



Introduction to the *Living with Land and People* Handbook

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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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