-language contexts, the approach of artistic action research is sometimes used (Lehtonen & Vehviläinen, 2021; Kantonen & Karttunen, 2021a). Unlike ABAR, artistic action research is typically situated within the realm of artistic research and may not require scientific methods. At the same time, it appears that the methodologies of artistic research and ABAR are converging as artistic research methods have become increasingly common in peer-reviewed academic publications.

Conclusion

In these guidelines, we have outlined ABAR as a research strategy that combines elements of academic research and artistic practice while retaining a clear identity of its own. In research and development projects, as well as in doctoral studies, it takes shape as a distinctive methodology that combines qualitative research with participatory art-based methods. Its multi-cycle process is well suited to addressing the broad, practice-oriented knowledge interests of visual art education. In smaller sub-studies, particularly in master's theses, ABAR often functions as a flexible method or tool adapted to the specific needs of the research design. In these cases, the phases of planning, implementation, evaluation and further development typically follow one another in a single cycle.

The development of this methodology has involved numerous contemporary, site-specific and community-based art projects, collaborating with researchers, teachers, artists, students and various community partners (including villages, schools and

workplaces). The aim has been to produce research that generates immediate and visible practical change as well as valid, practice-based knowledge, understanding and new skills relevant to this change. Research tasks have been defined, and development processes have been created in collaboration with community members as artistic activities. This is one of the foundations of ABAR: the diverse members of communities – including non-human participants such as animals, plants and places – are recognised as co-actors and participants in the art, research and development process, contributing to art and growth in visual art education.

ABAR is well suited to innovation and development in visual art education – a field inherently oriented toward change and the future, much like education and art more broadly. It is particularly appropriate for places and communities where artist-researcher-educators develop practices through participatory research methods to address identified challenges. Action research in visual art education is always reflexive and, depending on its emphasis, may be participatory, critical or activist in nature.

This research methodology was initially developed in the spirit of place-based and situational art education, with a strong connection to Northern eco-cultures and methods of environmental and community art. This has directed attention not only to research activities but also to the cultural sensitivity and ethical dimensions of educational and artistic practices and to the roles of co-actors in the process. More recently, a posthumanist perspective has broadened the notion of participants and co-actors in research to include various ecosystem actors.

The principles of ABAR connect closely with participatory and dialogical contemporary art, co-creation, co-research and Indigenous research approaches. It can generate valid knowledge and practical, individual and collective capacity for change. It also generates research-based practical knowledge for visual art education.

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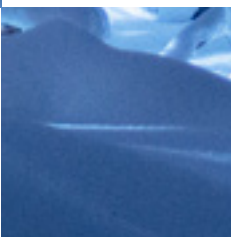
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Living in the Landscape in the Time of COVID-19

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In recent years, the University of the Arctic's Thematic Network, *Arctic Sustainable Art and Design* (ASAD), has conducted several educational projects, courses and workshops highlighting the social and culture-sensitive active principles of place-based art and design education (Härkönen, 2021; Hiltunen & Zemtsova, 2015). The *Living in the Landscape* (LiLa) project is one of its latest educational initiatives, where universities from Finland, Norway, Sweden and Russia have collaborated (Härkönen & Stöckell, 2019; Jokela, et al., 2018). In this chapter, we discuss the challenges and opportunities of the LiLa collaboration in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The LiLa summer school series was developed using art-based action research methodologies (Jokela, 2019; Jokela et al., 2019) to promote culture-sensitive and sustainable art-based learning on the socio-cultural landscapes of the European Arctic region and to bring together MA and PhD students, researchers and scholars from different disciplines. The development of multidisciplinary educational and scientific collaboration through the LiLa project was designed to meet the emerging challenges related to the environment, population and economic life in the region caused by climate change and globalisation. The project aimed to find culturally and socially sustainable solutions via scientific and practical interventions of the project to meet the needs for education targeting sustainable development in the North and thus benefit the inhabitants, communities and other stakeholders. The practice we developed aims to focus investigations on both traditional forms and phenomena of culture and their current practices and challenges as well as to reflect how their encounters and dialogue could be presented through art.

When discussing the challenges of the North and the Arctic, distance has always been one of the most prominent issues. In our view, distance refers not only to the geographical distance between nations or, for instance, universities operating in the area but also cultural distance, including that between indigenous and non-indigenous ways of living, which is very often seen as the distance between traditions of the past and

innovations of modern times. In the LiLa project, distances have also been observed between different disciplines: natural sciences, humanities, education and the arts. All LiLa partners understand that in higher education, more extensive collaboration across disciplines is required. We contend that only an active, multidisciplinary approach can identify the relationships between northern phenomena and their adaptability in a complex system wherein different elements are interdependent.

Through merging the research and education of art and other academic disciplines LiLa aims to offer students more versatile and practical studies, allowing them to better develop their own expertise in authentic and multidisciplinary learning situations. A practical higher educational aim of LiLa is to develop art-based pedagogical methods for joint fieldwork studies, which help participants to better understand the eco-cultures of Northwest Russia and the north of Nordic countries and find ways to support sustainability in these regions. This is not expected to only benefit students but also strengthen the expertise of the teaching staff.

From a wider perspective of the Arctic and northern societies, the aim of LiLa is to promote art-based, place-specific and participatory activities that elevate rural or semi-urban places and locations in Russia and the Nordic countries.

Rationale and Theoretical Concepts

In several disciplines, scholars have pointed out how the northern environment is rapidly changing and cumulatively impacting nature, the economy, social life, wellbeing and the culture of the people living in the region (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2011). Several scholars have suggested that higher education should increase investments in creative and circumpolar cooperation, as challenges are common throughout the Arctic. To ensure more uniform and beneficial development of the whole region, extending accessibility for good practices is seen as essential (Karlsdóttir & Junsberg, 2015; Petrov, 2014; 2016; 2017).

The focus on the development of LiLa is related to the ASAD network's agenda on reviewing the environment and community from the participatory perspective. It stresses grassroots human agency in exploring how traditional knowledge of communities' eco-cultures, such as indigenous knowledge (Valkonen & Valkonen, 2018; Virtanen & Seurujärvi-Kari, 2019) natural and cultural heritage of landscapes (Fairclough, 2009; Fairclough et al., 2014; Ingold, 1993; Smith, 2006), can provide better and more sustainable ways to contribute to the development of rural and semi-rural areas in the North (Vodden et al., 2015). In the Arctic, the interconnection of the ecological and the cultural

aspects is intense, and this nexus can be described as ‘eco-cultures.’ This concept highlights the specificities of neighbouring communities and places – for example, a village includes its location and residents. During ASAD activities, the concept of *northern knowledge* is now used to describe the tactile, situated understanding and knowledge communicated in material cultures and visual symbols (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020a, 2020b; Jokela et al., 2021). The northern knowledge system differs from indigenous knowledge because situated knowledge, integrated with the eco-culture and living traditions, is formed and carried by non-indigenous residents in the Arctic as well. Northern knowledge incorporates cultural heritage and the tacit comprehension of material culture and it can be shared not only with the new generation but also with newcomers as situated learning.

To increase the impact of multidisciplinary education collaboration, the northern and Arctic environments in LiLa are approached not only as scientific and geographical concepts but also as spaces and places for symbolic community created through art (Hiltunen, 2010). Thus, the central themes of the LiLa project, besides environmental questions, are the expressions of the northern environmental and material culture, such as art, handicrafts, narratives and living in nature (Härkönen et al., 2018).

The pedagogical basis of higher education is place-specificity (Härkönen, 2021; Jokela & Hiltunen, 2014), situationality (Granö, et al., 2018) and cultural sensitivity (Manifold et al., 2016), where learning is seen to take place via social interaction (Tynjälä, 2016). One of the main principles of the Lila summer school was to test and promote culturally sustainable practices, where the place, its features and inhabitants were actively engaged in the processes. The contextual circumstance of LiLa also brought to light the interdisciplinary matters in education. It offered possibilities for students to discover through different collaborative tasks how to weave together the different ways of knowing and create new thinking (Hollmén, 2015). LiLa’s pedagogy emphasises art-based approaches to multidisciplinary education. It is based on the ability of contemporary art to offer alternative ways of knowing and expressing knowledge but also considers art’s role in ecology (Demos, 2016) and how all the disciplines can contribute to sustainable development in their specific ways.

Art-based Action Research as a Methodological Approach

Methodologically, LiLa as a development project can be considered as a case of art-based action research (ABAR) (Jokela, 2019). ABAR shares some common features with

international arts-based research, artistic research and action research. In all of these research approaches, practical and theoretical forms of research are simultaneously conducted. Through utilizing ABAR, this was a central form in the way the study was constructed.

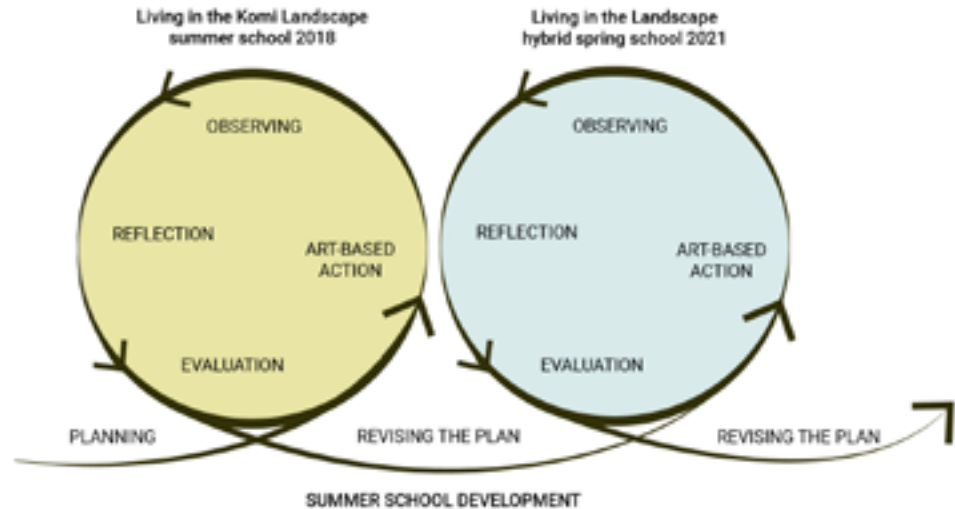
More as a research strategy than a complete method, ABAR has been developed at the University of Lapland to combine artistic practices with regional development and community empowerment (Jokela, 2019; Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018; Jokela et al., 2015) in formal and informal education (Hiltunen, 2010) and in higher education (Härkönen, 2021). Research topics are situated in the middle ground between art and other academic fields, such as the social sciences, education studies and regional development.

The ABAR methodology has widely been in use within the ASAD network. Since 2012, when the ASAD network was established (as part of the University of the Arctic organisation), Arctic educational institutions in the fields of art and design have collaborated to foster cultural life in the Arctic and to strengthen vitality and regional development through art, design and culture (Jokela & Coutts, 2018). ABAR and place-based art implemented in the ASAD collaborations have been promoted as a way to integrate artistic work, education, research and regional development. Building on the existing eco-cultures in the Arctic towns and villages, on the skills and strengths of locals as well as on contemporary art and international collaboration, this research approach seeks to represent an alternative to conventional top-down and nationally coordinated development projects.

As a potential ‘innovation’ of the school, we have used the ABAR methodology to create ways to merge art and design education, natural sciences, humanities and social sciences to develop new pedagogical methods of fieldwork for education targeting sustainability in the Arctic.

LiLa requires a reflective art-based approach to perception, knowledge building and representation. Using cyclical, reflective and iterative ABAR methodologies, we aim to develop professional methods and working approaches of the artist–teacher–researcher in art education at university level. An important aspect of ABAR is that it accepts cultural expressions that configure, communicate and express human relations to nature non-verbally through art or handicraft, verbally through oral narratives, literature, letters and blogs, or multimodally through music and performances. This study uses the reflective research data collected during the second LiLa School 2021; the data include discussions documented during the practices, planning and process descriptions of the

Figure 1: Two development cycles of LiLa Summer School using art-based action research method. Figure: Mari Parpala, 2021.



artworks and other activities and stored on a digital platform, tutors' planning discussions, final digital exhibition and participants' visual essays, written by the school participants for the exhibition catalogue, to open the processes of their artworks (Härkönen et al., 2021).

Next, we present LiLa's two annual development cycles (see figure 1) as an ABAR project: the first school as the first cycle is based on place-specific collaboration and pedagogy, and the second school as the second cycle is based on a digital and hybrid model considering the new challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The First Cycle: Living in the Komi Villages

The first LiLa international Summer School took place in the Komi Republic of Russia in 2018. This interdisciplinary school was organised as the ASAD network's collaboration, and the participants included master and doctoral students from the University of Lapland (art education and AAD), the Syktyvkar State University (Fine Arts and Natural Sciences), Arctic University of Norway (Cultural Anthropology) and the Uppsala University (Social and Cultural Anthropology).

The Russian partners organised various activities to meet the aim of the school to investigate the Komi cultural landscape in situ. These included a lecture phase and ac-



tivities in the city of Syktyvkar and a fieldwork phase in the villages of the Komi Republic. The aim was to conduct place-specific interdisciplinary research through different methods and produce artistic outcomes of the process for the final exhibition at the end of school. Besides offering the students authentic learning environments and opportunities to build international networks, the emphasis was on interdisciplinary learning and ways of integrating different research orientations in landscape research. Moreover, the emphasis on producing art-based research outcomes through interdisciplinary work was seen to broaden the perceptions on knowledge production and on presenting research results. This became evident through the evaluation of the themes, discussions and reflections presented in the final art-based productions.

The lecture phase introduced landscape research from different fields by the respective scholars to initiate the plans for data collection in the villages of Komi. The fieldwork phase introduced the Komi traditions and culture through different master classes and meetings with people from the local village communities. Every activity ensured cultural sensitivity and cultural sustainability while working with the locals. The place-specific research practices ranged from interviews with local people to artistic interventions and natural science experimentations were reflected throughout the school. The different perceptions of the Komi sociocultural landscape were artistically processed in teams and individually during the school and the following summer break. The outcomes were displayed at the exhibition at the Syktyvkar University gallery and the Komi national library.

The exhibition also operated as a dialogical space, where the exchange and sharing of the knowledge and expertise gained could be negotiated. This, for example, raised the visibility of art and art education as an essential actor in education for sustainable development in the Arctic. For the wider audience, the exhibition offered a better understanding of how the creative work of artists, teachers and researchers can contribute to northern social-cultural and economic settings as well as to international cooperation.

Figure 2: Six phases of place-based LiLa Summer School 2018. Figure: Mari Parpala, 2021.



Figure 3: An important part the summer school was gathering around the table to discuss of the activities of the day.
Photograph: Antti Stöckell, 2018.



Figure 4: Besides the school participants, local people gathered to view the exhibition and discuss the representations of the Komi sociocultural landscapes. Photograph: Antti Stöckell, 2018.

The results of the LiLa activities in Komi were evaluated through research articles (Härkönen & Stöckell, 2019; Jokela, 2019). The best experiences of the international, multidisciplinary, place-specific and art-based pedagogical practices were collated and developed for the following LiLa Summer School which was to be held in Helgeland, Traena Island, in coastal Nord Norway in 2020.

The Second Cycle: New Challenges due to COVID-19

In 2020, LiLa faced a novel situation when COVID-19 prevented any use of the developed place- and community-based fieldwork pedagogy central for the aims of the summer school. The first measure to safeguard these aims was to postpone the school to 2021. It became apparent rather quickly that the situation would not change and that the school would have to be organised online if we wished to organise it at all. This put the aims of the school into scrutiny; in particular, the community aspect had to be reconsidered. There were many worries related to the new situation, like one of the coordinators expressed: 'Even with distances you are able to teach and convey knowledge, but the embodied learning and trading situation where also the senses are highly important will be missing.'

Eventually, the second school took place in spring 2021. This time it was organised by three ASAD partners: the Nord University of Norway, the University of Lapland and the Pitirim Sorokin Syktyvkar State University of Komi Republic of Russia. The students and researchers came from the fields of art education, teacher education including natural sciences, art and craft, music education and fine art and design.

Instead of organising an intensive, two-week school similar to that in Komi, the seminars took place once a month via Zoom. The communality and physical meetings were organised mainly for the country teams but the activities aimed to engage everyone from different countries. More effort was required to establish communality and the sharing



Figure 5: Seven phases of hybrid model LiLa Summer School 2021, Figure: Mari Parpala, 2021.

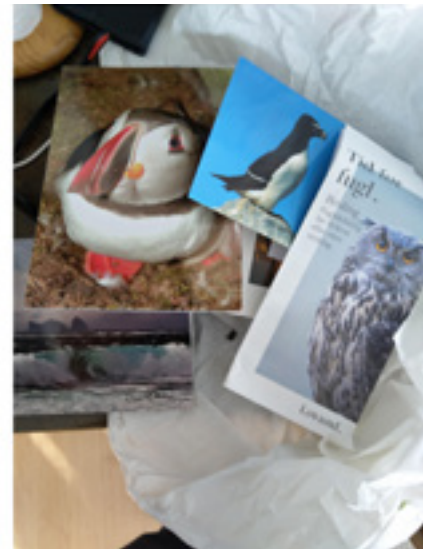
of experiences between the participants online. Worries lurked in the organisers' minds: 'How would the landscape investigation and sharing of experiences take place meaningfully in online settings'? The idea of spending time in the physical landscapes was a main one that was not to be abandoned.

Figure 6: The students from Komi connected the bird-related activity to the process of making organic paper; I started sewing the birds that I spotted, and the Norwegian team sent heartfelt greetings from the coast, where the birds seemed much more exotic than inland birds. Photograph: Victoriya Lihacheva (left) & Elina Härkönen (middle/right), 2021.

Reducing the Distances using *Padlet*, Small Online Exercises and Teatime Meetings

The school started in January with pre-readings, and everyone familiarised themselves with anthropologist Tim Ingold's article *The Temporality of Landscape* (1993). His writings on dwelling in a landscape significantly defined the practices during the school. He called the everyday chores related to landscapes *the taskscape*, and these themes were reflected in almost every assignment, workshop and final art-based production of the school.

The lecture phase centred on getting familiar with the concepts of landscape research and preparing online presentations of the socio-cultural elements of the three locations. The atmosphere was distant at first, and it was easier to concentrate on online presentations and lectures. Small environmental exercises started to break the ice and bond at least the groups in each country.



Small side-tasks were included when the workshop week in March was approaching. The team from Komi launched a postal exchange related to birds living in each country. This was a timely task during the season when birds started to arrive for summer at each location. It allowed the participants to observe not only nature awakening in their neighbourhoods but also the similarities and differences in nature at these locations. Receiving something tactile via land mail from each place when the birds had started to arrive was enchanting. It made the other participants seem more real.

The sociocultural landscapes started to appear during the workshop week. Each day, one team had a workshop related to the seasonal traditions or a story related to the landscape. In addition, ideas for the art-based productions as the final tasks of the school started to take shape with the revealing and sharing of the sociocultural elements in the participants' sometimes commonplace landscapes. These workshops appeared to the authors to engage the participants even more. The following visuals (Figure 7) show glimpses of the tasks:

These meetings, posts on *Padlet* and ongoing communication with all the participants individually led to bonding in the group. The gradual bonding between the participants stirred desires to travel to each other's location after the pandemic.

The school became a part of spring 2021, and the meetings were much anticipated by the participants. After all, the new situation showed that distances can open new dimensions that push us to work, collaborate and participate differently. Efforts were put into the final productions, and the results were presented in a virtual exhibition. The exhibition was held as part of the University of Arctic Congress in Reykjavik, Iceland, in May 2021. Owing to its virtual form, the exhibition could not be physically presented to the local audiences; nevertheless, it reached a wide audience. The exhibition was directly presented to those who discuss the future of the Arctic region and the importance of education and research in it. The possibilities of art education to develop virtual university teaching came to the fore. We hope the exhibition also grabbed the attention of political decision-makers in the region, as the UArctic Congress was part of a larger collaboration. In 2021, Iceland held the chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

Art Works Engaging over Distances

The LiLa school ended with a digital exhibition to which each participant, both tutors and students, made their own art-based contribution. The diverse exhibition built on the *StoryMap* platform and opened at UArctic Congress 2021 in Reykjavik was impres-

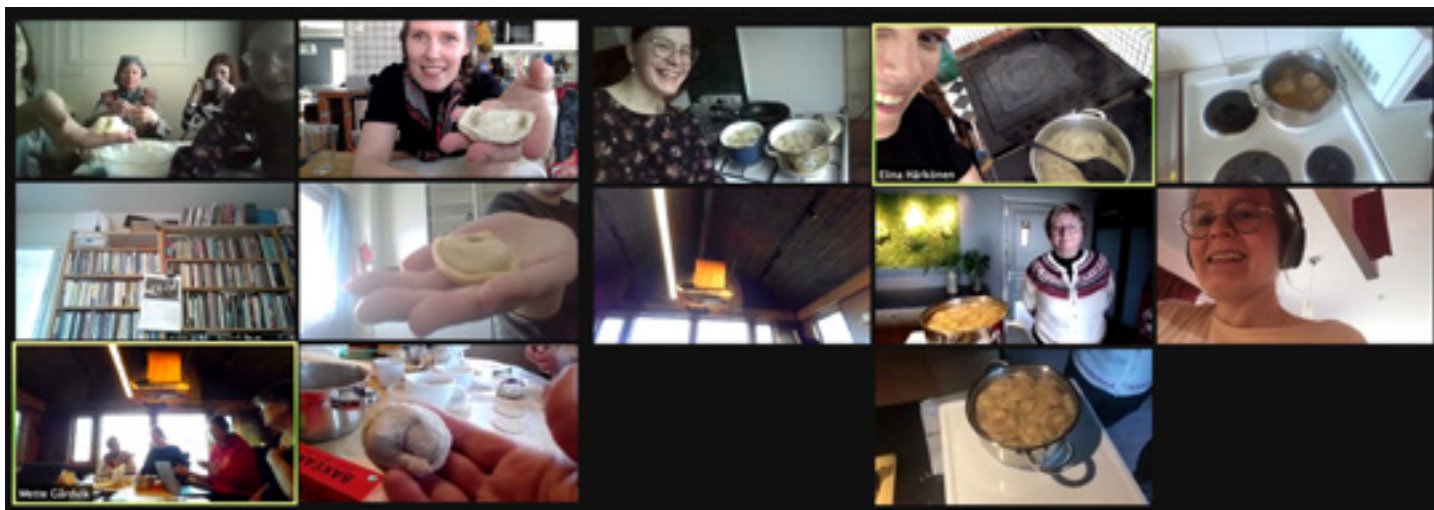


Figure 7: The Komi team walked us through their traditional spring celebration.
Photographs: Screenshots from the Zoom meeting.

Figure 8: Dumpling-making was introduced as part of Komi everyday life; we made dumplings together during a Zoom meeting. Photographs: Screenshots from the Zoom meeting.

LiLa 2021 + 14 = 21d



LiLa 2021 Project Map

Make a padlet of your own LiLa-project and link to this map on your location. On your own Padlet-page you can post pictures and notes on your own project and eventually place the narrative there too. The instructions for creating the padlet page and writing the narrative are pinned on this map in the Arctic Sea .



sive and featured a variety of implementations and content choices (see, for example, the exhibition catalogue, Härkönen et al., 2021). Tim Ingold's (1993) *taskscape* guided the selection of content related to people's relationship with everyday landscapes. Some of the works were realised in the countryside, almost in the wilderness. Central to these works was winter, with different uses of snow and ice. Some *taskscape*s were found in urban environments – from a built environment to grocery stores and imported fruits. One of the key themes was related to post-humanism and the mission to see and understand the landscape through non-human experiences. The landscape was viewed through a Lappish dog's movements using a *GoPro* camera, and eider duck's nesting was secured by making wooden eggs and placing them to mislead predators such as foxes and minks.

All of these different perspectives to the landscape relationship could be the subject of deeper analyses and their productions could be examples of how geographical, cultural and communication 'distances' were bridged. In this article, we take a closer look at two art works that significantly reduced the cross-distant nature of the LiLa school and

Figure 9: The Finnish students uploaded a project map on *Padlet* to collect each participant's final productions and processes at the same place. As the pins on the map show, the school undertook a large number of different projects related to *taskscape*s and dwellings in the landscape. The students will use the platform as data for their master's theses. Map: Google Maps™ mapping service, 2021.



Figure 10: Antti Stöckell examines his relationship with and the meaning of winter in the Arctic landscapes. Details of the video *Living with the Snow in the Landscape*, by Antti Stöckell, 2021.



Figure 11: Maikki Salmivaara examines her everyday city landscape related to its history and how she is dwelling in it every day. Photographic series *Thank You For My Everyday* by Maikki Salmivaara, 2021.

show how LiLa's place-based and participatory methods were transformed into digital activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mette Gårdvik's final production addressed the tradition of Fisherman's mittens in coastal Norway. She engaged participants to knit a pair of mittens by giving instructions and organising voluntary knitting nights via *Zoom*. These meetings created space for not only sharing memories related to knitting traditions in each country but also exchanging life experiences and getting to know each other better on a personal level.

The mittens that were completed during the spring were sent to Mette, and she collated them together into an installation and presented them in video format. Maikki Salmivaara, one of the participating students, reflects on the experiences of Gårdvik's project:

It combines the beauty, the tradition and the contemporary of the Arctic together. We carry them in our hands, affecting our doing in the wintertime which, as you tell us, has been taken into account in making the appropriate mittens for the fishermen. This tactile aspect bridges the virtual distance and makes it possible to transmit and share sensory feelings (Härkönen et al., 2021).

The other project that actively sought to bridge the distances was the collaboration between Lidia Kostareva, Elina Härkönen and Lotta Lundstedt, who continued their artistic collaboration through their shared interest in natural dyes. They experienced each other's dyeing locations via *Zoom* and shared their usual processes over these virtual meetings. Their previous collaboration using *Zoom* meetings had focused on the material sharing



Figure 12: A screenshot of one of the knitting meetings organised by Mette Gårdvik, 2021.



Figure 13: A selection of mittens knitted during the LiLa School 2021. Photograph: Mette Gårdvik, 2021.

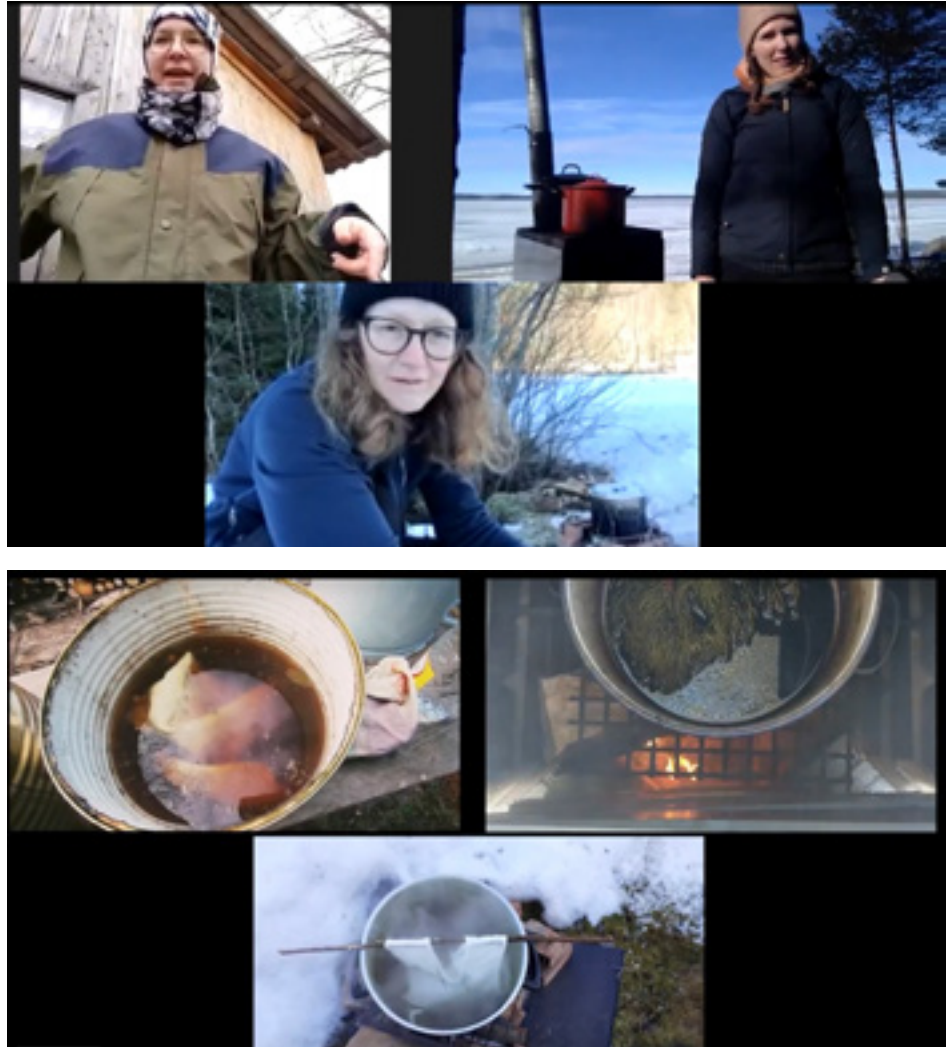


Figure 14: Screenshot of the Zoom meeting from the three dyers' locations, 2021.

Figure 15: The processes were filmed and collaged together into a video narrative showing the natural dyes in three landscapes. Screenshots of the video process by Lundstedt, Härkönen, and Kostareva, 2021.



Figure 16: Lidia's location for natural dyes in Komi. The other locations were in the Finnish Lapland and in Mid Sweden. Photograph: Lidia Kostareva, 2021.

of natural dyes and resulted in a quilt. The second collaboration aimed to see how the materials are actualised in each of the dyers' landscapes in Russia, Finland and Sweden.

Lidia (Härkönen et al., 2021) described the process:

We spent two days off getting to know each other's dyeing process and landscapes. The weather, internet connection and time made the process more difficult. Spring in Komi met the end of winter in Finland and Sweden. We shared a piece of everyday life, our rhythm of life and favourite places.

As a result, we got a video where three places and three processes are combined together. For the participants, the very process of communication and creation of creative work became a more valuable experience than the result itself. Projects like this can be expanded to bring together creative people, dyers and beyond, all over the world'.

Results and Discussion

Reflecting on the LiLa experience, a few remarks related to bridging the distances can be made: first related to geographical and cultural distances, second to the distances between art, science and different disciplines, and third related to how digital collaboration when bridging distances challenges us to think about looking at the concept and essence of a work of art in a new way.

When it became apparent that LiLa could not be implemented in a place-based manner as it was initially developed, the main disappointment was related to not being able to share the landscapes physically or dwell collaboratively in any of the locations together. However, when the planning for hybrid realisation began, new possibilities emerged. One of the tutors reflected: 'I would say the opportunities where in broadening the perception of landscape into every participant's own locations. It was not only the landscape where we would visit but actually an equal opportunity to present each and everyone's attachments to certain places. In this way, LiLa was connected to different eco-cultures in Norway, Russia and Finland and formed a dialogical space for learning with different existences of northern knowledge systems and developing ways for sharing the new understanding in art-based ways.

In the LiLa project, we also designed, tested and reflected on art-based dialogical and pedagogical ways to connect different disciplines, which are often perceived as fragmented knowledge. This was done through art-based expression, culture-sensitive awareness and understanding of the northern landscape. Bridging distances through

interdisciplinary work was manifested in two levels. First, the activities combined the methods of art and different disciplines to study the landscape. Second, the focus was on integrating the pedagogy of visual art, craft, music and science education. The participants from natural sciences, for instance, described the impacts when nature is viewed through cultural and art-based aspects. Karin Stoll (Härkönen et al. 2021, p. 54) reflected in her final production how she became aware of the similarities in the taskscape and the traditions of making homemade shoes in Northern Norway, where she lives, and Southern Germany, where she is originally from. She says: 'Bavarian grass shoe making in Northern Norway is like walking between cultures and being deeply connected to both of my landscapes'.

In LiLa's artworks and art-based realisation as a whole, appeared as collective symbolic and material interaction between human beings and their environment. This intentionally moved away from the traditional way of seeing artistic dimensions only as human interaction between individual artist and perception of art's universality appearing and understood only in human encounters. Tim Ingold's anthropological and phenomenological way of looking at the landscape seems to be a great opening and an inspiration for LiLa's multi-disciplinary and art-based activities. Ingold (2000, p. 155) explored the human as an organism that 'feels' its way through the world that is itself in motion. Thus, Ingold's landscape is an ever-changing 'relationship'. The relationship and the motion are present in all LiLa's art works, including those with post-humanistic aims towards learning and researching with others than human: with snow, forests, dogs and eiders (Ulmer, 2017).

Perhaps the most significant difference between the art works of participants from art education and those from natural sciences was not based on how the art-based process is realised but on how it is presented as art. For natural scientists, the visual essays that were produced alongside the artworks represented an appropriate way for art-based expression. Those from visual arts and music mainly relied on digital video and sound and on editing even when the art works seemed to belong to the category of land art or environmental art. The change in the art forms resonates with the change in the concept of landscape. In his article *The Temporality of the Landscape*, Ingold (1993) noted that in Western art, landscape is traditionally understood as a wide panorama and as an image of pristine, static and epic nature. Ingold denied the separation of humans from the landscape. His concept underscores the impossibility of the perception of the landscape from a distance and emphasises the role of various senses in shaping our understanding of the landscape. We see this in parallel with the current post-humanism trends in nature and landscape focus on contemporary art (Demos, 2016). According to the definitions

of contemporary and sustainable Arctic art (Jokela et al., 2021), the Arctic landscape is still essential, but now it is observed in videos and photographs, offers material for installations and environmental art and takes place in performances. Many contemporary artists from the North and the Arctic transform their northern knowledge and traditions related to landscapes with the help of digital technologies and showcase their work in international art exhibitions. Thus, COVID-19 has guided us in updating the activities and working methods of contemporary art education.

Besides art education, LiLa's hybrid model had an economic dimension. Traveling in the North is difficult and expensive, as the traffic routes in each country are mainly built on a south–north axis, towards the capitals. Transverse travel in the east–west direction is expensive. In this sense, LiLa's hybrid model provided a good starting point for developing ASAD network cooperation and bridging geographical distances in more economical ways.

Conclusion

LiLa is a valuable example of the ASAD network's activities and demonstrates how the network can identify and share contemporary and innovative practices in teaching, learning, research and knowledge exchange in the fields of arts, design and visual culture education, even in difficult situations such as those caused by COVID-19. The members of the network are art and design institutions and art education universities across the circumpolar area; therefore, the experiences gained through LiLa can provide opportunities to combine traditional knowledge with contemporary academic knowledge cultures in other northern academic institutions. Participatory and digital methods implemented in LiLa can support networking, knowledge exchange and the creation of new collaborations in Arctic art and culture education for sustainability. The second LiLa provided opportunities to narrow the geographical and multidisciplinary distances as well as the distances owing to the COVID-19 pandemic between the participating countries.

LiLa shows how the use of art-based methods allow to better obtain and express experience-based information and offers alternative ways to share the gained understanding about the eco-cultures of the northern and Arctic regions. We see that LiLa's impacts also reach a wider society in the Arctic through the exhibition activities we developed. All the exhibitions held during the LiLa project have introduced new research and education approaches to the Arctic society in addition to understanding, representing and

developing the region. The University of Arctic and the ASAD network are beneficial forums for sharing broader knowledge and thus influencing the regional development in the Arctic countries. Simultaneously, these efforts help promote and highlight the profile of the arts education as an essential actor in regional development work.

The development of the joint studies implemented in the LiLa project corresponds to the training organisations' and society's need to create a close and long-term cooperation between experts from different fields and different universities in the northern region. The results of LiLa are important for the initiation of new collaborations; LiLa enables the realisation of summer schools and other joint studies and the continuation of further curriculum planning and cooperation.

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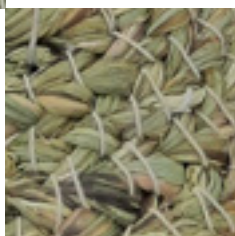


Understanding Landscape through the Interconnection of Different Forms of Knowledge

Three Examples from Living in the Landscape 2021

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The *Arctic sustainable Arts and Design* (ASAD) network has developed and initiated international and interdisciplinary “Spring/Summer Schools,” Living in the Landscape (LiLa), where the goal is to bring together masters and PhD students from different disciplines to develop culturally sensitive and sustainable research on the sociocultural dimension of the Arctic and sub-Arctic landscape. The Faculty of Teacher Education, Art and Culture Studies at Nord University was a partner institution in LiLa 2021. The students and researchers who participated in LiLa 2021 came from institutions in Finland, Russia and Norway that are responsible for art education, art and design education and for teacher education, including science, arts and crafts and music.

The development of a multidisciplinary educational and scientific collaboration through the LiLa project was designed to meet the emerging challenges related to environment, population and economic life in the Arctic and subarctic region through multidisciplinary and artistic approaches (Jokela & Härkönen, 2021). The practices aimed to create encounters and dialogue between traditional forms of culture and contemporary practices and discover how these could be presented through art (Härkönen & Stöckell, 2019).

Outcomes of the school consisted of several parts: a physical product that was part of a digital exhibition (Härkönen et al., 2021 and digital exhibition <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/345326b826054361a50905c6d92a6b56>) and starting point for a visual essay. The essay (published in Härkönen et al., 2021) forms an essential part of the holistic art-based expression, where process and associated reflection emerge.

In this chapter, we will reflect on three examples which describe the holistic understanding of landscape through an interconnection between both natural science knowledge and cultural/art-based aspects. In this way, we will shed light on how the synthesis of these different forms of knowledge contribute to our understanding of landscapes and materials, and why this understanding is essential to illuminate how we can meet today’s ecological challenges from an eco-cultural sustainability perspective.

Theoretical Grounding

Landscape

Art and culture are man-made, and from that point of view we are rooted in a purely human-centric worldview. If we perceive the landscape as a culture and a carrier of culture in relation to traditions and resources for materials, we are moving in an anthropocentric paradigm. In an eco-centric paradigm, the landscape is understood as nature or as an ecosystem, and is about “how nature works” which, according to Cohen (1989) in Sauv  , 1996, “allows us to interact with it in an appropriate manner, so that nature is appreciated, respected and preserved”. In the natural sciences, humans are understood as a species that is an integral part of nature and landscape, living in interaction with and in a mutual dependence with both biotic and abiotic components.

To understand the landscape as a whole, we must move away from a basic worldview that puts man exclusively at the centre, in favour of a view of man as an integral part of the world on an equal footing with animals, plants, objects and other life forms (Illeris, 2017). The landscape is an interconnection between cultural and ecological aspects where different knowledge shapes our experience. In the landscape, nature and culture, the scientific and the cultural meet and Ingold (2020a, p.15) states:

it should now be clear why natural science and cultural anthropology converge on a common vertex. The anthropological claim of perceptual relativism – that people from different cultural backgrounds perceive reality in different ways since they process the same data of experience in terms of alternative frameworks of belief or representational schemata – does not undermine but actually reinforce the claim of natural science to deliver an authoritative account of how nature really works.

Both culture and nature are dynamic and constantly changing. According to Ingold (1993), it is also more productive to look at the landscape as temporary and as a process that is constantly transformed by the activities performed by the organisms, dwellers, that are present at all times. This combines the scientific and the artistic approach to the landscape in a more holistic way and on non-humanistic premises. This concept, that Ingold calls a *Taskscape* is used in LiLa.

Material

In the culturally man-made world, materials appear as a resource we humans can use for various purposes. Also for arts and crafts, materials appear as primary resources with

certain characteristic properties and qualities. Most materials used in creative processes in arts and crafts come from a natural resource - a raw material (Näumann et al., 2020). In our context, the value of the materials is determined on the basis of what use it has for an artist or craftsman, ie. on human terms. Knowledge of the materials' properties and qualities are important when the aesthetic products are made. As an environmental sculptor, Andy Goldsworthy stated that "We need to shake hands with the material to fully understand it" (Goldsworthy, 2004) . This reflects his method to invade a setting and use his perceptions of nature in art-making, bringing natural materials like twigs, stones, leaves and water into conversation with natural forces like sunlight, wind, tide, and time.

As a reaction to anthropocentrism, eco-philosophers argue that we have direct responsibilities to natural objects such as animals, plants and landscape (Jakobsen, 2017).

In a post-humanist and new-materialist paradigm, natural science appears as eco-centric and looks at the intrinsic value of materials. Materials and organisms, living and non-living, are explored in relation to their chemical composition, structure, development and the interaction between materials/organisms in different natural cycles. In living organisms, physiological processes, behaviour and the interactions they have with each other are also explored: Is the relationship neutral, symbiotic or parasitic? This also includes man as an organism in line with many other materials and organisms.

In Arctic and sub-Arctic regions, the link between nature and culture is strong. This relationship can be described with the term 'eco-culture'. Knowledge based on eco-culture includes both traditional knowledge, ecological knowledge, indigenous knowledge, tacit knowledge and local knowledge. As the eco-philosopher Arne Næss puts it, an increased understanding of us humans as a way of life in line with others will strengthen our presence in the world:

The greater understanding we have of our coexistence with other beings, the greater care we will show. Thus, the way is also open for joy over others' well-being and grief over their death and depravity: We seek our own best, but by self-expansion we thus also seek for others. (Næss, 1991, p. 278)

Eco-Cultural Sustainability

Cultural sustainability deals with people's relationships to each other and their attitudes towards the environment (Härkönen et al., 2018; Stoltenberg, 2020/2010; Soini & Dessein, 2016). What has been created must be accounted for, and from a cultural sustainability

perspective it is important that we create a relationship also with the consumer culture. In this process, people can be innovative and influence the future with forward-looking ideas and values. The cultural sustainability perspective focuses on the local community's ability to continuously adapt to changes over time, at the same time as the culture lives on by acknowledging the culture's perspective, memories and ways of expression.

It is central to maintain and reflect on cultural traditions and practices as consumption patterns and environmental practices. In this discourse, one tries to find an answer to the question of whether our current cultures will be able to exist in the future (Soini & Birkeland, 2014). The same applies to nature and ecosystems and therefore Pedersen (2021) suggest a redefinition of "the social" in social sustainability where the inclusion of human-animal relations are necessary. Cultural sustainability is site-specific, i.e., each locality must evaluate its needs, rights and responsibilities in order to live more sustainable lives (Härkönen et al., 2018). The place helps in building identity, and can lead them to feel a stronger sense of belonging and motivation to take care of the place by giving ownership to issues in their own community (Sørmo et al., 2019). Therefore, we need to experience the world in reality (Jokela & Coutts, 2018). Eco-culture focuses on the experience of culture, local environment and interactions between nature and people both before and now and can contribute to people becoming happy in both nature and culture.

Methods

In this article we extracted emerging themes from our three narratives, to shed light on the interconnection between natural science knowledge and cultural/art-based aspects to better understand the materials and landscape. Narratives allow us to express and comprehend individuals, cultures, historical periods and societies in the round (Richardson, 1997). The visual essays (published in Härkönen et al., 2021) appear as narratives and form an essential part of the holistic Art-Based Expression (ABE) where, through narrative inquiry, process and associated reflection emerge (Leavy, 2015).

Results: Three Art-Based Expressions (ABE) in Dialogue with Landscape.

ABE highlights process and the associated artistic product. The emerging themes are how we understand the landscape, how we explored three different organisms/natural materials, and how the ABEs are eco-cultural anchored.

ABE 1. The Fishermen's Mittens of Helgeland, Mette Gårdvik (2021)

This ABE concerns a community art project (Austin, 2008) that invited the participants of LiLa 2021, to cross borders by the art of knitting a pair of Fishermen's Mittens made from wool. With its special properties, wool is a unique natural material that is insulating and warm even when it's wet. Wool from the Old Norwegian Short Tail Landrace sheep breed has good insulating properties and was considered the best wool for the mittens. It consists of soft bottom wool and long, straight coat hair. The long, smooth cover hairs are water-repellent and the garment is strong at the same time as it retains heat. The participants were given an opportunity to wander from the coast of Helgeland, Northern Norway, and into the history of the fishermen's struggling life through their own contemporary experiences of knitting, felting and making a pair of mittens.

As dwellers (Ingold, 1993) in the arctic landscape, we are all connected through tradition and our memories can relate to cold hands and a warming pair of mittens. My



Figure 1: Image 1, 2, 3, series. Fishermen's mittens were once one of the most important part of the work attire of fishermen along the Norwegian coast. When fishing in Lofoten, it was common practice to have a portrait of either your crew or yourself. The painted photography backdrops were a standard feature of early photography studios (1860 – 1920). All the fishermen are wearing the special home-made mittens. Photographs: Digital Museum.



Figure 2: Image 1, 2, 3 series. Wool from Old Norwegian Short Tail Landrace sheep is traditional used in making Fishermen's Mittens. Reconstruction of old mittens with embroidered initials (in Helgeland Museum). Old Fishermen's Mittens hanging in a boat-house on the Lovund island. Photographs 1, 2 & 3: Mette Gårdvik.

Figure 3: A selection of mittens knitted during the LiLa School 2021. Photograph: Mette Gårdvik.

landscape concerns the wellbeing, enjoyment and ownership of a good pair of knitted woollen mittens, and especially the process of making them. The nature, the materials, the technique and the tools, and the simplicity of making a functional object of only some yarn and knitting needles, creates a holistic approach to my own private *taskscape* (Ingold, 1993).

It combines the beauty, the tradition and the contemporary of the Arctic together. We carry them in our hands, affecting our doing in the wintertime which, as you tell us, has been taken into account in making the appropriate mittens for the fishermen. (participant).

ABE 2. Grass Shoes – A Walk in Landscapes, Karin Stoll (2021)

This art-based expression, both the product and visual essay, highlights the cultural sense of sustainability, where the biological diversity of the landscapes represents natural materials that has inherent and traded knowledge.

Excerpts from the visual essay:

As a four-year-old girl living in Bavaria, Southern Germany, I often wore my grandmother's slippers made of grass. I loved the shoes and the smell that reminded me of summer. Later, I realised that these were shoes people could make themselves using free materials from nature.

The tradition of using natural materials such as bark or grass to make daily life utensils and equipment is no longer visible in modern societies in Southern Germany, and much crafting knowledge related to this is gone. As a biologist, I have gradually become more aware of the importance of taking care of materials and older, inherited knowledge as a part of the landscape around us. In my movement between cultures from Southern Germany to Northern Norway, I became aware of how valuable knowledge about using natural materials is. From a cultural sustainability perspective, cultural heritage is one of its main building blocks in developing cultural identity (Friedman, 1994).

In addition to my childhood memories, I interpreted and decoded pictures of the shoes and watched YouTube videos of the making process (Bayerisches Fernesehen, 2017; Hola, n.d.). For wrapping the grass braid to form the shoes, you need a pair of *shoe lats*. *Shoe lats* were a common part of the households in Helgeland since making "Svart-lugger", a homemade winter shoe, was a necessity for members of the family.



Figure 4: Bavarian Grass Shoes in the Landscape of Helgeland, Northern Norway. Photograph: Karin Stoll.



Figure 5: Image series 1, 2. Shoes of the iceman “Ötzi”, His shoes consisted of a shell and sole of bear and deer skin, a skeleton of linden bark and dried grass and sedges that were used as insulation (Image 1) (O’Sullivan et al., 2016), something we also know from traditional Sami shoes, called Skulls. Photograph 1: © Südtiroler Archäologiemuseum. Traditional Sami shoes, Skulls. Photograph 2: Sara Lien.

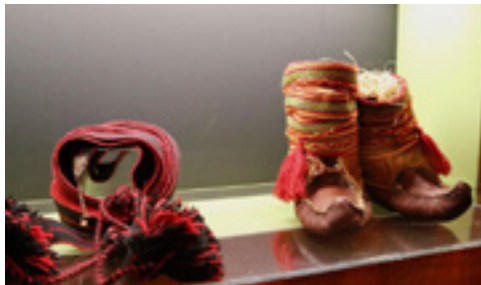


Figure 6: Image series.
The Quaking Sedge *Carex
brizoides* was harvested
for making mattresses,
furniture and shoes in
Bavaria, South Germany
in the 19th century.
Photographs:
Kreisbildarchiv
Lkr. Augsburg.





Figure 7: Image series 1, 2, 3. *Carex brizoides*, the quaking sedge is native to Central and Southern Europe. The stem is triangular and thin and can grow up to 40-100 cm long. Photograph 1: J. G. Sturm, Painter: Jacob Sturm. *Carex brizoides* which was traditionally used to make shoes and grows in the forest in South Germany does not exist in Northern Norway, and I had to find an alternative material for making the grass shoes. The Sami people use *Carex rostrata*, the bottle sedge, for insulation in shoes which is native to the Holarctic. Photograph 2: Nordens flora. Cross section of a sedge. Photograph 3: Stefan Lefnaer.

The combination of my natural science knowledge about anatomic and physiological properties of sedges and the practical experiences from working with this material/organism was useful for understanding why sedges are (still) used in shoe making. At a cellular level, the air-filled pockets in the stem tissue will contribute to both isolation and regulation of moisture (Figure 7). Compared with real grass, the sedge stems have no nodes and are smooth and flexible. Therefore, sedges will not break in the braiding process and remain strong enough to make shoes. According to Ingold (1993), my *taskscape* gained experience with, and new knowledge about, my co-dweller, the arctic sedge species *Carex rostrata*, as both an organism and a material to make traditional Bavarian grass shoes. I was not aware about how important these shoes are for my own identity.



Figure 8: Image series showing the making process. The whole process of making shoes from grass is a multi-sensory experience: the dried sedge has a light gray-green colour, and at the same time it is smooth and strong and smells fresh, with a hint of lemon. When working with it, it is rustling and feeling like hay. Photographs: Karin Stoll.

The meditative way of working and the smell of the rush awoke memories of the warm summer days when I harvested the rush and of my grandmother and her grass shoes. Bavarian grass shoe making in Northern Norway is like walking between cultures and being deeply connected to both of my landscapes.

ABE 3. The Precious Eggs of the Eider Duck, Wenche Sørmo (2021)

This essay presents the process and reflections on making wooden eggs to help the vulnerable eider duck, which is an important species for the local cultural heritage in Helgeland.

Excerpts from the essay:

I was born and raised on a slightly remote and rural farm which is located at the outlet of a small fjord, called Straumen (the Stream). I was exposed at a young age to

all kinds of nature and landscapes in my local area and being outside was a natural part of everyday life.

Ingold (1993) describes landscape as opposed to *taskscape* and explains what he puts in the term “dwellers”. Being “dwellers” includes all living organisms in the landscape and their activities that contribute to “*taskscape*”, with its sounds, smells, movements and tracks, that can be perceived and which are important as part of the whole of the landscape.

The eider duck is considered a domestic animal along the coast of Helgeland in Northern Norway and for centuries people have guarded nesting eider ducks in order to harvest the down to make duvets and collect eggs to eat. The camouflage coloured female lays 5-6 eggs over a period of one week, before she begins to incubate the eggs



Figure 9: The old and worn out wooden egg, made by my father 25 years ago. Photograph: Wenche Sørmo.



Figure 10: Image series 1, 2. The eider duck female incubating her eggs in the perfect nesting place under my saw mill. Photograph 1: Wenche Sørmo. The laborious work of down cleansing. Photograph 2: Wenche Sørmo.

(Figures 2 and 3). When my grandparents bought the farm in 1947, about 160 pairs of eider ducks nested there. They guarded the birds by replacing the first egg with an artificial wooden egg. Since I took over the farm more than 20 years ago, I have been worried about why fewer birds are nesting here. The reason for the decline is said to be a more active and disruptive *taskscape* from the point of view of eider ducks, especially during the vulnerable breeding period (Hanssen & Erikstad, 2012).

The down was harvested after the eider duck had left the nest with the young ducks after 23-25 days of incubation. The female farmers collaborated on cleaning the down after each season (Figure 10, series 2). This was dusty and laborious work, but also a social activity to which they looked forward (Elstad, 2004; Klausen, 2013). The down from 60-70 eider duck nests was needed to make a single duvet, but the result of the hard work was the lightest and warmest down duvets for your own use or to sell. The eider down has unique properties like extraordinary cohesion, elasticity, resilience, “breathability” and temperature-regulating effect that are not found in many other materials (Carlsen, 2013).

The idea for the artwork and making of eider duck eggs emerged when I discovered that I only had one old and worn out wooden eider-duck egg left (Figure 9). As a co-dweller with nesting eider ducks, I feel responsible for helping the birds to succeed in the breeding season. I made copies of eider duck eggs from wood (1: 1 size) and painted them with an environmentally friendly paint. The eggs have a string attached to them with a long nail at the other end, so that the nail can be inserted deep into the nest after I have removed the birds’ first egg.



Figure 11: I had the lathe in my workshop at the farm where I also found the piece of wood. I asked my father to help me make some new eggs. My father shows me how to use the lathe to make the new wooden eggs. Photograph: Wenche Sørmo.



Figure 12: Image series 1, 2. The wooden eggs in an eider-ducks nest. Photograph 1: Wenche Sørmo. Eider ducks nest with authentic eggs. Photograph 2: Thomas Holm Carlsen, Nibio. <https://www.nibio.no/nyheter/rfuglevokterne-er-naturens-vaktmestere>.

The process of making new wooden eggs demonstrates the necessity of repeating the *taskscape*s of different generations living in the same landscape at different times (Figures 9, 11, 12). The eider ducks are the same and have the same needs as they did 74 years ago when my family moved to this coastal farm in Helgeland. People also have the same basic needs, but have changed their ways of living by making life more easy and comfortable for themselves, at the expense of other species. It feels somehow good to help a fellow dweller, but I worry about the future for sea birds.

I harvest a valuable natural product that, in the long run, can be used in a locally produced down duvet which can be passed on to the next generation. With my knowledge about the species and my *taskscape* tradition of caring for the eider ducks, together with the trade skills in crafting wooden eggs, I can contribute to pass on the local cultural heritage. My contribution as a dweller will hopefully help maintain the *taskscape* that has been present on my farm for centuries.

Discussion

The Eco-culture of Landscape

During LiLa (2021), we were inspired by Ingold's (1993) article about the temporality of the landscape, working in our own landscapes that have changed with the concept of the *taskscape*. Tim Ingold's (1993, 2020a) understanding of *taskscape*, dwelling/co-dwelling provided guidelines for participants' choice of content related to their relationship to their own daily landscape. We see variation in the use of art forms, but common is the reflection on the landscape, its temporality, its significance as a bearer of knowledge and an understanding of identity and belonging. *Taskscapes* were culturally rooted in coastal culture and linked to different cultures and craft traditions. A post-humanist discourse that was expressed in all the artistic expressions was about how the landscape could be understood through non-human experiences.

From Gårdvik's ABE1 we realise that there are no landscapes without organisms and no organisms without landscapes and we humans are only a small part of this whole. The cultural landscape has an ecological, traditional and cultural significance that is threatened because the material wool has become less valued in the modern and more industrialised world.

In ABE2, Stoll lifts the crafting tradition of grass shoe making and its significance for forging close ties between nature, different cultures and one's own identity in different landscapes.

Sørmø views the eggs and the eider as a biologist in ABE3, and equates humans and the eider as dwellers in a common cultural landscape, where both have utility value for each other in a form of symbiosis. This reflects an eco-centric view of the landscape where the focus on “how nature works” and the interaction between humans and nature is prominent (Cohen (1989) in Sauvé, 1996). As a farmer, she is aware of her own role as manager of both the landscape and an important tradition in relation to the eider on the farm where she grew up. The culture of “taking care of” eider ducks is therefore part of her being in the world.

However, the interconnection between ecological and cultural aspect is also intensely and especially visible in our 3 examples. An interdisciplinary view of both organisms and material and how these characterise our connection to landscape were important messages in the art-based expressions, to overcome the divisions between culture and nature as well as human and non-human. In this way, rooted in a post-humanistic and new-materialistic way of exploring, learning and thinking (Barad, 2003; Friedmann, 1994; Ingold, 1993), we show how we constructed knowledge through making and inspired discussions and cooperation across generations in our different landscapes. The experience of the landscape as a *taskscape* where the dwellers live their lives and perform their tasks can be linked to Ingold’s (2020a) description of the landscape as an inter-connection between cultural and ecological aspects where scientific and cultural forms of knowledge. We gained a deeper insight into eco-culture of the subarctic landscape.

Materials and Eco-cultural Sustainability

The focus on knowledge of the natural materials, to understand how and why they can be used to strengthen our presence, is visible in all of the ABE’s. The non-anthropocentric philosopher Abram (1997), said that “ We must expand our values and our moral considerations to include the non-human world” (in Jakobsen, 2016). The materials were used with respect and caution, something also the eco-philosopher Arne Næss, (1991) was concerned with, and they can be seen as natural materials or organisms, but also as cultural material or culture carriers:

ABE 1: Wool from sheep to make the traditional Fishermen’s Mittens that will keep us warm under changing weather conditions during fisheries.

ABE 2: Sedges of the same species as those used inside Sami shoes were harvested, processed and braided. Shoes, based on traditions from Bayern in Germany, were made.

ABE 3: Wood from local birch were turned on a lathe and made into artificial eider-duck eggs to sustain a herding tradition caring for the duck when her eggs are vulnerable to predators. The tradition is from Helgeland, Northern Norway, in order to get valuable eider down.

All materials used in the production of the art-based expressions were sourced from the local environment from Norwegian sheep, wetlands and birch forests respectively, and were sustainable in the sense that they were renewable and that they can break down and re-enter an ecological cycle when they are worn out. The scientific perspective was explored to gain understanding of both organisms that contributed to the material and the properties of the material themselves. Through this process, we got to know how and why it has been used to help us adapt to living in the northern regions and become a part of our cultural heritage.

The sustainable approach and understanding of material is especially evident in excerpts from Stolls visual essay, about the grass shoes in ABE2, and in Gårdvik's visual essay in ABE1, which deals with mittens made from wool. Both discuss the importance of the knowledge of the materials, but also the importance of the craft traditions in a cultural and northern perspective and, importantly, also in a cultural landscape perspective. This is an example of the cultural perspective of sustainability that deals with identity, culture, housing, traditions, wellbeing and also a conservation of the cultural environment and local cultural traditions (Härkönen et al., 2018; Stoltenberg, 2020/2010; Soini & Dessein, 2016).

Goldsworthy (2004) states that “you need to shake hands with the material to fully understand it”, and our interpretation is that it is important to include the sensual perception of both material and the nature in your artistic work. However, in our ABEs, natural science knowledge was also an important part of our understanding of the material. This was something Stoll experienced working with different sedges making her Nordic version of southern German grass shoes in ABE2. She had to take a deep dive into both Nordic and Southern German traditions and cultural history, and the synthesis of this knowledge was important to be able to understand and use sedge as a material correctly. Different sedges have intuitively been used in different cultures. As a biologist, she knew where they grew in the Nordic landscape and that they were used due to their insulating properties. In order to understand why this plant has insulating properties, it is necessary to have scientific knowledge about the plant's physiology and about its habitat in the humid and marshy landscapes. In ABE 2, it was clear that a sensual approach to the material was not sufficient to fully understand the plant's properties, but that both a sci-

entific and traditional Northerner knowledge also had significance. In this context, both the scientific and traditional knowledge was absolutely central.

In addition to knowledge of the material wool with its insulating properties, even in the wet state, Gårdvik (APE1) goes into the role the Fisherman's Mitten has, both in a traditional and historical context, as part of her genuine interest. Wool as a material is lifted as being important for survival in our Arctic and sub-Arctic habitats. The eco-cultural perspective emerges strongly in this project and is made visible in the meeting between wool, sheep and "coastal heath," a type of cultural landscape that we find on the coast of Helgeland in Northern Norway. Wool was a valuable material, and the knowledge of how wool could be used was central in relation to survival, traffic and trade. As a result of the sheep grazing, the landscape form "coastal heath" is a man-made ecosystem that is also of great importance for the development of many different organisms and for our well-being and belonging.

Sørmo does not go into the eider down as an insulating material or in the material birch as a starting point for the artificial eider eggs in ABE3, but has placed most emphasis on the relationship with the eider and its challenges, which was the background for the production of the artificial wooden eggs. The use of wooden eggs was an important part of the tradition in egg and down production on the Helgeland coast, and the knowledge of which materials and tools were suitable for making artificial eggs was transferred from father to daughter. The eider ducks are highlighted as co-dwellers and their place in both the natural landscape (in the ecosystem), but also in the culture-based landscape. The traded and tacit knowledge is passed on from father to daughter to maintain the tradition of caring for the eider. This is an example of the transfer of Northern Knowledge (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020a; 2020b; Jokela et al., 2021), which helps to strengthen the belonging to the landscape. Although the end product in this context appears as an artistic expression, it is clear that the scientific knowledge about the behaviour of the eider ducks is important. Knowledge of egg colour as a physiological adaptation to the place, knowledge of predators and the ecological interaction between organisms in the landscape must be in place in order to take care of the eider ducks so that they succeed in reproduction. It becomes clear that the eider ducks are of great importance to the maker of the project, because she has grown up in this culture and with this tradition as part of her understanding of the landscape.

ABE 1-3 reflect a new-materialist way of thinking and show how one can construct knowledge through making, where natural materials are examined in a more culturally sustainable perspective and represent the biological diversity in the landscape. In this

perspective, the natural materials are lifted, which intrinsically have inherent properties that will be useful to pass on to future generations in the form of traded knowledge. At an overall level, the ABE's appear as a deeper reflection on the movement between man's place in nature and nature's significance for culture and tradition and is rooted in a post-humanist paradigm (Illeris, 2017). The significance of this is culturally constructed (Ingold, 2020a, p. 15), with a focus on eco-cultural sustainability (Härkönen et al., 2018; Stoltenberg, 2020/2010; Soini & Dessein, 2016).

Artistic ways of expression can help to raise issues related to sustainability in the Arctic, both of a cultural or ecological nature (Jokela & Härkönen, 2021). In this way an artistic expression about these issues reaches a different and wider audience than a scientific article. The expression can have a greater role as a carrier of culture and contribute to the spectator becoming aware of the challenge and wanting to be part of the solution. In light of this, it may be interesting to compare how people with different professional backgrounds understand landscape, *taskscape* and dwellers (Ingold, 2020a). They are important contributions since they describe the impacts when nature is viewed through cultural and art-based aspects (Jokela & Härkönen, 2021).

Conclusion

Cultural heritage and traditional handicraft were explored through sharing and using existing knowledge, and by passing it down in our present. All projects were carried out in the Nordic Arctic landscape, where the interplay between cultural and ecological aspects is closely linked. The concept of Northern knowledge (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020a; 2020b; Jokela et al., 2021) was expressed in the projects in the sense that knowledge of landscape, material and eco-culture is required in order to have a comfortable life as a northern dweller. The sensory situated understanding and knowledge communication through organisms, materials and cultures clearly emerges in images and text, something that Ingold (2020b) emphasised as a prerequisite within the context of a direct perceptual engagement with our environment. The ABEs show how important it is to have a holistic approach to knowledge, especially as related to sustainable developmental issues, which in themselves are very complex. Artistic expression is thus important for highlighting the major issues that require approaches from many perspectives in order to be understood more holistically. Compounding of the dichotomies between humanity and nature (Ingold, 2020b) is crucial to focus on the major sustainability challenges in our Arctic and subarctic regions.

In LiLa, the focus was on eco-culture as an interdisciplinary foundation part with participants from various disciplines. The different professional backgrounds were clear in the ABEs and constituted a synthesis of the art and science, culture and environmental perspectives. This enriched the view of the Arctic landscape and eliminated the distance between the subjects. Scientific knowledge of species and organisms proved to be important in order to understand a material, a culture or a tradition in its entirety. In this way, the natural sciences, with their post-humanist roots, contributed to the understanding of new-materialist thinking within the arts.

Aknowledgements

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This handbook provides practical guidance and inspiring models for designing and implementing collaborative projects in northern contexts, introducing the framework of New Genre Arctic Art Education and the Art-Based Action Research methodology.

Readers of this book are invited to participate in the creative and often transformative process of making art with Land and communities in ways that are socially, culturally, and environmentally responsive. The book provides step-by-step guidelines for project planning—from setting intentions and goals to choosing methods and evaluating outcomes—developed and tested at the University of Lapland and the Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design network.

Drawing on years of teaching, research, and artistic practice through the Living in the Landscape summer school, this handbook highlights examples of how students and scholars from across the Arctic have learned, created, and shared artistic creation. It demonstrates how art can become a meeting place: for collaboration between disciplines, for dialogue between people and the Land, and for imagining sustainable Arctic futures.

Whether you are an artist, educator, researcher or representative of a local community, this book equips you with tools to engage respectfully with Arctic Land and communities through art and art education.

