POSSIBLE FUTURES

# Relate North

**Edited by Glen Coutts & Timo Jokela**

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# Preface

**Glen Coutts and Timo Jokela**

One needs imagination to confront a revolution.
(Toffler, 1970, p.186).

P ublished in 1970, Alvin Toffler's influential book *Future Shock* argued that the world was (is) undergoing enormous social, technological and structural change and that the *pace* of that change is accelerating. The pace of change, he wrote, overwhelms people. Toffler argued that we were (are) experiencing a revolution, moving from an industrial society to a super-industrial society and the rate at which change is taking place today has not eased up. If anything, it has increased. We might add geopolitical, environmental and climate change into the mix. New creative industries and small-scale local services are becoming much more pivotal to economies and society. A post-industrial revolution indeed. How might creatives - artists, designers, educators and researchers respond to this phenomenal rate of change, this revolution? What might our possible futures look like?

The book you are now reading is the tenth in the *Relate North* series and the fifth to be published by the International Society for Education through Art (InSEA). The series sets out to chronicle, document and critically analyse art, design, craft and education in the North, the Arctic and near Arctic countries. In a book with such a speculative title, *Possible Futures*, readers might expect to find a diverse collection of chapters. We hope that readers will not be disappointed and will view the expansive nature of the content as a strength and celebration of the vibrant state of contemporary art, design, craft and arts education in the Arctic and circumpolar north.

The two words that make up the theme of this book are individually thought-provoking and invite creative speculation; Possible and Futures. If we take each word in turn, they surely appeal to artists, designers and all those concerned with creative intervention on a range of levels. If one talks about the 'possible' usually one means things that are doable and feasible - something eminently practical and within the realms of

possibility. The attainable, the achievable or realisable. Some task, project or endeavour that is within reach and manageable. The word encourages speculation, for example, could there be another way to look at a problem or situation? The word 'futures', also invites speculation about what might lie ahead in times to come, beyond the 'here and now'. When we put the two words together in our call for this book, we invited artists, researchers, designers, makers, education specialists and craftspeople to ponder the future in relation to their own specialist expertise.

From 2019 to 2021, UNESCO carried out an extensive worldwide consultation on what education might look like in 2050. Entitled *Futures of Education* the exercise invited a wide range of stakeholders to speculate on what education should look like in 2050. Earlier, the same scientific, cultural and educational organisation published its *17 Sustainable Development Goals* (2015), all of which focused on the big issues facing the world, for example, climate change, hunger, poverty, health well-being and gender equality. The right to quality education is included but there is no overt mention of art, design, culture or creativity. Perhaps these are seen as means by which to address some of the big problems. We hope so. In 2023, UNESCO published *A New Social Contract for Education*. this series of short 'think pieces' includes future thinking on a range of themes including 'Reorienting Educational Purpose' and 'Transforming the Future'. Thought-provoking themes for those engaged in art, research and education and also those concerned with design thinking and the potential benefits of each to wider society.

For this book and as part of the *Relate North* series, we wanted authors to think about possible futures in the context of their own research and praxis and the emergent need for new paradigms in contemporary art, design, innovation and creative enquiry. Our aim was to investigate ways in which the visual arts might help to build new models for sustainable futures using art-based methods and design thinking. During 27-28 January 2023, the *Relate North: Possible Futures* symposium and exhibition took place hosted by the University of the Arctic's *Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design* thematic network (ASAD, 2023), Yukon University (Yukon School of Visual Arts), and the University of Lapland. The theme of the symposium *Possible Futures* was an expansion on one of the core themes of the *Arctic Arts Summit* (2022) held in Whitehorse, Yukon, in June 2022. At the Summit, one of the themes was *Possible Futures:* New Directions, Youth Voices, Imaginings. Arctic communities are at the forefront of imagining alternative futures in a rapidly changing present. At the end of the *Relate North 2023* symposium, a general call was made for contributions on the same theme.

We were overwhelmed by the response to our call and received more proposals than it was possible to include and unfortunately, we had to decline many otherwise excellent proposals. Following the call, the InSEA Publications *Academic Board* reviewed the proposals and made a selection to invite full drafts. The full drafts were then subjected to double-blind peer review and the content of this book is the result of that process. Speculating on possible futures is timely in these turbulent times when we consider the social, political and environmental issues that we all face. For example, climate change and associated environmental issues are key challenges in the Arctic, Circumpolar North and the 'near' Arctic. *Relate North* events (symposia and exhibitions) are somewhat unique in that a curated exhibition takes place alongside the academic gathering and therefore has equal status. Many participants see their practice as a designer or artist as inextricably linked to the investigation, research and writing that they do. The breadth and depth of the presentations and exhibition is always impressive. Art, design, craft and science come together to explore new ground and promote knowledge exchange.

In our disciplines and in these times, we need to work together with openness and clarity of purpose. International sharing of output and methods helps us ensure that our work stands up to scrutiny from our peers and experts in other fields. It is important to strive to maintain our high standards and seek new ways to solve old problems in addition to some new ones. We have previously speculated on how art and design methods might help tackle some social, cultural and environmental challenges facing the North and Arctic (Jokela & Coutts, 2018). The *Relate North* books continue that spirit of curiosity, innovation and contemporary artistic enquiry.

In the opening chapter, the Canadian artist and researcher, Ruth Beer investigates the challenges that emerging artists from remote communities face as they pursue formal post-secondary education at urban universities. The Canadian North is home to a diverse, rapidly growing arts community. Coming from remote areas, artists face challenges in pursuing their education and developing creative practice. As Beer observes, some choose to stay in their communities with access to traditional methods and approaches, but many opt to move and study in Canada's more southern regions. This small-scale qualitative study focuses on the experiences, aspirations and expectations of a sample of such students.

The second chapter is also from a Canadian author. Shannon Leddy's essay centres on the development and implementation of a graduate course entitled *Indigenous Visual Expression as Pedagogy.* A course that explores the pedagogical implications of Indigenous art-making and visual expression. Leddy provides a fascinating insight into the

philosophy underpinning the course. A key aim of the course is to 'develop decolonial literacies that will support cultural competency, inclusivity, and equity in art education classrooms'. The skills and knowledge passed down through generations of Indigenous communities have allowed people not only to survive but to thrive in the north. What can we, must we, learn from Indigenous visual expression?

The third chapter by Finnish author Aki Lintumäki, is about the potential of arts-based actions to empower and develop the confidence of young people in the north. Lintumäki makes a strong case for developing an arts-based model, inviting young people to express their thoughts and feelings through video artwork. Using the techniques and methods of video production the author encourages the participants to reflect on climate change, the resulting artwork, produced by twenty-two participants, included photographs, video and text. The video artwork entitled *Minun paikkani – Mu báiki – My Place*, was published at the *Aurora Future* event in Levi Fell, Finland, on 18 November 2022. The event's themes were equality and climate change.

Nature photography is the central topic of the next chapter. Esa Pekka Isomursu and Timo Jokela report on the notion of 'truthfulness' in photography and in particular, the photographs of nature and the natural landscape in northern Finland. The authors 'examine nature landscape photographs of the North' and, in doing so, pose the question 'How truthfully and in what ways can they convey relevant aspects of nature to the viewer?' In addition, the authors discuss a nationwide survey of professional photographers and propose an art-based action research project.

*Visualising contested geographies* is the title of the fifth chapter. Elena Mazzi, a visual artist and researcher based in France, focuses her doctoral research on the development of the so-called *New Silk Road by Land and Sea*. Mazzi's research addresses questions such as: How do we visualise contested landscapes today? How can artistic practices and theoretical research contribute to delineating new experimental tools that may grasp the complexity of our times? Would it be possible to define new forms of knowledge starting from alliances and interactions between humans and non-humans living in contested landscapes? If so, what methodology should be followed to define this process in the frame of Arctic regions?

In the penultimate chapter, Jonna Häkkilä, Matilda Kalving, Saija Marjomaa and Maija Mäkikalli focus on the testing of a prototype search portal designed to make access to Sámi cultural heritage artefacts that are often 'scattered around Europe and beyond'. The process of digitalization and the portal opens up a range of possibilities for users to use and learn from, centuries-old documents and records using modern technology. As

the authors state 'As part of the user-centric design process, Sámi school children and their teachers were involved in trying out the prototype version of the search portal, with which they could access the old historical materials related to Sámi culture'.

*Structural Moves in Norrland* is the title of the closing chapter. Tonia Carless, and James Benedict Brown, based at Umeå University, Sweden, report on the practice of moving entire houses and other buildings. This is fairly common, not only in Sweden but also in other countries, for example, the USA and New Zealand. The research involved observation, documentation, revisiting the sites (after the move) and visiting the new locations. The documentation, analysis and artwork involved video, including interviews, and photography.

Individually, the words 'possible' and 'futures' have many layers of meaning, put them together and we have a powerful theme that challenges us to explore our commonalities and differences, reflect on our heritage and look forward. We cannot afford *not* to think about our possible futures.

*Glen Coutts and Timo Jokela*
Elderslie and Rovaniemi, November 2023

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# Far from Home:
# Northern Canadian Students
# at an Urban Art and Design University

**Ruth Beer**

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**I**n the Canadian North, the arts have a role in nurturing thriving communities, confronting complex social, economic, and environmental conditions, and shaping possible futures. While the Canadian North is home to a diverse, rapidly growing arts community, artists face challenges accessing formal art education in these remote areas. While many study art in their home communities, which afford access to heritage materials and traditional artistic approaches, increasing numbers also seek formal post-secondary education in Canada's southern regions. Of these, many artists from the North elect to study at Emily Carr University of Art and Design (ECUAD), situated in Vancouver, British Columbia on unceded, traditional, and ancestral *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* (Musqueam), *Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw* (Squamish), and *səl̓ilw̓ətaʔɬ* (Tsleil-Waututh) territories.

Emerging artists from remote communities face unique challenges as they pursue formal post-secondary education at urban universities such as ECUAD. During my long tenure as Professor of Visual Art at ECUAD, I have been interested in the motivations and future aspirations of students from Northern communities. Their decisions and expectations, and the quality of institutional support for artists from the rural North depend on understanding the complexity of conditions these students face, yet these issues require further study. This qualitative study, which centres student voices, aims to partially fill this gap. It is informed by testimony from four Northern artists who have completed coursework at ECUAD. Through informal interviews, each of the students eagerly shared their aspirations and experiences. Alysha (Kaska Dene/Tahltan) is an Indigenous student from Telegraph (population, approximately 250), near the Yukon border. Nigel, a third year undergraduate, grew up in Jade City (population 21). Juri, a third year undergraduate, grew up in Prince George (population 75,000) the largest municipality in Northern British Columbia (Government of Canada, 2022). Megan is an Inuit artist from Inuvik (population 3000) who, after completing her Foundation year, moved back to the North. It is important to attend to the circumstances of these and other future cultural leaders in the North in order to provide positive, impactful educational experiences. Incorporating qualitative first-person testimony in research efforts can productively intervene in this process.

## Northern Canadian Art Communities: Traditional Methods, Contemporary Innovations, and New Initiatives

Art is thriving in the Canadian North. Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Northern artists have represented Canada in the world's most prestigious museums and galleries, garnering international recognition. In 2022, Yukon hosted the Arctic Arts Summit in Whitehorse, an event which represents both an affirmation of the region's artistic achievements and promise. In conjunction with the Summit, The Yukon Art Centre featured a large exhibition—*TETHER*—showcasing exemplary artwork of diverse themes, mediums and disciplines by contemporary artists from across the Canadian North (Bernhardt et al., 2022). At the same time, Qaumajuq, a new exhibition space with the world's largest collection of Inuit art, featured its inaugural exhibition (Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2021).

The landscapes, cultures, and traditions of the region shape the local artistic practices which have garnered so much acclaim. While Northern Canadian artists continue to draw inspiration from daily life, contemporary artists increasingly draw attention to the need for change with respect to social, cultural, political and environmental issues affecting communities and geographies in the North. These include issues of sovereignty, cultural identity, social justice, and impacts of climate change felt acutely in the North. For instance, rampant mining and oil and gas extraction in the region, destroys traditional territories and landscapes, and poisons potable water sources, even amid the immense networks of wetlands, rivers and lakes in vast northern regions. With bold statements and subtle gestures, these artists address a range of hardships and future possibilities. This socially-engaged artistic activity advocating change, nurtures emerging future cultural leaders.

In many Indigenous communities in the North, relationship to heritage arts is understood as a dynamic, evolving component of cultural practice. Artists from the Canadian North often employ heritage practices like sewing, embroidery, carving, and weaving, and make use of local materials including moosehide, sealskin, and cedar. Megan, one of the students we interviewed, describes being immersed in art from the moment she was born. At birth, in a traditional gesture, she was wrapped in a blanket made by her mother and grandmother. Specialized skills for producing artwork like traditional regalia have been passed down to her through generations. In the interview, Megan explains that sewing, embroidery, beading and making regalia has become her artwork of choice, despite having studied painting as a student in Vancouver. This choice reflects larger trends. Härkönen writes that "There is growing interest in the intersection of craft traditions and contemporary art, particularly how perception of the tradition either deepen or change when brought into a new context" (Härkönen, 2020, p. 199). "Combining traditional handcrafts with contemporary art practices through intergener-

ational and intercultural approaches creates an open space for dialogue where the values and the perceptions of cultural heritage can be negotiated" (Härkönen et al., 2018, p. 202).

In Northern communities, more young people, like Megan, are immersing themselves in their cultural heritage and revitalizing heritage crafts and traditions. This is especially true among Indigenous communities in the vast territory of Canada's North, where Indigenous peoples make up 86 percent of the population of Nunavut, 51 percent in the Northwest Territories, and 23 percent in Yukon (Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, 2013).

In addition to reviving traditional artistic practices, contemporary artists in Northern Canada are working on the cutting edge, pushing contemporary art in new directions and shaping the cultural landscape of Canada and beyond. Internationally acclaimed contemporary artists from the North include ECUAD graduates Bryan Jungen (Dunne-za) and Jeneen Frei Njootli (Vuntut Gwitchin). In addition to sculpture, drawing, prints, textiles, and various heritage art forms, many contemporary Northern artists employ newer media, like 3D digital printing, assemblages of ready-mades, video, film, installation art, new media, projections, performance, and socially engaged art practices, also described as "new genre" art (Jokela et al., 2021). Jungen's work, for example, incorporates found objects and explores themes of identity, globalization, and cultural exchange. In his sculpture series "Prototypes for New Understanding," Jungen repurposes Nike Air Jordan sneakers into traditional Northwest Coast masks. Along with distinctively contemporary technologies, many artists incorporate ephemeral materials and materials found in nature like ice, snow, and animal hides. Video and film practices also have an important role in documenting life in Canada's Northern regions and engaging with global conversations. Alysha incorporates traditional materials and themes in her video art to striking effect.

As the Arctic Arts Summit's activities and the roster of acclaimed artists highlights, Northern Canadian artists are making their voices heard, and building a vibrant, internationally connected community with increasing governmental recognition and support. Representatives of the Department of Canadian Heritage, Global Affairs Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, and other federal agencies supporting the programming took part in the Summit proceedings, a sign of their growing commitment to artistic practices in the North. The event connected Canadian Northern artists internationally and strengthened Northern ties to these agencies who declared increasing support both for professional artists, and emerging artists.

Many young artists are trained at home. As researcher Teunis Ijdens writes, "meaningful learning in the arts can…occur in informal settings, such as in the home, with friends, or through various forms of media" (Ijdens, 2016, p. 7). In addition to knowl-

**Figure 1.** Alysha Johnny Hawkins, *Salmon Harvesting* (2022), Film Still, Video 7:52 min. Accessed: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mcBSLixbKw.

edge sharing and learning from Elders, other informal initiatives provide access to arts education. There are a diverse range of partnerships and initiatives that aim to support art programs in the North. For example, mobile art or media workshops visit rural communities to teach young people about media literacy, digital storytelling, and media production, and help them create their own media projects. Experiences away from home are increasingly accessible through workshops, exchange and residency programs. In Yukon, the Yukon School of Visual Arts in Dawson City, affiliated with Yukon University, offers a Foundation Year program with BFA program transfer agreements in conjunction with several universities, including ECUAD (Zho, n.d.). It operates a dynamic residency program and exhibition opportunities for emerging artists.

Education in art is an important tool for enriching and preserving culture and shaping possible futures in the North. It can have a positive impact on rural youth and their mobility, both in terms of personal development and professional opportunities. In gaining marketable skills, rural youth are better prepared to work locally, remotely, or pursue further education or career opportunities in urban areas. University art and design education can also enhance access to professional networks and a sense of connection with a wider artistic community.

## Obstacles for Emerging Artists in Remote Northern Regions

Increasing interest in art and design among young people in the North, strengthened by a flourishing network of local artists and a range of new programs, has led to higher demand for post-secondary art education. Despite the efforts outlined above, emerging artists in the North still face stark challenges. Insufficient resources, geographic isolation, and cultural barriers all pose difficulties. These difficulties are especially pronounced in the context of colonialism in Canada, the long-term corrosive effects of which disproportionately impact Indigenous communities (Florence, 2016). Calls to improve education are included in the 2016 Truth and Reconciliation Committee's findings and their outline of the 94 "Calls To Action," particularly #6 - #12, which address "Education," and #62 - #65, which address "Education for Reconciliation" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from governments, schools, and communities to provide rural youth with the resources and equal access to high-quality university art education programs (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2022).

Something as fundamental as accessing art supplies can be difficult. Megan explains some challenges in the following terms:

> Living in the North is very expensive, and so purchasing these materials to make whatever [art] you decide to go towards is going to be a really difficult thing to do. If you were a painter, or if you needed that charcoal, or if you are into pottery, and what have you—those things are not easily accessible in the North, and a lot of places actually don't even ship to the North. Or they add this outrageous price of shipping. So it's just a really difficult life, especially if you use materials that have to be brought in.

Nigel, Megan and Alysha also describe struggling to access art materials other than what is available from nature locally. Nigel often crafted art objects from natural materials such as sticks he found nearby, in part because, as he recalls, it might take a month or longer for supplies shipped to him to arrive in Jade City. As a young artist living in Telegraph before coming to ECUAD, Alysha recalls making art with materials available to her at the time: "I've made photos, videos, beadwork, make drums and experimented with cedar." However, for Alysha, getting materials such as clay for ceramics—a medium she was keen to work in—required a twelve-hour drive. Adding to the difficulty, her school lacked a working kiln.

Artists in the North often have trouble not only acquiring essential supplies, but also making connections and participating in wider networks. Many young artists find them-

selves essentially stranded far from hubs of cultural institutions and events. Nigel recalls growing up in relative isolation, experiencing little social interaction with anyone other than his immediate family members, who made up half of Jade City's 21-person population. "We don't have anything close to home," he explained. "Jade City is just composed of a highway maintenance company and a few bunk houses, and a tourist 'Jade Store.' And then there's nothing else except for random houses of residents. So we don't have a school there." Nigel was home-schooled. He recalls often wanting to leave home. He spent his free time playing video games online, but also drawing with pens and pencils. He drew from his imagination, and also found inspiration in the beautiful landscapes surrounding him. Despite the setbacks to his artistic career imposed by geographic isolation, however, Nigel feels proud that he worked hard helping on the family farm. He attributes that experience to the development of a strong work ethic that he understands as an asset in academic life, and which will give him an advantage in his professional endeavors.

In remote Northern communities, vast distances often make accessing formal postsecondary arts education near home impossible. In her interview, Megan describes the importance of learning from Elders, community members and through informal workshops, but was excited to leave home for formal training. Alysha also lacked access to formal art education. Alysha explains:

> There is no art school close to home other than Terrace, BC, and in Dawson City. Telegraph to Terrace is about twelve to thirteen hours. And it's the same distance with Whitehorse, and there's the additional distance Whitehorse to Dawson about seven hours further north.

She has looked forward to spending time in the city to learn to use new materials and embark on new artmaking strategies. Juri, too, felt constrained in Prince George. She was anxious to be involved in new art-making experiences not available at her local college. She was not fully prepared for the range of opportunities available in the city. "When I got to ECUAD," she said, "I was shocked."

Rural students from the North increasingly elect to leave home to pursue higher education, including arts education. A number of studies have established clear advantages for mobility of rural youth seeking a university education (Corbett, 2016). Findings suggest that students who leave home achieve advanced professional accomplishments and economic opportunities compared with rural students who elect to stay at home. Rural education researcher Michael Corbett (2013, p. 280) explains how attitudes towards postsecondary education have evolved in some rural Canadian coastal communities:

There was a time in this community when postsecondary and even secondary education was mocked as useless, particularly for young men. Today quite the opposite seems to be the case. They are now told that it is powerfully important and that it is essential that they choose carefully, strategically and that they choose well. The stakes are very high because the cost of this higher education is extremely high for their families.

## Leaving Home: Unique Challenges for Northern Students at Emily Carr University of Art and Design

Despite these obstacles, leaving home to pursue formal art education in distant urban centres can present unique challenges, including in relation to cultural differences, new academic pressures, homesickness, and finances. Rural Northern Canadian art students may also face challenges adjusting to new ways of socializing, communicating, and working with others. Several of the students interviewed suggested that rethinking university curricular approaches and other supports could ease these pressures.

Some of the interviewees struggled to find adequate social support. Juri reports struggling to acclimate to social life at ECUAD and build relationships with peers. Nigel described a similar experience adapting to the new educational social environment. Nevertheless, these students also see these challenges as beneficial for personal growth. Nigel stated, "I think attending in-person classes here at Emily Carr really helped me open up, because I was a really introverted sort of kid before… I grew up in a place where I was only interacting with my family and friends. And I hardly ever talked to people I didn't know."

Students also had to adjust to changes in their physical environment. For Juri, an overwhelming experience of the city sometimes causes homesickness. Alysha finds the loud, busy city a stark contrast to the North, where she is surrounded by nature and open space. Nigel was very new to any urban context. He made use of this experience in his creative work:

> I was still trying to understand the transit route from the place I was staying to the school, so I created a transit route-inspired map (figure 2) with highly stylized 'landmarks' which are seen along the route from my place to ECUAD. If I saw all the landmarks in order, I could never get lost. Keeping a list of landmarks in your head in order to remember a specific trail is quite common for Jade City locals. There are no clear hiking trails and very few signs when you're hunting or traveling through the forests where I grew up. The drawing was a mysterious, dramatic reaction to how unfamiliar I felt towards my surroundings, and how I was in the process of understanding how city systems, like transit, operate.

Students have also had to adapt to drastic differences in learning style and the rigorous demands of academia, with which they are often inexperienced as compared with their urban counterparts. Juri explains that the emphasis on abstract conceptualization and specific disciplinary and academic norms in her new scholarly environment have been difficult to adapt to, since most of her artistic work is done intuitively, without a theoretical foundation in mind. She explains that most of her time working on a project now is spent thinking of what to make and the reasons behind it, rather than actually executing the piece. She is growing accustomed to this new mode of academic rigor. Nigel also explains his fulfillment with learning new skills and experimenting, particularly working with metal through the metal workshop and becoming familiar with other new materials and processes he has never worked with before.

Alysha also describes struggling with academics at ECUAD, stating that transitioning between essay writing, presentations, and research, on the one hand, to a creative mindset on the other can sometimes be difficult, though she too is adapting to new expectations around assignments and strict deadlines. Despite these challenges, Alysha overall enjoys ECUAD's more self-directed curriculum, which encourages experimentation.
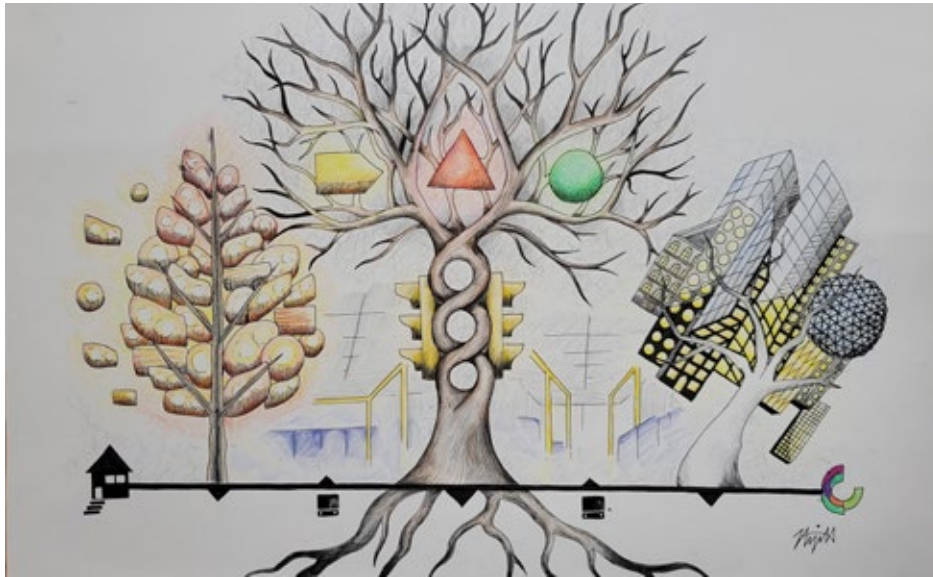


**Figure 2.** Nigel Altman, *Strange Map* (2021). Coloured pencil and ink on cardstock, 20 x 13 inches. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist.

**Figure 3.** Nigel Altman, *Cold Perfection* (2022). Steel and aluminum sculpture, 37 x 26 inches. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist.

**Figure 4.** Alysha Johnny Hawkins, *Salmon* (2023). Fishing net, wood, plaster, bucket paint. Dimension variable. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist.

However, Alysha explains that this emphasis on individualistic innovation contrasts with the collective learning typical in her community: "Many of the art forms that interest me have been passed down through generations and are deeply connected to cultural traditions and beliefs," she explained. Back home, Alysha participates in community art events such as sewing groups or craft nights. She explains:

> We all show up, get together the materials there we could experiment with, and help each other. There's ideas and everyone's so creative… They're so rich with material and knowledge and they're constantly sharing and just, like, getting together in a circle. And there's something about sitting down with others to create. There's just, like, an energy of creating that's happening.

The high cost of living in Vancouver is also a persistent challenge that often disproportionately impacts students arriving from more remote regions. The need to leave home to have access to a Bachelor of Fine Art degree puts significant pressure on young adults

who may not have the funds to allocate for these needs. The students interviewed in this study spoke about struggling to stay afloat financially in British Columbia, where the average monthly rent fee is now $2,471 (Judd, 2023).

For example, Alysha explains that it is difficult to afford tuition and the high cost of rent. Without a community network, she finds it harder to earn money than at home, where she ran a small business. As a mature student with a teenage son, she had been comfortable in their relatively large house in Telegraph and could rely on family and community support. She now rents a small apartment far from the expensive downtown core. She commutes over an hour by car each way to attend classes. She relies on selling her beaded earrings online for income. Nigel is careful with finances. He lives in a basement suite with three of his siblings, but still lacks money for materials that he would like to experiment working with.

## Unique Benefits of Urban Postsecondary Education at ECUAD for Emerging Northern Artists

Despite the difficulty of making these adjustments, the majority of the interviewees are content with their decision to attend ECUAD and confident in their abilities to overcome these challenges. Nigel is enthusiastic about the radical changes to the sense of self, and way of life that he has discovered living in the city and attending ECUAD. He explains, "It was such a shift from online learning to actually being in-person, in actual classrooms, because I had never done any of that before. Like one-on-one with the teacher, or having a fellow classmate right next to you, which you could talk to." Nigel has felt satisfied with the surprising level of dialogue in classroom settings, as well as in interactions with faculty. "The learning style I enjoy the most is probably the in-person classes where I can actually talk to the teachers, have them see my face, and kind of grow in some…sort of like friendship." While Nigel speaks passionately about "the natural beauty and peacefulness" of his home, he appreciates the practicality of the city. "Because of the resources I need professionally for illustration, it would be much easier to live in a city," he explains that unlike living up North, "You can just order online and have it in two days, if you need something important. Or you can walk to a store and get everything you need." Nigel is also eager to be exposed to new ideas:

> In Jade City, I was only exposed to Christianity [for] my entire life up to leaving the house for university. So of course, coming to Emily Carr, it was kind of a culture shock. I'm taking social studies and art history courses which are actually acknowledging other cultures and other people and their beliefs…I appreciate it.

Megan "loved every minute of being in Vancouver," though she elected to return home and transition away from painting. "I think as I grew older, I realized that it's actually quite sustainable for an Inuit person to make a living off of art in the North, although it's hard." She has honed her sewing, beadwork and embroidery skills, learning from Elders and others in the community, while developing an art practice creating regalia and beaded earrings.

Alysha, too feels satisfied with her decision to attend ECUAD:

> I've heard other art schools were more academic and I did not want that. I wanted an art school that would help me explore more of my skills and other areas. I was surprised at how self-directed the courses are…. I really enjoy being able to explore and experiment. It's encouraged, which I really like.

Juri, prefers more structured projects focused on learning new technical and material ways of artmaking. She explains: "Some stuff was unexpected, like thinking critically, because I just go with the flow."



**Figure 5.** Megan Lennie, *Earrings crafted by from beads and caribou hide.* Photograph: Megan Lennie. Retrieved from https://www.nwtarts.com/artist-profile/megan-lennie.

## Current Initiatives and Sources of Institutional Support at ECUAD

ECUAD strives to create an inclusive environment that respects and celebrates the diversity of the student body. The University currently offers a range of support services through Student Services' Counseling and Advising, as well as Wellness Programming (Emily Carr University of Art and Design, n.d.), for all students, including rural Northern students to access. Organized group programming within these services aim to reduce isolation and foster a sense of community. A popular initiative provides free, healthy food to students several days per week. Other resources include orientation programs, academic support services, cultural events, the Writing Centre, and mentorship programs. Exhibition opportunities where students practice their curatorial skills and can feature their work are also popular. These resources, available to all ECUAD students, provide a solid foundation for more targeted support systems.

In addition, ECUAD has a range of resources particularly dedicated to supporting Indigenous students. Because many rural Northern students come from Indigenous communities, these specific resources are especially important for many of them. For example, the Artist Speaker Series has a mandate to invite Indigenous practitioners and those from minority groups. An Indigenous student exhibition occurs each year. The University's Aboriginal Gathering Place (AGP), established to support Indigenous students, is a popular, welcoming space on campus where Indigenous voices are amplified (President's Office, 2022). The space hosts cultural events, ceremonies, workshops, and gatherings, as well as serving as a resource center for Indigenous knowledge, history, and art. Alysha finds comfort and social connections there:

> The AGP is where I mainly go in and relax and sit down or do my homework, or visit. I'm really engaged with them in that aspect. We get emails from Student Services and Wellness. There's just so much going on. I do feel supported. When I went through hard times here, trying to balance my personal life and academic life, they were very supportive and understanding.

It was also an important place for Megan, who attests: "When I first attended Emily Carr, I was brought into a group that was organized specifically for Indigenous people and I thought that was a really beautiful concept at the time." It is important to remember that Indigenous populations are also incredibly diverse. For instance, Inuit communities face specific challenges. Megan suggests improvements to the AGP's programming:

I think Inuit people tend to be tokenized. Because we're from the North—it's a very remote place—a lot of people don't come south to take part in post-secondary education. So bringing in mentors from the North to speak on behalf of what it's like to be an Inuit person there—I think that's something that could be really beautiful for someone who wanted to attend Emily Carr.

She recommends more Inuit visiting artists to encourage better understanding of the diversity and differences within Indigenous populations across the country.

In recent years, as a way of demonstrating its commitment to promoting Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) perspectives and social justice, ECUAD has implemented curriculum initiatives that include efforts to ensure that Indigenous perspectives are integrated throughout the curriculum. The University has been awarded a government-supported research EDI Capacity Building Project Grant (Emily Carr University of Art and Design, 2022) to support and expand these initiatives. Ongoing consultations related to EDI, open to all members of the University community, are organized weekly. This year, the University established a newly developed, required course entitled "Indigenous Presence" described in the following terms: "The Indigenous-led course introduces students to Indigenous ways of knowing through the lens of contemporary artists and their cultural expressions," ensuring that all students take at least one course that covers Indigenous perspectives and beliefs "through the lens of contemporary Indigenous artists and their cultural expressions" (Emily Carr University of Art and Design, 2023). ECUAD additionally makes an effort to prioritize hiring Indigenous faculty members, as well as faculty members from other under-represented communities (Grauer, 2019).

These are uniformly admirable efforts that make a difference in the lives of all students at ECUAD, particularly Indigenous students. However, to address the range of challenges expressed by students in our study, and those facing rural Northern students more generally, ECUAD might provide additional programming to help students from this population adjust to their new environment. While many of these initiatives can help with culture shock, homesickness, and social life for Indigenous students specifically, many students from remote Northern regions may still face financial hardship, histories of isolation, struggles acclimatizing to the highly specialized academic environment at ECUAD, and the challenges of growing and maintaining networks with other rural Northern artists.

Despite some of the difficult adaptations required by the students interviewed, all expressed enthusiasm for their learning experiences at the university and optimism in their potential to share the knowledge they acquire with others in their future roles in society.

## Looking Forward

When asked about their career aspirations, the interviewees collectively expressed the desire to strengthen their respective communities and expand learning and teaching opportunities, particularly in relation to young people. Nigel imagines himself working as a concept artist for video games or films. Nigel is thoughtful about the benefits and drawbacks of returning home:

> I didn't realize how many wonderful things I had in life, until I left Jade City and moved here to Vancouver. So I can see myself returning up North sometimes, because it's a very quiet lifestyle. My work there was always inspired by natural materials. What interests me after ECUAD would mostly be making money right off the bat. I want to use my illustration skills to work as a concept artist for either a video game company or a TV series or maybe a movie someday but that would require me to not be living in a rural place. Back home there is no cell service. There's internet, but it's not that great.

After completing her studies at ECUAD, Juri plans to return to Prince George to work at the Two Rivers Art Gallery teaching art to young people. Subsequently, she hopes to move to Tokyo, where her grandparents live, to embark on a career exhibiting her artwork in galleries in Japan,



**Figure 6.** Nigel Altman, *Pine Cone Owls* (2020). Found natural materials and cardboard, 4 x 2 inches, Photograph: Courtesy of the artist.

**Figure 7.** Juri Sudo-Rustad, *Infected* (2022), 23 x 32 inches. Steel. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist.

Alysha has ambitions to establish herself as a professional artist and to continue pursuing higher education though a Master of Fine Art degree program in addition to learning from Elders and other local artists. "My goal is to teach and to learn and go back and teach everyone my skills," she reports. "I enjoy working with youth and with Elders. The group that I'm working with, they really want artists within the nation to keep going back home and then being able to teach the youth there, put on workshops and teach whoever is interested in learning."

Megan feels that she has benefited from attending ECUAD. She now works supporting education in Iqaluit for the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation as the Regional Youth Coordinator in the Health and Wellness Division. She is involved in the Project Jewel Initiative with the Western Arctic Youth Collective in Iqaluit, whose mission is "to assist youth participants to begin or continue their healing journey, while being immersed in a cultural setting and relying on the natural healing that takes place with the connection to the land" (Inuvialuit Regional Organization, 2016). She is currently putting her creative efforts in community and well-being of youth and more heritage-based artwork "that is very different from the paintings I made at ECUAD." Interestingly, when asked to characterize the relationship between what she learned in her year at ECUAD and her work now with youth aged 18-30 through the Western Arctic Youth Collective in Iqaluit, she explains that there is an affinity with art within the program where she works, as she implements a lot of what she learned at ECUAD, in guiding the group in ways of thinking creatively.

The young people from the North who we interviewed, even if they pursue opportunities in urban centres elsewhere, have deep familiarity with, and allegiance to, the geography and their communities in the North. As artists and designers concerned with the future of their home communities, they each have the potential to make a powerful impact. It is incumbent on institutions such as ECUAD to support learning that will enable Northern students to pursue their artistic careers. Because these emerging artists are well poised to use their voices to enact social-environmental justice and sustainability efforts, supporting arts education can have resounding positive effects. As Jokela et al. (2021, p. 75) explain:

> Art and design, as renewable economies must be implemented through culturally sensitive and place-based strategies to respond to the challenges and ensure sustainability in the north and in the Arctic. Higher Art and design education have an important role to secure human capacity and promotion of sustainable futures in the Arctic.

Serving students from the North and other rural communities demands creativity, humility, and attention to students' circumstances. As several students emphasize in the interviews, communal learning is not only familiar, but deeply valuable, and evokes a positive response. Notably, this approach mirrors intergenerational systems of knowledge production central to many Northern communities. The students characterize class discussions as productive. This suggests that urban art and design universities need to further adapt curriculum approaches to reflect how students respond to these more social, more community-focused ways of engaging with the course content and expectations.

Increased institutional alignment with student interest in sustainability, social and cultural differences, and anti-colonization efforts are called for. As mentioned above, Megan recommended that inviting Elders from her community could improve understanding of her Inuit culture among her peers. She further suggests that the link would help to attract potential students to the University. Students advocate for increasing the numbers of faculty from underrepresented communities. They request the establishment of additional adaptations to conventional delivery models within student-centered, student-led curriculum. They ask for land-based learning (Simpson, 2017), community-engaged social art practices, and artistic research models of merging practice and research (Cotter, 2019) in both academic and studio courses. Students recommend alternate possibilities for communicating their knowledge in classroom settings and suggest that academic assignment responses could be submitted in non-written formats, for example orally or through video presentations.

These and other options may help support new models of formal, postsecondary arts education to better serve students from rural and remote communities in the Canadian North. With rapidly evolving social, cultural, economic and ecological conditions, it is important to enhance positive student outcomes at art and design universities through greater human resource investment, flexibility in curricula, and infrastructural changes commensurate with the importance of art and design in fostering change, and in the preparation of students as emerging artists and their role in imagining and crafting possible futures.

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# Indigenous Visual Expression as Pedagogy; Developing Decolonial Literacy through Dialogic Encounters with Indigenous Art

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**T**his essay describes the philosophy underpinning a graduate course that explores the pedagogical implications of Indigenous art making and visual expression. The story of Indigenous visual expression arcs from before Indigenous contact with Europeans through to the present, so we begin with looking at the history of display practices and their impact on our understandings of art, material culture and Indigenous peoples themselves. Throughout the course, entitled Indigenous Visual Expression as Pedagogy, we move through four key themes: representation and misrepresentation, self-representation, auto-pedagogy, and pedagogical implications. Indigenous visual expression becomes a pedagogy as we learn to view art as text and employ a process of phenomenological art inquiry (Leddy & O'Neill, 2021). Throughout the entirety of this examination the goal for students enrolled in the course, and for readers, is to develop decolonial literacies that will support cultural competency, inclusivity, and equity in art education classrooms.

While this course was not conceived in direct relationship to the north and Indigenous artists from the north, recent developments in relation to climate change, as well as some new research opportunities, have caused me to reflect more deeply on my own and my family's relationship to the north, and why there is an urgent need for southerners (those below the circumpolar north boundary) to take notice of what has happened and what is happening there. For example, in the Canadian context, the north makes up 40% of the total land mass of the country, and yet very few Canadians in the south know anything more about Inuit and Inupiat cultures than igloos and seal hunting. As Salusky et.al. (2021) note, however, "the skills required to navigate the land are passed down generationally" as "Indigenous parents and Elders take on effective roles as teachers in helping young people learn traditional practices and survival skills that are part of growing up" (p. 14). The ecological, cultural, and spiritual knowledges taught by parents and Elders that have allowed people to thrive in the north for generations are of increasingly profound importance as they are now at the center of climate change impacts including reduced ice mass, changes in migratory patterns of major fauna, and transportation challenges caused by temperatures too low to allow ice routes to be travelled safely. Worse, parts of

the north, such as Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada, are now experiencing the devastation of forest fires that used to be common only below the 60th parallel. Like the proverbial canary in the coal mine, the current experience of the north is a harbinger of what is to come for all of us, and it is imperative that we begin paying attention.

But how can we pay attention to that of which we are not aware? How can we southerners gain an understanding of cultures and knowledges that are situated thousands of kilometers away? How can we come to understand the impact of both colonization and climate change on lands that are often prohibitively expensive to visit, and for many, climatically challenging? Huhmarniemi & Jokela (2020) offer a clear answer when they suggest "Arctic artists inform and educate their global audiences, share traditions and pass on the material culture of the Arctic to new generations, even those outside the northern region" (p. 14). This is crucially important when connected with the understanding offered in the following year by Jokela et. al. (2021) that "the ecological, social and cultural connections in the lives of Arctic and northern peoples are close and therefore have valuable ecocultural knowledge often beyond western culture related to the use of Arctic and northern natural ecosystems and materials in arts, crafts and spiritual culture" (p. 11). The curricular and pedagogical structures informing the course that is at the centre of this essay offer insight into one method for connecting with and making sense of Indigenous art that verifies the claims of the authors above. Through spending structured time with works of art from the north and elsewhere, we can develop dialogic relations with the content Indigenous artists are sharing with us through their work.

Supported by a sequence of readings designed to move students through the curriculum in a story-based way, we move together through a plot arc that takes us from where we were, to where we are now, to where we are going. Throughout the course, students are invited to consider their relationship to Indigenous Peoples (mainly in Canada) and to colonization. In general, our class compositions are quite diverse and include Indigenous students, settler Canadians, new Canadians, and international students, so the range of perspectives and levels of knowledge also inform both the curricular and pedagogical needs of each group as we teach each other. In addition to readings, and viewing films such as Colours of Pride (Jacobsen, 1973), Haida Modern (Davidson et al., 2019), and Man of Masks (Claxton et al., 1998), each week we take up the practice of learning a new art skill together, such as crocheting, ceramics, weaving, or drawing, further enhancing the spirit of community learning in the classroom.

Indigenous art has long been recognized as a powerful tool for self-expression and cultural preservation. For many Indigenous artists, creating art is not just a means of

creative expression, but also a way of learning about their own cultures and histories and of maintaining connection to community, story, and land. This process of self-representation has become increasingly important in the face of a history of misrepresentation and erasure by colonial policies, practices and school curriculum. By representing themselves through their art, Indigenous artists actively refuse to accept this status quo by challenging dominant narratives, offering new perspectives on their cultures and histories, and dispelling colonial and pan-Indigenous stereotypes and mythologies.

This is particularly important for Indigenous peoples whose communities are in more remote parts of the world, such as the circumpolar north, which are not widely serviced by the travel industry and where there is little demand for tourist infrastructure. The consequence of this marginalised position vis-à-vis public awareness and attention has fueled global slowness to respond to some of the urgent issues currently faced in the north, as climate change threatens ways-of-life, subsistence patterns, and food security. This essay seeks to illuminates the affordances of using an arts-based approach, through which these important dialogues can be evoked.

## Phenomenological Art Inquiry (PAI)

Before proceeding with a discussion of the content of each of the four course themes, students in the course are introduced to the process of phenomenological art inquiry (PAI). Underpinned by transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2003), this pedagogical approach was conceived as a means through which to engage pre-service and in-service teachers in decolonizing dialogues that would support their work in Indigenous education in classrooms. Particularly in the context of adult education, transformative learning seeks to examine "fixed interpersonal relationships, political orientations, cultural bias, ideologies, schemata, stereo-typed attitudes and practices, occupational habits of mind [...] paradigms in science and mathematics, frames in linguistics and social sciences, and aesthetic values and standards" (Mezirow, 2003, p. 59). This makes it an excellent framework for the challenge of engaging in difficult subjects in the classroom, such as colonization, racism, and oppression. Learning of this kind is rooted in a disorienting dilemma, which in this case involves asking student at the start of the PAI process to recall what they learned about Indigenous peoples in their elementary and secondary school experiences, as well as in other informal discourses such as media, and family discussions. For many students, this leads to the recognition that they learned very little, so we can collectively explore what this colonial erasure has meant to their understand-

ing of Indigeneity and Indigenous peoples in Canada. When students are ready, they are shown work by a contemporary Indigenous artist such as Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun, Jane Ash-Poitras, or Kent Monkman, for example. This is a key aspect of the phenomenological art inquiry process in which five guiding questions support the process of leaning into a work: what am I seeing; what does it remind me of; what do I like about it; what disturbs me about it; and what do I need to learn to make sense of my responses.

Indigenous art, in this context, is viewed as a radical act of self-expression that challenges historic misrepresentation through reclaiming authority over identity. In this course we engage in the process of phenomenological art inquiry, reading art as texts, developed as part of my dissertation research. Building on this research, Leddy & O'Niell (2022) explore the dialogic potential that occurs when viewers of Indigenous art are given the opportunity for sustained viewing of an artwork and engagement in interpretation without a master. By introducing this process initially as a group activity, students are able to think together through the questions and their own responses, and are often led forward by one another's insights and perspectives.

## Representation and Misrepresentation

As a mechanism for decolonizing curriculum, the course begins with readings that explore the history of display practices of Indigenous material culture, definitions of art, modernity, and the politics inherent in how these discourses are informed. Strategically, the first four of the sixteen course readings are written by two white male scholars whose work was prevalent in the late 1980s and 90s, and which still echo in the present. Each of their works is somewhat representative of the authoritative tone that often characterizes anthropological, art historical and cultural studies discourses of the previous century, and which Indigenous Peoples, and feminist, post-colonial, and cultural theorists have long worked to disrupt. From this point on in the course, however, all remaining readings are by Indigenous scholars, artists and curators, with the intention that the curriculum is literally decolonized through the centering of Indigenous thinking.

Ames (2010), one of the first authors introduced in the syllabus, discusses the history and development of museums and display practices from early cabinets of curiosity to modern curatorial approaches, including contextual and aesthetic choices. In particular, he draws attention to the ways in which these choices have for decades represented Indigenous peoples variously as relics of the distant past, as akin to other fauna in the context of natural history museums, as primitive and/or exotic Others. Ames' frank con-

clusions on the impact of display practices as effectively stereotyping Others is reified in the more recent work of Indigenous scholar Susan Dion (2007). In unpacking what she has termed "perfect stranger" positioning (p. 300) Dion is clear about the ways in which such positioning rests on colonial mythologies that posit Indigenous peoples as "romanticized, mythical, victimized, or militant Other" which enables "non-Aboriginal people to position themselves as respectful admirer, moral helper, protector of law and order" (p. 331). Museums as sites of public knowledge about colonial others, especially in North American and European contexts, inform the public imagination about who Indigenous people are, or more pointedly, who we were. Moreover, because of the prominent international reputations of sites such as the British Museum and New York's Natural History Museum, museums are still perceived as authoritative and expert in the cultures of Others.

Clifford (2008) focusses more on the implications of collecting as identity validation in both personal and cultural contexts. His discussion evokes the visual organizer of the semiotic square, which illuminates the transformative effect that display contexts convey to the objects they house. Drawing on the broad and slippery notions of masterpiece/artefact and authentic/inauthentic, Clifford traces the potential pathways of material culture objects, tourist art, and art made for market, through the art-culture system of the semiotic square. This discussion becomes an important point of departure in our course as we move from this place of non-agency for Indigenous artists towards the power of self-determination. In fact, in a later article in the course, scholar and artist Claxton (2013), who is Hunkpapa Sioux, points out that those items deemed as material culture by museums were in reality the belongings of contemporary people and their ancestors meant not for display but for daily or ritual use. This is only a part of what Clifford (2008) discusses when he looks at the art/culture matrix and the impact of removing belongings from people in light of the change in status that placing them in museums conveys.

In addition, through lectures and presentations, students are introduced to photographers and artists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries who also contributed to the canon of Indigenous cultures as antiquated and vanishing. The photographs of Edward Curtis, the paintings of Paul Kane and Emily Carr, are also acts of representation that seek to preserve highly romanticised golden moments of Indigenous culture, but which can also only ever provide an outsider's point of view. This is one of the foundations of colonial mythologies that we seek to unpack in our course, along with their incumbent misunderstandings, misperceptions, and ultimately complete misrepresentation of who Indigenous peoples are and what matters to us.

In concluding our work in this first course theme, the question of who has access to museums and their collections is explored, further complicating this connotative/denotative/semiotic entanglement. There has been much made over the past few decades about the ethical problems inherent in large national museums housing huge collections of cultural belongings from non-European nations. Aside from questions about the ways in which most objects were acquired and the role of colonial power, such collections are also only available to those who can afford to travel to international sites to see them. Together, we work to untangle the historic, colonial, and systemic roots of our current states of understanding.

## The Power of Self-representation

From this point in the course forward, all remaining readings are the works of Indigenous scholars and artists who present ideas about themselves as Indigenous people and the work of Indigenous artists through their own lenses. This contributes significantly to the second stage of transformative learning, where new paradigms are introduced. The goal is not to replace one paradigm with another, but rather to encourage what Bartlett et al., (2012) refer to as Two-eyed Seeing, which means "learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western knowledges and ways of knowing, and to using both these eyes together, for the benefit of all" (p. 335). Along with course readings, Indigenous art is used as the fulcrum to initiate transformative shift.

Dewey (2005) and Greene (2000) both point to the importance of encounters with art as dialogic opportunities that allow us to engage with the worldview of the artist. Greene offers: "we may have the experience Merleau-Ponty describes when he talks about 'a route' being given to us, 'an experience which gradually clarifies itself, which gradually rectifies itself and proceeds by dialogue with itself and others' (1964, p. 21)" (p. 149). Dewey articulates the power of art as follows: "It is when the desires and aims, the interests and modes of response of another become an expansion of our own being that we understand him. We learn to see with his eyes, hear with his ears, and their results give true instruction, for they are built into our own structure" (p. 350). Both authors offer credence to the potential impact of phenomenological art inquiry to transform our understandings of self/other through encounters with art.

In writing about her work on expanding the inclusion of Indigenous histories and ways of knowing in schools, Dion (2022) discusses the power of art as story, noting "this

learning requires recognition of the power of Indigenous peoples to represent ourselves, accepting the invitation to learn from us in the service of establishing responsible relationships" (p. 30). In the face of Canada's long history of colonial erasure and distortion, reclaiming agency over our own identities is a key component of bringing balance back to our relationship with non-Indigenous Canadians and with the political system within which we live. This, of course, is true for other colonial contexts in the world, wherever they might be. The centering of Indigenous voices in this way allows for a re-telling of the colonial story that reveals the devastation wrought by educational policies, as just one example, from an Indigenous perspective in ways that often startle non-Indigenous peoples. Self-representation functions as a form of refusal; refusal to be silenced, refusal to be ignored, and refusal to be complicit in keeping the colonial machine in forward gear.

In one reading under this theme, Crosby (2018) discusses the hard road for 20th Century Indigenous artists such as Ellen Neel and George Clutesi who sought to maintain NWC design traditions while simultaneously beginning to create art for sale rather than for cultural use. Both Neel and Clutesi were highly innovative artists who sought to draw on aesthetic and design traditions from their communities while also seeking to enter the growing art market alongside their non-Indigenous peers. Crosby's work explores the limitations that art and ethnographic discourses have placed on Indigenous artists through exploring the implications of notions of modernity and modernism, and who could, or should, be included in such discourses.

Contemporary Inuit artists such as Annie Pootoogook and Inuuteq Storch offer more modern examples of artists who seek to expand the notion of who Indigenous artists are and what Indigenous art can/should be through showing us Northern cultures through their own eyes and subject choices. This is another key component of reclaiming and revisioning Indigenous identities. Pootoogook, who passed away in 2016 at just 47, used pencil crayons on paper to describe the aspects of Inuit and Northern life that spoke to her the most. From scenes of families seated on the floor and eating seal meat from cardboard plates (as is quite common in some communities) to scenes of grocery shopping, she shows us what everyday life looks like for many Inuit in Canada. Her work takes many darker aspects of life on as well, documenting alcohol and domestic abuse, along with scenes of personal heartbreak and despair. Pootoogook offers an emic version of her world, which for many southern viewers defies assumptions and expectations rooted in stereotypes.

Storch uses photography to capture often unexpected aspects of life in his hometown of Sisimiut, Greenland. In the series Keepers of the Ocean, he offers an eclectic

array of mostly candid photos that explore everything from a crowded bathroom vanity, and scenes at various kitchen tables, to hands playing guitar, and shadows on a pond. While about half of the images in the collection may be counted as portraits, giving viewers some sense of who the people of Sisimiut are, more telling is the inclusion of images of cluttered hall ways, photos of snow, and shots featuring the land as a character in daily life. These are clear indications of what his home community feels like to Storch and what he values. In addition, the almost chaotic and occasionally artfully naïve composition and perspectival choices lend a relatability to his work in that they are clearly made of the stuff of everyday living in the world rather than composed and highly edited versions of perfect world images.

## Indigenous Art as Auto-pedagogical

Under this theme, Cardinal-Schubert (2004) draws forth the words of Métis Leader Louis Riel who claimed in the late 1890s that "my people will sleep for (over) one hundred years, but when they awaken it will be the artists who give them their spirits back" (p. 28). For many artists, this means in part that we learn about ourselves and our cultures and histories as we engage in art making practices. From the creation of regalia, drums, and beadwork, to art made for market in more contemporary mediums such as acrylic paint, film, and printmaking, Indigenous artists often draw on stories and teachings, and on the land, to inform their work. This involves nurturing relationships with family, community and Elders, which encourages further learning. For non-Indigenous people, the work of Indigenous artists can offer new perspectives on Indigenous identities, realities and concerns that have long been absent from public discourse.

Nicolson (2015) and Yahgulanaas (2015) write about their own art practices to indicate the ways in which they understand their art as giving back to, elucidating, and articulating their cultural values. Nicolson's petroglyphic work, Kingcome Inlet Cliff Painting (1998), inscribes the land of the Muskamakw Dzawada'enuxw Peoples with the figure of Kawadilikala, the Great Wolf, drawn from the histories of the four tribes of the Kingcome people. In relating the story of how this massive mural came into being, Nicolson describes learning about the colonial limits placed on her people through the Indian Act and reserve system and its impact on her desire to persue an education that would help her advocate for her Nation. She also discusses the encouragement of her Uncle Ernie, who inspired her to draw on the origin story of the Kingcome people to inform her work. Student presentations of this article often include a wide range of Nicolson's other more

recent works, along with her academic accomplishments, allowing them to trace the path of Nicolson's advocacy and engagement over the past few decades, and showing her as an example of Indigenous success and survivance.

Yahgulanaas (2015) grapples with the creative process and the legacy of Haida and other Northwest Coast art on contemporary art practices in his pictorial essay, Haida Manga. While the struggle for creative autonomy and realization he offers is more internal than Nicolson's public example, he none-the-less captures the ways in which his process for producing work also offers inducement to deeper learning about his artistic forebears and influences and their relationship to his identity as a Haida person and an artist. In addition, this work gives us the opportunity to consider the notions of hybridity and appropriation as his work combines elements of Japanese Manga with Haida form lines. This further invites discussions of authority, cultural transmission, and the prerogative of artists to innovate.

Tamati-Quennell (2004) and Martin (2004) discuss the importance of Indigenous curatorial and critical art practices as a means of opening the western cannon of both art history and art criticism. This is important work as it is another way of not only educating ourselves about Indigenous aesthetic practices, but also educating our local as well as international communities about who we are as Indigenous Peoples now. Particularly in light of the initial course readings about display practices, the topic of Indigenous curatorial priorities and critical interest in the work of Indigenous artists pushes the self-determination envelope further by deliberately creating relational opportunities for Indigenous artists amongst one another, as well as for settler and international viewers. Similarly, when Indigenous art critics and historians publish, they invite us into deeper consideration of what Indigenous aesthetics means and what Indigenous priorities are at play in defining them.

Many of the questions we take up together under this theme are difficult to answer at best. In many ways, however, this is another avenue for reifying the idea of art as pedagogical, and for encouraging the disposition of life-long learning. It also provides recursive opportunities similar to those in Indigenous Storywork (Archibald, 2009), where learning takes place not necessarily at the time of listening to a story, but when the listener considers the story and its themes in retrospect and attaches them to personal understanding and experience. When the story is heard again, the listener will have new experiences to build on their prior understanding. The cycle of learning is both on-going and cumulative.

## Developing Decolonial Literacy

This course encourages students to consider, often for the first time, the relationship between what they learned (or did not learn) about Indigenous peoples and how this has shaped their understandings of Indigeneity and colonial relations in Canada. Students are invited to build on what they remember learning about Indigenous peoples and histories in their K-12 learning experiences through an exploration of relationship between Indigenous Peoples, museums, and the public imagination. The PAI process is designed to be a transformative learning opportunity in which these previous frames of reference, habits of mind, colonial mythologies and stereotypes can all be brought to bear in a viewer-led inquiry into our relationships with Indigeneity. This work is the backbone of developing decolonial literacies which seek to reset settler-colonial relations into modes that are holistic, relational, anti-oppressive, and inclusive.

One of the reasons that art is such an important foundation for this course, as well as for the process of truth-telling and reconciling, is that it offers dialogic opportunities that present Indigenous perspectives for viewers to engage with in potentially transformative ways. This work often presents more questions than can be answered in a single course, encouraging ongoing inquiry and engagement. Although the focus is always brought back to Indigenous artists and voices, the discussions both the art and course readings evoke often include feminism, climate change, the work of BPOC artists, globalization, capitalism and social justice concerns.

In the coming months, I will have more cause than ever to turn my face to the north as I begin a research project that will connect the colonial survivance stories of Inuit Greenlanders with those of Indigenous peoples in Canada. In preparing for this work, our research team plans to visit both Nuk, and Inqaluit, as well as Alaska, in order to found our learning in relationship with both the people and the land. Although I have previously visited both Labradour and the Northwest Territories in Canada, like many other Canadians, I still have much to learn about the circumpolar north, especially in this age of crisis over climate change and food insecurity. Although these issues are broadly outside of the scope of the course discussed here, on many levels, they are also intrinsically intertwined in ways that we cannot collectively afford to ignore any longer. I am truly hopeful that these visits will lead to the inclusion of more Inuit and Inupiat art and artists in future iterations of this course, and possibly even create opportunities for artist residencies and virtual talks that will strengthen ties and understanding between those in the north and south.

Restoule and Chaw-win-is (2017) remind us that old ways, that is, Indigenous ways of learning and knowing, are the new way forward if we are to truly see and understand

one another in the contemporary global context. Viewing the work of Indigenous artists as having dialogic potential invites the connection required to begin the work of decolonizing and moving on together in a good way. The course described in this essay is a small drop in the bucket when it comes to the overall scale of the work required. But the art and artists to which students in the course are introduced, and often discover on their own, hold tremendous power potential in reconfiguring how we see, understand, and relate to the world beyond our own little corners, and help us all challenge the stereotypes and silences offered by colonial curriculum both in Canada and internationally. It is my hope that the reader will find this to be true as well.

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# My Place:
# Building Young People's Future
# Using Art-based Action in the North

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**I**n this chapter, I discuss an art-based action research process with young people in the Arctic and Eastern Finland. The aim of the study is to develop an art-based model for young people to express their thoughts and feelings about climate change and promote their social inclusion in the future. The study produced a video artwork titled *Minun paikkani – Mu báiki – My Place* (2022) which presents young people's feelings about their favorite places and thoughts on climate change. Twenty-two young people participated in the video production. The video artwork included photos, videos, and texts received from young people.
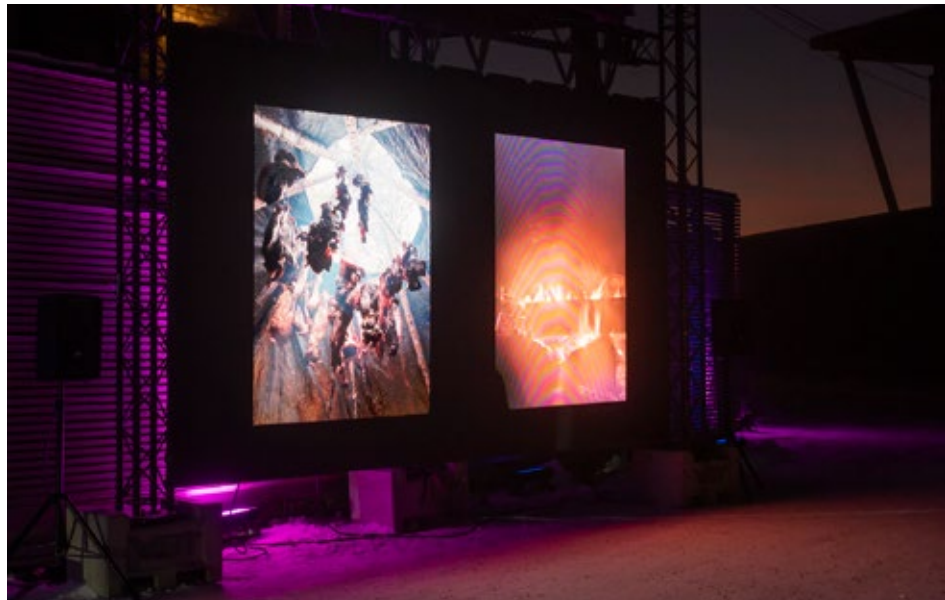


**Figure 1.** *Minun paikkani – Mu báiki – My Place* video artwork presents young people's feelings about their favorite places and thoughts on climate change. Photograph: Aki Lintumäki, 2022.

*Minun paikkani – Mu báiki – My Place* video artwork was published at the Aurora future event in Levi Fell, Finland, on 18 November 2022. Aurora was produced by the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE and Visit Levi (Figure 1). The event's themes were equality and climate change. The production of the video artwork was made possible by the *Arcta Fast* project led by the University of Lapland. *Arcta Fast* produced several different artworks for the Aurora Future event. Other partners in the project were the University of Applied Sciences of Lapland and the Vocational College of Lapland. According to Jokela and Riikonen (2023), the *Arcta Fast* project used art-based methods to develop education in the creative industries in the North and cooperation between cultural events in the Lapland region.

At the Aurora Future event, the *Arcta Fast* project presented ten short films from *The Stories for Climate Justice* (2021) project. This opportunity arose from the Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design (ASAD) network. The project aimed to promote young indigenous people's filmmaking skills and offer participants the opportunity to tell stories about climate change from their own perspective. These short films were made in collaboration between the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Department of Theatre and Film, the Native Movement, and the Anchorage Museum. From an artistic point of view, the video artwork *My Place - Mu báiki - My Place* and *the Stories for Climate Justice* project films had many similarities.

The research team of the *Minun paikkani – Mu báiki – My Place* process included the University of Lapland's doctoral researchers and artists Aki Lintumäki and Korinna Korsström-Magga (2023). They facilitated this study. The research process was also a sub-study of Lintumäki's dissertation at the University of Lapland. *Minun paikkani – Mu báiki – My Place* video artwork was a starting point for the larger research project called *On the front line of the Climate Crisis*, which started in September 2022 and will last until the end of 2025. The project is carried out in Lapland, Eastern Finland, and the Tampere region. It is coordinated by the Youth Research and Development Centre Juvenia of South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences and the University of Lapland. The research team's task is to develop young people's climate citizenship and climate activism through art-based methods and co-research. The project is funded by the Kone Foundation.

Climate change is causing uncomfortable feelings and even anxiety among young people worldwide. According to an extensive international survey by Hickman et al. (2021), 59% of respondents aged 16-25 were very concerned about climate change, and more than 45% of young people said negative emotions affect their ability to function in everyday life, and 83% said they believe that humankind has failed to take care of the

planet. From a northern perspective, this is a critical issue as the Arctic is warming nearly four times faster than the global average (AMAP 2021; Rantanen et al., 2022).

In this chapter, I link the negative climate feelings experienced by young people to the promotion of youth inclusion in the North. According to Stephen (2018), climate change threatens Arctic residents' and indigenous peoples' traditional lifestyles, languages, and cultures. From this perspective, young people in the Arctic are especially vulnerable to climate change because they are just starting to build their future. This issue is particularly concerning for young indigenous people whose way of life is under threat from climate change.

According to a study on inclusion by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, young people feel that their lives are meaningful if they are given the opportunity to grow up in an environment where they are listened to as equal members of the community (Isola et al., 2017). Leiviskä (2021) states that sтrengthening young people's experience of inclusion reinforces their growth as active citizens. The Sámi Youth Council (2021) emphasize inclusion in their climate declaration as promoting inclusion allows young people to adapt. According to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992), promoting adaptation aims to reduce global vulnerability to climate change. Fur-



**Figure 2.** *Minun paikkani – Mu báiki – My Place* video artwork was inspired by Arctic art. Photograph: Aki Lintumäki, 2022.

ther, according to Pretty (2011), the local and ecological knowledge of residents and young people must be considered, which will also increase their resilience to climate change.

In the first part of this chapter, I introduce the study's theoretical background and main concepts. In the second part, I explain the research method, which is an art-based action research. In the third part, I present the organization of the research. In the fourth part, I describe the practical implementation of the research and analyze the artistic process. In the fifth part, I deepen my analysis of the young people's thoughts and feelings generated by the artistic process. There are similarities between the thoughts and feelings of the young people who participated in *the My Place - Mu báiki - My Place* video art process and the short films of *the Stories for Climate Justice* project. In my analysis, I reflect on these together. In the final part, I present the main conclusions of the study.

## Theoretical Background and Main Concepts

This study is based on the concept of young people's inclusion and how to promote it. According to Leemann and Hämäläinen, inclusion is a changing, dynamic process that prevents poverty and exclusion. Inclusion enables participation in society, provides opportunities and empowerment, and promotes the development of individual skills and abilities. Inclusion is a personal and emotional experience, providing a sense of belonging to a community and society. Inclusion is about influencing your own affairs and is achieved through participation. (Leemann & Hämäläinen 2016.)

Art-based research has been broadly used to promote inclusion (Hiltunen 2009; Hiltunen et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2020; Manninen 2021; Nunn 2022). These studies discuss how to improve the inclusion of different individuals, groups of people, and communities in society through art-based methods. Participation in art-based activities has been shown to have holistic positive health impacts (Lehikoinen 2021; Secker et al., 2007). According to Piispa and Pihkala (2020), negative feelings toward climate change can be mitigated through active participation. Nairn (2019) emphasizes that community-based and active participation can promote hope among young people and motivate them to participate in social action in the future. A sense of active involvement may increase young people's hope for the future.

Participatory action research-based participatory photography methods have been widely used around the world to study the everyday lives of communities and individuals, explains Palibroda et al. (2009). The most famous of these is the Photovoice method developed by Wang and Burris (1997), in which participants are asked to produce

research data by taking photographs. According to Nykiforuk et al. (2011), Photovoice helps the researcher understand the community and can be applied to meet the needs of the community as it allows for the expression of the participant's opinions and can socially empower individuals and the community. For example, Oregon's Public Health Institute (2011) has carried out similar practical art projects. The Photovoice method has influenced the development of our artistic work used in this chapter.

The world is always seen and described from a place, as Karjalainen (2006) explains. Therefore, we brought the idea of a place-based approach to artistic work. This chapter defines the concept of place from the perspective of humanistic geography, where the place is not considered an objective fact, but a phenomenon constructed from human experiences and interpretations (Haarni et al., 1997). Massey specifies (2008) that a place is constructed by economic, political, and social relations, all of which include power. According to Knuuttila (2006), a place is a dialogical concept that is lived, told, and experienced.

In our study, we encouraged young people to take photographs and tell stories about everyday places that were important to them. According to Lippard (1996), who has studied the relationship between art and place, one of the functions of art is to activate the consciousness of place. The approach is analogous to placemaking, where citizens are involved in planning the environment through creative methods, explains Roberts (2023). The method strengthens the relationship between people and place. Thus, this method could promote the inclusion of young people in our study.

The artistic philosophy behind this study was inspired by the concept of Arctic art, developed within the Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design (ASAD) network (Jokela 2021; Jokela & Coutts 2018) (Figure 2). Arctic art refers to contemporary art that deals with themes of sustainability and the North. Arctic art reflects and renews cultural heritage. It presents northern knowledge and facilitates the creation of connections between the past, present, and future. (Huhmarniemi & Jokela 2020; Jokela 2021.)

Jokela et al. (2021) have highlighted the connection between Arctic art and the concept of a New Genre Public Art developed by American community artist Suzanne Lacy (see also, Jokela 2021). New Genre Public Art refers to socially engaged artworks produced in public spaces. It combines different art forms and allows the public to participate in the artistic process. Lacy clarifies that this art form resists the idea that public art is simply installations or sculptures. (Lacy 1996.) New Genre Public Art and Arctic art can also take a stand on social issues and aim to stimulate social debate (Jokela 2021 et al.,) and therefore, artistic approaches suited well as the background artistic philosophy of the *My Place - Mu báiki - My Place* art and research process because they promote inclusion.

**Figure 3.** The aim of the artistic process was to promote the voice of young people.
Photograph: Aki Lintumäki, 2022.

# Method

This study followed an art-based action research model. The method has its roots in international art-based research and action research, and it has been created in response to the sociocultural and sustainable development needs of the North (Hiltunen 2009; Jokela 2019; Jokela & Huhmarniemi 2018). According to Jokela (2021), art-based action research focuses on change within the community where the research is conducted.

Many researchers emphasize the unique way in which art-based research creates knowledge of bodily sensations, individual and social experiences, and tacit knowledge-based phenomena (such as Barone & Eisner 2011; Finley 2008; Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018; Kallio 2008; Leavy 2019). Leavy (2020) even suggests that art-based research is its own paradigm alongside qualitative and quantitative research because it takes the role of promoting change and political activism. Finley (2008) agrees and defines arts-based research as a space where the epistemological views of artists and social scientists meet and form a new research practice. These perspectives resonate well with the concept of Arctic art.

Our research followed the process of art-based action research, which Jokela and Huhmarniemi describe as a cyclical development process. The first cycle involves organizing the research and exploring the phenomenon under study. In the second cycle, the artistic work begins. The third cycle involves making art and collecting research data. In the fourth cycle, the process is analyzed, and the results are used to propose a new model. In art-based action research, it is important to evaluate the activity after the cycle and clarify the research's aim. (Jokela 2021; Jokela & Huhmarniemi 2018, 2020.) Järvinen and Järvinen (2004) explain that the most valuable output of action research is not the research report but the useful operating model or the change in the operating community produced during the research. Furthermore, Jokela and Huhmarniemi (2020) emphasize that artistic outputs have an important intrinsic value in the research process.

According to Jokela (2021), art-based action research intertwines research and practice and emphasizes the social dimensions of research work. The method of action in art-based action research is art, and the aim of the research is community and social development (Jokela et al., 2015). In addition, the method includes the idea of co-research that many action researchers emphasize in their work (Jokela et al., 2015; Kindon et al., 2007; Pain et al., 2007; Pyyry 2012; Whyte 1991). In co-research, the research participants are experts in their own lives and environments (Kulmala et al., 2023). Pyyry (2012) clarifies that, especially in research on young people, participatory research methods increase the inclusion of the participants.

**Figure 4.** The video artwork was set up on a four-meter-wide LED screen, which captured the audience's attention. Photograph: Aki Lintumäki, 2022.

Co-research can foster a deep connection between researchers and young people involved in the research process. This positively promotes the artistic research process. Jokela et al. (2015) describe how artist-researchers act as facilitators, coordinators, inspirers, and encouragers in the process. According to Salo (2007), a researcher's voice is a social construct that echoes the thoughts of research participants and other researchers (Figure 3). For us as artists and researchers, the co-research approach was very important. We believed that it was the best way to support young people to express their thoughts and feelings about climate change. In our artistic research process, multiple voices merge and produce new interpretations of reality.

## Organisation of the Study

Our research team conducted the main data collection in autumn 2023 in Finnish and Norwegian Lapland and Eastern Finland. Korinna Korsström-Magga contacted young people in Lapland, and Aki Lintumäki contacted them in Eastern Finland. We coordinated and facilitated the process partly live and remotely. The footage collected from young people consisted of photos, videos, texts, and recordings. After this, we started to

**Figure 5.** Young people had a deep understanding of their favorite places. Photograph: Aki Lintumäki, 2022.

dramatize the video artwork. Kanerva Kivistö and Sara Teperi, Master's students in art education at the University of Lapland, participated in the dramatization. The students were involved in the artistic process as part of the *Arcta Fast* project. The video artwork was edited and sound designed by Inka Holck, videographer and photographer from the *Arcta Fast* project. The video artwork was set up by Lappia's media students under the supervision of their teacher, media professionals and assisted by Lintumäki (Figure 4).

The video artwork was launched for the second time in Kuopio on 22 February 2023 as part of the Ingmanedu Vocational College for Culture Studies *Lempipaikka (Favourite Place)* photography exhibition. *Minun paikkani – Mu báiki – My Place* (2022) video artwork included photos and texts by first-year photography students. At the end of the exhibition opening, Lintumäki conducted a reflective discussion with the students. In addition, he conducted a reflective discussion on 13 April 2023 with young people from Culture House Kajo and their mentors who participated in the study.

The primary research data for this study is a video artwork. All the footage we received from young people has been included in the artwork. Photographs taken by the researchers and field notes during the artistic research process, as well as reflective discussions with young people, support the interpretation of the primary research data.

This study followed the analysis principles of art-based action research, which according to Jokela & Huhmarniemi, are carried out in two stages. During the process, when it can be improved, and at the end of the process, when it is evaluated in relation to the success of the research task if the results of the analysis are presented artistically, the artwork can be evaluated together with the participants. During this process, attention must be paid to issues such as how successful the artistic output was and how the artistic process fostered a sense of empowerment for the people who took part in the research. (Jokela 2019; Jokela & Huhmarniemi 2018.)

## Practical Implementation of the Study and Analysis of the Art Process

Our research team started this study in early September 2022. In the first meeting, we planned the timetable for the process and identified collaborators. During this brainstorming session, we decided that our artistic practice would concentrate on conveying the voice of young people, utilizing a participatory action research approach. By young people's voice, I mean the thoughts and feelings of the participants. Manzo and Brightbill emphasize that in participatory action research, every individual has the right to

have their voice heard, which must be respected by all participants in the research. Furthermore, the approach encourages participants to use their voices to implement social change. (Manzo & Brightbill 2007.) We were aware that the Aurora future event would be attended by many politicians, researchers, activists, journalists, and climate experts, so it was clear that the voice of young people needed to be heard in this context.

In the next meeting, we decided our artistic production would be a video artwork. This art form can be considered polyphonic because it can include different forms of media. Video art allowed us to convey the voices of young people in a diverse way. After this, we formulated the following three questions for young people: "What is your favorite place that you want to save in the future?", "Why is this place important to you?", "What should be done to save this place so that you can experience it in the same way in the future?" The questions were deliberately open to make it easier for participants to deal with climate change. Their artistic task was to take photos and videos and tell short stories about their favorite places using these questions.

We wanted young people to link their artistic work to a place that was important to them. This approach emphasizes a phenomenological environmental aesthetic. According to Forss (2007), it focuses on the interaction between the observer and the environment and the meaning of the interaction between human identity and place. We trusted that young people had a deep understanding of their environment that would help them express their thoughts and feelings about a major global phenomenon through a concrete place. Most of the participants agreed with us on this solution. One participant commented: "The place builds a dialogue with the subject, making it easier to deal with. Also, as a viewer, it makes it easier for me to deal with the subject when I can explore it through different places". According to Adams (2002), art is the making of meanings that can encourage a personal emotional relationship with a place (Figure 5).

The next step was the facilitation, which we carried out partly remotely and partly in live situations. We ended up with this solution due to schedule limitations and long distances between locations. Hybrid work has become familiar for many of us and so we did not hesitate to get started. A diverse and multi-channel approach promotes young people's inclusion (Lintumäki et al., 2022). Young people gave positive feedback on the facilitation of the process: "It's great to be able to participate remotely!" commented one of our participants. Another participant commented, "Participation was made easy, and that's why I took part."

Korsström-Magga contacted high schools, vocational schools, and individual young people in Lapland. She received audiovisual footage from nine young people. For my

part, I contacted Ingmanedu Vocational College for Culture Studies in Kuopio, where first-year photography students participated in the study. I also inspired young people from Culture House Kajo in Mikkeli to get involved in the process. I collected footage from thirteen young people. Participants were motivated to take part in the study because they were told that their stories, videos, and photos would be presented at the large Aurora future event. One of the young people commented: "It's great to have the opportunity to show my skills in front of such a big audience." Jokela and Huhmarniemi (2018; 2020) emphasize that art-based action research has an empowering influence. This comment confirmed their point of view.

After the facilitation, we started to dramatize the video artwork. We wanted to present the young people's voices as authentically as possible, so we included all the footage in the video. It was important to use audiovisual expression to convey the young people's voices. Kanerva Kivistö and Sara Teperi wanted to participate in the dramatization because their Master's thesis dealt with young people's feelings about climate change. Kilpi and Numminen (2018) define contemporary dramaturgy as a shared space in which the structure of an artwork is created through negotiation. There is an analogy between this definition, our dramaturgical work, and art-based action research. They all combine a polyphonic interpretation of reality. Inka Holck's editing and sound design emphasized the polyphonic element of the video artwork.

The video artwork was set up on a four-meter-wide LED screen near Levi Summit the day before the Aurora Future event started. I participated in the installation. The artwork was displayed for one day and was positioned so that all guests attending the event could see it. *Minun paikkani – Mu báiki – My Place* video artwork was grounded on a place-based approach, but it cannot be defined by Lippard's (1997) concept of place-specific art, where the artwork is created in the place from where it derives its inspirations. This approach emphasizes the immediate experience of place through art. A more relevant concept to define this video artwork is Kwon's (2002) concept of site-specific art, which refers to art that takes over a specific public space for a specific period.

From the notes I made during the event and the conversations I had with the audience, I conclude that a large site-specific artwork captured their attention. The event visitors described the video artwork as "interesting" and "touching." It was seen as a good method for young people to express their thoughts and feelings about climate change. The video artwork was also seen as an excellent way to promote the inclusion of young people. Young people's voices were listened to and respected. The reflective interviews I conducted at the end of the artistic process made it clear that young people also felt the same way. One of

**Figure 6 and 7.** Young people living in the Arctic were concerned about the impact of climate change on their culture and traditions. Photograph: Aki Lintumäki, 2022.

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them commented: "It was a surprise for me that all my pictures and stories were published. I really appreciated it, and that's why I feel I have been heard and my opinions respected." This comment confirmed that we had made appropriate solutions in the dramatization.

## Analysis of Young People's Thoughts and Feelings

My analysis demonstrated that the young people felt great love and appreciation for their favorite places. For them, these places symbolize safety, and losing it threatens their sense of security. Sepänmaa (2006) describes such places as places of the heart that can be upsetting to lose. This is how one of the participants expresses her feelings in the video artwork: "When I am alone, I experience this place as a haven from the emotional storm." All the young people were worried about losing their favorite places. Most of them were very concerned about climate change. One of the participants in the video artwork commented: "Global warming may change the species diversity and our forests in the future."

Some young people underlined the value of participation. In fact, they had very little interest in the climate challenge. One of them commented in an interview: "If I can influence something through my own actions, then I definitely want to participate." Another participant commented: "It is important to be able to act, and it is important to be able to speak!" For them, the process was more important than the topic. One young person wanted to be involved in the study just to explain how the place became important to her: "Everyday places are important. They become important to me through interaction with others. I feel that I can impact things when I can talk about these places." This comment has connections with the concepts of place-based education and placemaking, which many art educators and researchers have highlighted in their work (for example, Adams 2002; Gruenewald 2003; Jokela 1996, 1997, 2016; Jokela & Hiltunen 2014). The concepts emphasize an existential-phenomenological perspective focusing on place-based empowering experiences produced by community-based action (Jokela & Hiltunen 2014). The community-based experiences of places were repeated in the stories in the video artwork. One participant described the issue: "It's not the place that matters to me, it's the people there."

Human attachment to a place is formed through living, through which the place becomes part of the person. Perceptions of present places are constructed partly through memories of past places, as Haarni et al. (1997) explain. Based on the findings of this study, it seems that the young people living in the Arctic experienced their favorite places in a different way than young people living in Eastern Finland. Participants living in Eastern Finland described their favorite places from an individual perspective. Their fa-

**Figure 8.** Photograph from the short film *My Someday,* written and directed by Shak'shaani Éesh (Konrad Frank). Photograph: Shak'shaani Éesh/Konrad Frank, 2021.

vorite places were urban public spaces or familiar street corners, local beaches or nature spots, and their own home or yard. One participant described his favorite place: "I like empty streets more than congested places or natural landscapes."

In comparison, young people in the Arctic who participated in this study saw their favorite places through the lenses of their own culture and traditions. These included reindeer herding, hunting, and berry picking. Young people also wanted to preserve the traditions they had learned from previous generations. One young person from the North described the topic: "The summer marking of reindeer is the highlight of the year for every child in a reindeer family. In the future, there should be clean nature where reindeer can live so that future children can experience this feeling." These young people were more concerned about the impact of climate change on nature than young people

living in Eastern Finland. In addition, young people from the Arctic strongly associate climate change with the loss of their culture and traditions. One participant commented on the video artwork: "It will be very sad to see how wildlife disappears because of climate change." Another participant expressed his concern in this way: "In the future, I hope that I can feed my own reindeer. The biggest threat to this is the impact of climate change." According to Soini and Birkeland (2014), preserving cultural heritage is fundamental to a sustainable living environment. The young people that participated in this project reflect this point of view (Figure 6 and 7).

There is an analogy between the thoughts and feelings presented above and those of the young people involved in *the Stories for Climate Justice* project (Figure 8). Young people in Alaska have also reflected on their own favorite places through their own culture and traditions. In the short film called *When we eat, we heal*, the author describes the topic: "To come to these places is sovereignty, to practice my traditions is practicing sovereignty. When I am here, I am one with the universe. When I am here, I know how I am." In another short film called *St. Paul Island Alaska Climate Change*, the author describes it in this way: "We are the protectors of our culture. We are the protectors of the fur seals. We are the protectors of this land." A third example of how to deal with this topic can be found in the film *Where the Caribou Roam*: "We learned to follow and live in harmony with the food we ate. I hear their hearts beating like our drums. We are the caribou." According to Stephen (2018), nature and nature-based culture are the basis of traditional cultural lifestyles in the Arctic. This perspective is visible in the thoughts of young people in the Arctic region. They have a broad understanding of the places that are important to them. Barr (2009) clarifies that climate change threatens both physical and cultural heritage sites and the cultural roots of Arctic communities.

From the *Minun paikkani – Mu báiki – My Place* video artwork and *the Stories for Climate Justice* project films, it is evident that young people in the Arctic are aware of this issue. Therefore, I interpret that they felt a strong need to express themselves. I conclude from my analysis that artistic processes such as *My Place - Mu báiki - My Place* are needed to give young people a greater voice in social and global issues, especially in the Arctic region.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrated that an art-based action research process such as *My Place - Mu báiki - My Place* can promote the expression of young people's thoughts and feelings on climate change issues. During the study, we developed an art-based model that en-

courages young people to express themselves through audiovisual expression. The central element of the model is a site-specific video artwork.

We linked artistic work to young people's favorite places. This place-based approach helped the participants to address a broader phenomenon, which in this study was climate change. We facilitated the artistic work partly remotely and partly live, which made it easier for young people to participate in the process. Participants were motivated to take part in the study because they were told that their stories, videos, and photos would be presented at the large Aurora future event. We included all the footage we received from young people in a video artwork, which they saw as a method of visibly ensuring that their opinions were listened to and respected. The audience at the Aurora Future event found that the video artwork was a good method of expressing young people's thoughts and feelings about climate change. It was also seen as a positive way to promote the inclusion of young people. The goal of the project was to empower young people. This study demonstrates that we achieved our goal, which is reflected in the feedback from young people.

The young people felt great love and appreciation for their favorite places. For them, these places symbolize safety, and losing it threatens their sense of security. Most of the young people were very concerned about climate change. While some of the young people underlined the value of participation. They were more interested in talking about their favorite places and the community experiences relating to these places. Based on this study, young people living in the Arctic have a broad understanding of the places important to them. These young people experienced their favorite places through the lens of their own culture and traditions. Young people also wanted to preserve the traditions they had learned from previous generations. In comparison, young people living in Eastern Finland described their favorite places from an individual perspective. Young people from the Arctic strongly associate climate change with the loss of their culture and traditions. This thinking united the young people involved in the *My Place - Mu báiki - My Place* video artwork and the *Stories for Climate Justice* project. These young people had a strong need to express themselves.

In conclusion, when we encourage young people to express their opinions on climate change through empowering art-based action, we may support their development into active citizens. This action could promote young people's social inclusion and sustainable development in the Arctic area. Furthermore, it could be a way for young people to build a brighter possible future for themselves in the North. Additional research with larger group of participants could deepen our understanding of the elements related to the promotion of young people's inclusion in the North.

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# Truthfulness in Nature Landscape Photography

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**A**photograph always has a direct physical connection to reality because it is formed when light from the photographed object(s) forms an image on film or a camera sensor (Barthes, 1981). However, a photograph is also always an incomplete representation of the real world, and its meaning is limited and prone to interpretation. In this chapter, we examine nature landscape photographs of the North: How truthfully and in what ways can they convey relevant aspects of nature to the viewer?

We first discuss key concepts and terminology. Then, we introduce a nationwide survey about how photographers perceive "real" in nature landscape photographs in Finland. We discuss the results with regard to related literature and works of art. We then identify and categorise various ways to interpret "real" in nature landscape photography. The categories enable the identification of possibilities for future interpretations of "real" in Northern and Arctic nature landscape photography. Finally, we outline an extensive research task and a design for long-term interpretational-experiential art-based action research (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2018).

## Key Concepts and Terminology

A central concept in this chapter is landscape, which we understand as part of the Western way of seeing and interpreting natural surroundings (Andrews, 1999; Muir, 1999). We use the term *nature landscape* and understand its overlap with the concept of the environment in environmental aesthetics (Berleant, 1992). Berleant (1992) emphasises that the environment does not only surround us but that we, as experiencers, are fused with it, are sensorially fully immersed in it, and are, thus in fact, on the same continuum with it. The landscape "becomes the field of human action, not merely a visual object. Entering and participating in the landscape requires full sensory involvement" (Berleant, 1992, p. 6). We also understand the concept of nature landscape as overlapping with the cultural geography concept of place (Muir, 1999), which arises through the creation of meaning by humans based on their experiences of a place.

**Figure 1.** One of the "Instagram trophies" in Northern Finland, Saana Fell, as seen from a beaten path. Saana is a sacred mountain of the Sami People. Photograph: Esa Pekka Isomursu, 2022.

Nature photography, alongside photojournalism, is thought to be one of the last fortresses of the authentic image. This is particularly true when it comes to the North and the Arctic, where photography has played an important role in making the region and its nature known to the general audience in a way that we can see, for example, in the book *The Arctic: The complete story* (Sale, 2008), where photographs are used as truthful documents that reveal the nature of the Arctic.

However, a closer examination reveals other views. According to Chartier (2018, p. 73), the North has been imagined and represented for centuries by artists and writers of the Western world. Over time and with the accumulation of successive layers of discourses, this has led to the creation of an *Imagined North*. Today, the Arctic region has attracted the interest of international artists, who have considered the changing rela-

**Figure 2.** Even during the off-season, there are plenty of photographers at "trophy locations" in Lofoten. Photograph: Esa Pekka Isomursu, 2018.

tions of art, media, and aesthetics within the Arctic region (Bloom, 2022; Marsching & Polli, 2012). On the other hand, the concept of a *True North* became known in Francis's travel book (2010), where he critically dismantled how the landscape of Arctic Europe has seduced explorers and adventurers for hundreds of years. True North was also the name of an Anchorage Art Museum exhibition in 2012, where, according to the curator Julie Decker (2012, p. 7), the artists' view of the Northern landscape was "... not the romantic North that belonged to former generations. It is the next North. Their North is connected, pivotal, and conflicted, both rarefied and ubiquitous." Recently, a strong effort has emerged in arts to make the visions and voices of the insiders of the North noticed when discussing the future of the North and the Arctic (Beer, 2014; Chartier, 2018; Decker, 2012; Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020a, 2020b; Jokela et al., 2021).

The image of the North and the Arctic is no longer built only by visitors to the area, but increasingly also by the residents of the region themselves, including ordinary people as well as artists. Nature photography, artmaking in general, and research in the Northern regions all follow this trend. Today, photography is a hobby as well as a profession for an increasing number of locals around the circumpolar North (Far North Photo Festival, 2022). Nature photography as a form of creative industry, often connected with sustainable and responsible tourism, has also been seen as an opportunity for a new economic activity breaking away from the colonial tradition of the exploitation of natural resources in the North (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2020; Jokela et al., 2022). At the same time, one may expect the insiders' view of art, including nature photography, to increase the authenticity and truthfulness of images of the North.

On the other hand, the number of tourists visiting the North has also grown substantially. The Internet and social media have made it easy to locate iconic, well-known landscapes, which have become "Instagram trophies", i.e. places to be hunted down with a camera to get one's own photographs that are likely to resemble numerous other images from the same place (Figure 1). Nowadays, social media is filled with images that virtually every visitor takes of these locations and on such a scale that in many places environmental protection has become an issue (Figure 2). The phenomenon is global, but the fragility of nature in the North and the Arctic and the growth of nature tourism mean that nature is more at risk there (Jóhannesson et al., 2022).

Interesting perspectives on Northern landscape photography are also provided by posthumanism (Nayar, 2014). From the transhuman perspective, we can examine how the real world could look without the limitations of human perception. Nature photography could also be a corporeal, multisensory experience, not limited to visual perception (Figures 1 & 2).

Advanced photo editing tools and augmented, mixed, and virtual reality, as well as images generated by Artificial Intelligence (AI), further change and complicate the perception of our visual milieu. In photography, they place the relationships between truth, authenticity, and representation in a new light. Nowadays, Chartier's Imagined North is increasingly easy for everyone to recreate themselves, and this is already being exploited in, for example, nature photography and tourism.

We live in an era where image manipulation is easy and accessible to virtually everyone. Equipment that a few years ago was considered professional, and priced accordingly, is now within the reach of amateurs as well. Especially on social media, some images are so photoshopped that they no longer portray reality (Figure 3). They can be seen as simulacra that are detached from their original referents, creating instead a hyperreality

**Figure 3.** A simulacrum that creates its own reality of northern nature. Photoshopped photograph: Esa Pekka Isomursu, 2023.

in which the photograph replaces reality itself. The concept of simulacrum in this sense was introduced by the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1981) to describe how reality is constructed through representation and media. In the case of nature photographs, these images are often staged, manipulated, or taken out of context, creating a layered representation of reality that is separate from the actual natural world. The photograph becomes a simulacrum, a copy without an original, that obscures our understanding of the true nature of the environment being depicted.

Chartier's analysis of the North as an imagined and constructed space echoes Baudrillard's ideas about the hyperreal. Chartier, however, does not imply that the Imagined North is completely detached from reality. Rather, it is a reality that is based on a narrow outsider's view, not always based on knowledge, and almost totally ignoring the views of the Northern cultures. While Baudrillard rather pessimistically focuses on the collapse of meaning and the loss of the real, Chartier is more focused on the complex cultural and historical processes that shape our ideas and representations of the real.

From the very beginning, Finnish nature photography has followed a national romantic landscape tradition (Inha et al., 2016), gradually bringing birds and other fauna into the landscapes (Hautala, 1968; Kokko, 1950). Although this tradition is still strong in the 21st century, the photographs taken nowadays are much more diversified. Accordingly, they can be interpreted, and their truthfulness can be questioned in new ways. In this chapter, interpretations of the truthfulness in nature landscape photographs are examined from a perspective where individuals and societies construct their own versions of truth based on their experiences, beliefs, and concepts (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Nature photographers and their audiences tend to be passionate about the truthfulness of nature photographs. However, everyone has their own subjective view of what truthfulness means in this context. Understanding the various interpretations fosters meaningful debate within the photographic community and paves the way for new interpretations of "real" in nature photographs. Benjamin (1972) points out that it is impossible to translate from one language to another and preserve all the original connotations, so it should be noted that our survey was in Finnish. The Finnish term typically used for truthfulness in this context is "aito". It directly translates into English as "real", and conveys quite similar connotations to "truthful", or "verisimilar". In this chapter, our notion of "real" covers all the various ways in which nature landscape photographs convey aspects of true nature to the viewer, and the aim of our survey is to identify these ways. Next, we introduce the survey and after that discuss in more detail the various ways that we have identified to interpret "real" in the context of nature landscape photographs.

## Nationwide Survey

### *Survey Settings*

The survey was conducted online using the Webropol (2022) survey tool. The invitation to participate was distributed nationwide via national and local photography organizations as well as social media. The questionnaire was completed by 342 people. The respondents also submitted 159 photographs of their own of what they felt to be good examples of real nature landscapes and 74 images that they did not consider to be real.

Based on the presumption that age, skill level in photography, and interest level in nature photography might influence the respondents' opinions, the participants were asked about these in the questionnaire (Figure 4). They were not asked to specify their gender.
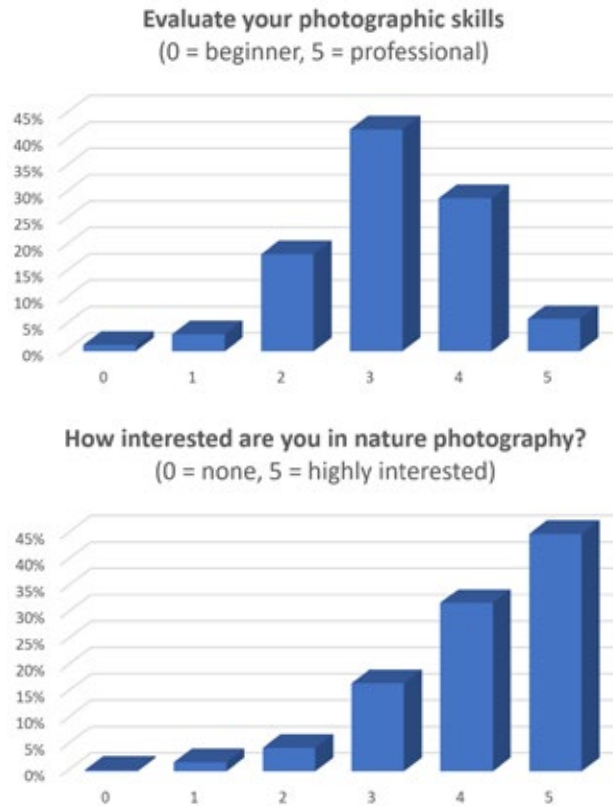


**Figure 4.** Survey Demographics (n = 342).

Next, the respondents were asked to describe in their own words what defines a na-
ture landscape photograph as real. The qualitative, open-ended format of the question
made it possible to cover all possible aspects of verisimilitude that came to mind when
they thought of the concept. A predetermined list of alternatives would have narrowed
their thinking, and some aspects of their views would probably have stayed hidden.
Thus, at the cost of vague categorization and the more tedious analysis of the answers
afterwards, a wider perspective on verisimilitude was received from the respondents.

The opposite was also asked: What makes a nature landscape photograph not appear
real? While this may seem redundant at first, the approach proved to be very useful.
Most of the respondents expanded their views and did not just repeat their previous an-
swers, resulting in more comprehensive answers. This method of repetitious inquiry was
further encouraged when the respondents were given the possibility to submit images
that they considered to be real (Figure 5) or not real (Figure 6) and explain why they had
chosen those images.

Finally, to identify any other relevant thoughts, the respondents were asked to write
down anything they wanted to add. Even at this point, the participants still contributed
new ideas. Varying the basic question and asking it in multiple ways were clearly beneficial.

One should understand certain details and limitations of the methodology used for
the interpretation of the survey results. As the answers were mostly qualitative, and the
answer categories were created after the survey, they are prone to the analyser's subjec-
tive interpretation. This potentially makes the results more inaccurate. Moreover, since
no predefined categories were given in the questionnaire, the selection rate for many
of the afterwards-defined categories was relatively low. Even the most widely used cat-
egory, "moderately adjusted and not manipulated", was only mentioned by 64% of the
respondents. The percentage shows how many respondents thought the category to be
significant enough to be included in their answers. It does not mean that the rest of the
respondents would necessarily have disagreed with the category. Thus, the percentages
show a minimum support level for each category instead of the total level. When inter-
preting the results, the key was to recognise features about which a significant number
of respondents had an opinion and not to focus on the exact percentages. If, for example,
only 10% of the respondents mentioned a category, this revealed that, as a minimum,
over 30 people thought that category to be significant, which is already a considerable
number. Similarly, when comparing different age groups or photographic skill levels, it
was important to recognise significant differences in the answers between groups and,
again, not to look at the percentages per se. For such a result to be considered signifi-

cant, a minimum difference of 5% between categories was set as a requirement. For the above-mentioned reasons, although percentages are mentioned in some cases, terms like "most of", "many", and "some" are more typically used.

### Survey Results

The most common answer to the question of what makes a nature landscape photograph "real" was that such a photograph is only moderately adjusted and not manipulated, e.g. by adding or removing elements. This was mentioned by most of the respondents in one form or another. In particular, altering or oversaturating the colours is a definite "no" for many. In general, these answers were consistent with the rules of allowed editing in most major nature photography competitions, such as Wildlife Photographer of the Year (National History Museum, 2023), European Wildlife Photographer of the Year (German Society for Nature Photography, 2023), or the Finnish Nature Photograph of the Year (Suomen Luonnonvalokuvaajat, 2023). The following is a direct quote from one respondent (this and later quotes without references are direct answers to the questionnaire):

> An image [is real if it] has not been over-processed by image processing. Admittedly, this is difficult to define.

Many of the respondents also stated that for an image to be real it should be documentary, reflecting what the human eye saw in a real situation. This excludes creative techniques, which as a concept are ambiguously defined. The respondents typically mentioned specific creative techniques and not creative techniques in general. Based on the survey answers, creative techniques in this study were perceived to include multiple exposures, merging (parts of) images in editing, intentional camera movement (ICM), high dynamic range (HDR), the creative use of filters, long exposure times, and excessive image manipulation beyond normal editing. Normal editing that was not considered excessive covered techniques such as moderate adjustments made to the contrast, saturation, and lightness of specific areas of the photograph or the whole image. The following techniques received scattered mentions as creative techniques: oversharpening, black and white images, mirror images, drones, and vignetting. In Figure 5, the sample of images that the survey respondents identified as "real" clearly shows the dominance of the documentary style (cf. Sale, 2008), as well as the ongoing tradition of national romanticism, which was discussed earlier.

Creative techniques have their supporters as well. Interestingly, about as many people expressed their support for creative techniques as were opposed to them (Figure 7).
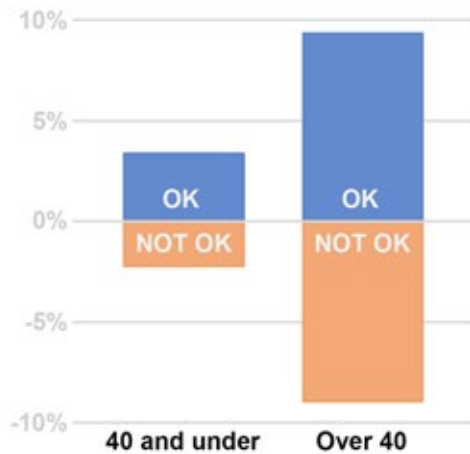
**Figure 7.** Responses for and against creative techniques (n = 51) and an example of a creative etchnique: In-camera multiple exposure. Photograph: Esa Pekka Isomursu, 2020.
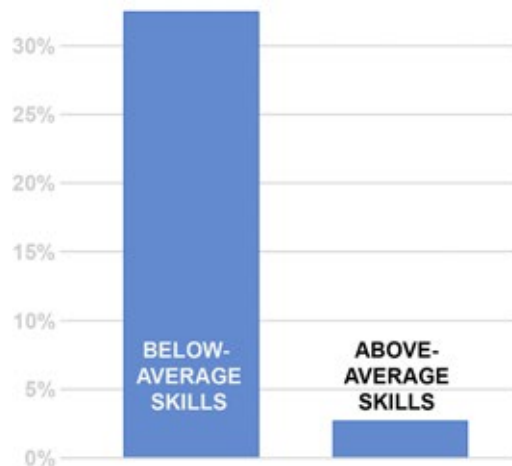


**Figure 8.** Skill level (cale: 0 = beginner to 5 = professional) vs "A real nature landscape photograph should be completely or almost completely unedited" and an xample of an "unedited" landscape photograph. Photograph: Esa Pekka Isomursu 2020.

Furthermore, respondents aged over 40 were 3 times more likely to mention creative techniques than younger ones. When these results were discussed in a meeting of a local nature photographers' association, one probable cause for the age bias was suggested: perhaps people start with "traditional" photography, and as their skill level increases, they progress from using basic techniques to employing more creative techniques, with some permanently adopting them and some rejecting them after experimenting for a while. This proposition is also supported by the fact that half of the respondents aged over 40 considered themselves very skilled photographers, compared to 28% of the younger respondents (answer 4–5 on a scale from 0 = beginner to 5 = professional).

One might assume that since the younger generations have grown up seeing all kinds of image manipulation, they would be more willing to accept it. However, the survey results showed the opposite. The younger respondents (40 or under) held much stricter views regarding image manipulation than the older ones. Of the respondents that were 40 years or younger, 72% thought that image manipulation or heavy adjustment is not acceptable, whereas only 61% of the respondents over 40 shared this opinion. While there was a rather big difference in opinions between age groups, the difference was tenfold between skill levels, regardless of age (Figure 8). A third of the respondents with below-average skill levels stated that a real nature landscape photograph should be completely or almost completely unedited. However, this view was shared by less than 3% of those with above-average skill levels. The study by Yao et al. (2017) supports our findings if we consider image editing skills to be a part of advanced photography skills: their study showed that people using Photoshop accept more photo alterations than those that do not use this tool.

The photograph in Figure 8 is straight from an SLR camera without any further editing, not even cropping. However, as some respondents pointed out, even an image like this is not totally unedited since the camera processes the raw image into a jpeg or other format according to its own algorithms.

Opinions were also divided on whether traces of human activity could be visible (i.e. man-made objects, domestic animals, traces of forestry, humans themselves …). This, maybe more than any other aspect of the survey, included many shades of grey. Some were fine with cityscapes where there were elements of nature present. Others did not allow the slightest trace of human presence. Drawing a line somewhere between the extremes is complicated. Over 75% of Finland's land area is forests—the highest percentage in Europe. Although Finland also has by far the highest proportion of primary forests in Europe, they cover only 2.9% of the national territory (Sabatini et al., 2018). Most of

**Figure 9.** By cropping, one can alter the message and leave out "truths" from an image. Photograph: Esa Pekka Isomursu, 2021.

what is considered wilderness has at some point been altered by humans (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland, 2021). If we also consider indirect human influence, such as the effects of pollution and climate change, most images we perceive as showing pure nature include traces of human presence. Each photographer and viewer must draw their own line in terms of what they consider to be wild nature.

Another issue related to (not) showing traces of human activity is the cropping of photographs, either by leaving things out when capturing the image or by cropping afterwards during editing. Figure 9 shows the same photograph cropped in two different ways. While the tighter cropping conveys the feeling of a remote wilderness, the looser cropping includes parked camper vans, roads, and a ski slope. Of course, there is no single answer as to the right way to crop the image as it depends on the message that the photographer wishes to convey. In this case, the first image is cropped to show the wilderness of the national park, focusing on its pristine nature, whereas the latter reveals its coexistence with an adjacent ski resort.

> The image is [unreal if it is] cropped to show only things that are perceived as wonderful or nice.

Andrews (1999, 3-4) identifies cropping as an inherent part of the process through which land (the physical entity) turns into a landscape (a more abstract concept) when the land is perceived by the viewer: "[…] in the conversion of land into landscape a

perceptual process has already begun whereby that material is prepared as an appropriate subject for the painter or photographer, or simply for absorption as a gratifying aesthetic experience." A landscape is what the viewer has selected from the land, in accordance with certain conventional ideas about what constitutes a "good view". Thus, cropping is inherent in a landscape regardless of whether we crop a landscape photograph in editing.

## Identified Interpretations of "Real"

Based on the survey results, we have identified and categorised various ways to interpret "real" in nature landscape photography. Each category brings out a unique perspective on perceived reality. The categories have been named accordingly as Subjective, Physical, Emotional, Extended, and Metaphysical Reality. They are depicted in Figure 10 with some sample photographs that represent each category. The photographs in Figure 10 are included to give an idea about the ongoing art-based action research on each topic. They will be discussed further in future publications that follow the research plan laid out in this chapter.
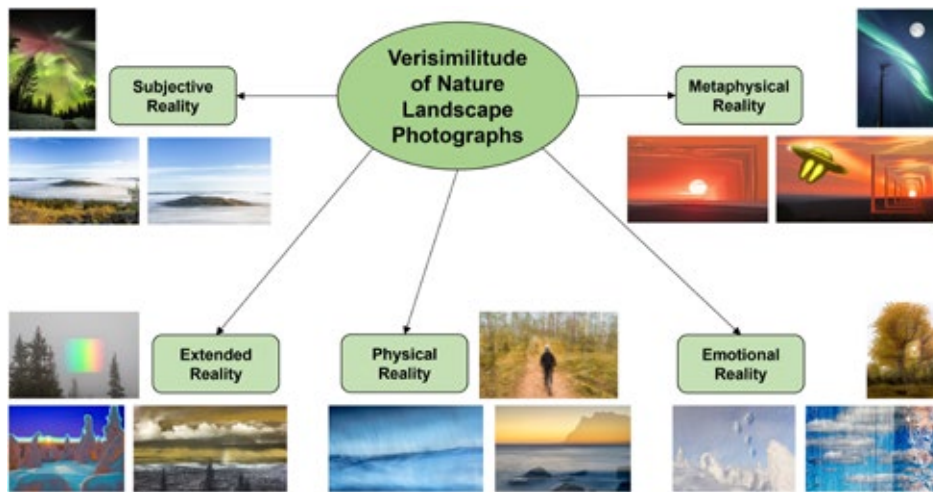


**Figure 10.** Various ways to interpret "real" in nature landscape photography. Photographs: Esa Pekka Isomursu, 2015–2023.

## 1) Subjective Reality

The most straightforward way to photograph "real" nature landscapes is to capture the natural environment as it is in a documentary style, without manipulation or artificial enhancements and with minimal or moderate image adjustments. It also involves using a realistic colour palette, accurate exposure, and sharp details. According to the survey, this is by far the most popular approach.

> Landscape images also remind me of historical paintings made before the advent of photography, for example, those of Koli. I think this conception still influences many people's perception of how to 'authentically' depict a landscape. In other words, a rugged, age-old landscape without human constructions.

However, each person has their own opinion on where the boundaries lie with regard to moderate adjustments. Many classic images clearly fall into this category, but there are also many images that some would accept as real, and others would not.

> [...] it can be said that a landscape photograph produced by a telephoto lens is not 'natural' because it compresses the perspective, and the human eye cannot even see the same way. However, the picture shows nature or a landscape without adding anything that was not originally there [...].

> Quite often you see photographers emphasize that the image is 'unedited' or 'straight from the camera'. Sometimes you feel like pointing out that it probably should have been edited. I think basic adjustments are always necessary.

## 2) Extended Reality

The concept of verisimilitude in nature landscape photography is closely tied to the human perception of reality. The human eye has several limitations that can affect our perception of the world around us. Visible light, which roughly covers wavelengths ranging from 380 to 750 nanometres, is only a narrow part of the whole electromagnetic spectrum. As the human eye has a limited number of photoreceptor cells, its resolution and dynamic range are limited. The field of view is narrow and thus always cropped. Various visual illusions reveal further limitations of the visual system. If these limitations were removed, the way we see nature would be significantly different. We can explore these limits with photography.

Camera sensors typically detect infrared (IR) and ultraviolet (UV) light. However, to create images that correspond to what we normally see, these wavelengths are blocked out with a bandpass filter positioned in front of the sensor. A camera can be modified

for IR or UV by mechanically removing the filter and, possibly, adding a new filter with different properties. However, other problems may exist. For example, modern lenses typically block UV light.

Possibilities for extending beyond human vision do not stop with IR and UV. Other potential areas for study include spectral imaging and cosmic radiation. Macro photography could also fall under this category, but it is not typically considered to be part of landscape photography, although 2 people out of the 342 respondents included it in the survey.

### 3) Physical Reality

Merleau-Ponty (1962) emphasises perception and the body as the primary site of knowing the world, instead of the consciousness or the mind. Likewise, the human experience of landscape is the experience of a body in motion in an environment that does not stand still (Harvey, 2014). While a nature landscape photograph can evoke emotions and feelings related to being in nature, it cannot fully convey the actual physical experience of being there. This is because photographs are limited in their ability to capture the full sensory experience, including smells, sounds, and tactile sensations. However, it is worth exploring the extent to which it is possible to convey the photographer's corporeal experience of nature via the photograph.

Shusterman (2012) argues that we tend to identify photographic art so one-sidedly with regard to the end products, i.e. the photographs themselves, that it occludes the aesthetics arising from the somatic, performative process of taking the photograph. If a photograph could guide the viewer to realise the process of making it, it would help the viewer to experience the nature behind the image more comprehensively.

A simple and much-used way to emphasise the creation process is to include the photographer or other people in the photograph. A classic example, although not a photograph, is the first engraving of Niagara Falls from circa 1679 (Andrews, 1999). In the image, one spectator holds his head in his hands while others have raised their hands in awe. This reinforces the idea of them being overwhelmed by the spectacle. A more contemporary example is Arno Rafael Minkkinen (1999), who incorporates his own nude body into isolated settings, emphasizing its bond with the natural world.

In his writing on Cézanne's series of impressionist oil paintings of Mont Sainte-Victoire, Merleau-Ponty (1964) points out that Cézanne not only shows the landscape but also leaves visible the elements that make up the painting. There are traces of brushstrokes, which are easily recognizable as such, and the canvas is not entirely covered with paint. It is not only the subject matter of the painting but rather all these elements

together that convey the artist's vision. Similarly, leaving technical properties visible in a photograph can add to the viewer's connection with the landscape that the photograph depicts. These technical properties could include using an unusual focal length or leaving sensor noise, vignetting, and other deficiencies visible in the final image. Following Harvey's above-mentioned idea that landscape is a dynamic experience, one could also show movement caused by the photographer or by elements of nature in the image.

### 4) Emotional Reality

According to Andrews (1999), "truth to nature" can mean two things: an analytical understanding of "deep" nature and its accurate rendering or what might be called the emotional truth to nature. Cézanne referred to the latter meaning when he famously said that painting from nature is not copying the object but realizing one's sensation (Gasquet, 1991). In this approach, an authentic work of landscape art becomes a subjective response to the feeling the subject evokes in the artist instead of the meticulous copying of the subject's direct visual image into the artwork. Many of the survey respondents referred to this "emotional reality" when they accepted the use of creative techniques:

> […] very strong editing could look distorted, but I'm not sure if I see it as unreal. The modified image is the author's view of the landscape. Is a drawing of a landscape inauthentic? I don't look at paintings as not real because they are painted. Instead, I see in them an artist's vision of the landscape, which is as real as someone else's.

> I think that the concept of the so-called authentic landscape has fortunately expanded over the years. The pejorative talk of 'art' pictures has diminished, and even creative use of the camera is accepted.

As mentioned earlier, creative techniques divide photographers quite markedly into supporters and opponents. However, there is a significant group of photographers who consider photographs depicting emotions to be "real", regardless of the technique used.

### 5) Metaphysical Reality

> It's horrible when you can't trust a photograph anymore.

Earlier, we discussed the constructed realities of Chartier's Imagined North and Baudrillard's simulacrum. We can take this line of thought on the boundaries of reality much further. Contemplating the simulation hypothesis, Bostrom (2003) shows that, if certain assumptions are likely to be true, then we are almost certainly living in a simulation.

The recent AI tools in photograph-like image creation have been considered a break-through. AI was only mentioned by one respondent, but had the survey been conducted in 2023, many would likely have brought it up. The respondent rightfully pointed out that the use of AI in image creation is not black and white:

> How about […] AI? If the adjustments made by the camera are accepted, where do you draw the line?

An interesting case is the "Space Zoom" capability of certain smartphones. These phones use AI to detect the moon's presence in a photograph and use predefined data to enhance the image beyond what is possible with traditional image-enhancing techniques. One might argue that this technique creates new details and is thus on the borderline of being fake. Johnson (2023, para. 9) points out that "every photo taken with a digital camera is based on a little computer making some guesses". When these techniques become increasingly sophisticated, it becomes ever harder to draw the line between "real" and "not real".

Nowadays, "photographs" as well as "paintings" and other artwork are efficiently and easily created with the assistance of AI, such as Midjourney or DALL-E2. While these images are not photographs in the traditional sense, arguably their mere existence does influence the credibility and people's interpretation of actual photographs.

## Proposal for Future Research

In this chapter, we have identified and categorised different ways of interpreting "real" in nature landscape photographs. The categories give an extensive understanding of possible interpretations in the context of Northern nature landscape photography. They consider the North from many angles, including Chartier's North as an imagined and constructed space and Baudrillard's ideas about the hyperreal, as well as the True North of Decker (2012), Francis (2010), and others.

On the other hand, the approaches in each category can also be somewhat agnostic with regard to the photographer's views of the North and being an outsider or an insider. The methods for capturing, for example, extended or emotional reality can be used to depict both the Imagined and True North in new ways, depending on the artist's intentions. Perhaps, therefore, this work could be a way to build cross-cultural bridges between the different worlds for both professional and amateur photographers, as well as for both outsiders and insiders of the Northern regions.
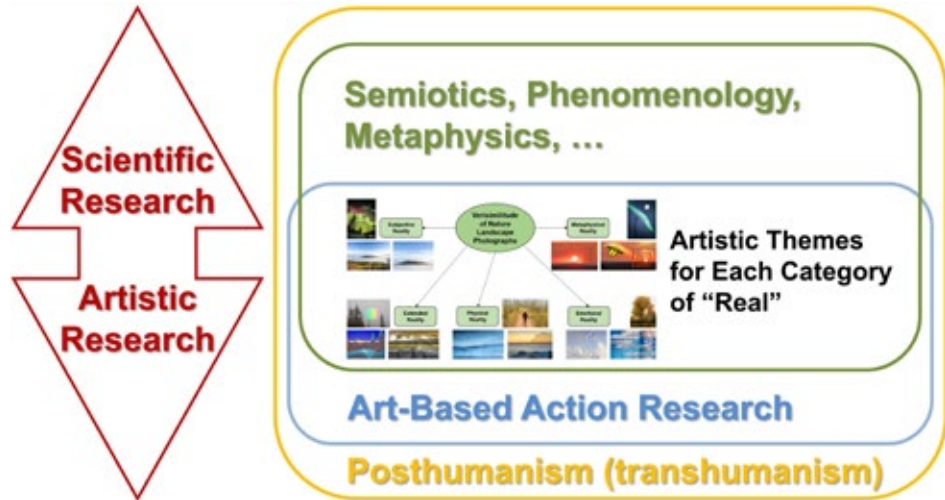
**Figure 11.** Proposed design for long-term research.

One goal of this research is to widen the photographic community's understanding of how the truthfulness of nature photographs can be defined in different ways and, thus, give the community tools for reflection. Another, more personal goal is for the first author to obtain inspiration and depth for his artistic work on nature landscape photography. As both authors live and work in the northern parts of Finland, this research has a Northern perspective. Within the category of emotional reality, the first author has created the concept of visual haiku, which draws ideas from Japanese written haiku and their Western interpretations. In a forthcoming publication, similarities and differences in their interpretations from the perspectives of different cultures will also be discussed.

Our proposed design for long-term research, based on art-based action research, is presented in Figure 11. The best research approaches and methodologies vary from category to category, but a central part of all the cases is artistic research, where photographs are created on the various artistic themes related to the identified categories of what is "real". These photographs are in dialogue with scientific research based on literature and other artists' work. Already, the categories of subjective, extended, and physical reality have been touched upon in one article (Isomursu, 2021), but they, as well as other categories, will be studied further in the future.

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## List of photographers in Figures 5 and 6

**Figure 5 from top left:** Kari Vattulainen, Juhani Häggman, Harri Kiljander, Liisa Vihelä, Johanna Pihlajamaa, Tuula Välimäki, Kimmo Hurri, Miika Kinnunen, Timo Koivumäki, Sari Karhu, Markku Välitalo, Tuija Salo, Heli Nukki, Johanna Pietiläinen, Kalevi Koskela, Nina Kilpinen, Jouni Hakonen, Marja-Liisa Kivistö, Johanna Puska, Jouni Mertanen, Johanna Vaurio-Teräväinen, Christa Lundgren, Tuula Tikkanen, Henna Rajala, Tiina Hämäläinen, Matti Autio, Vesa Rönty, Petri Hakosalo, Anne Seppälä, Heikki-Veikko Lämsä, Tarja Kaltiomaa, Johanna Kiviniemi, Kari Vienonen, Pia Simonen, Jouni Haurinen, Veijo Rio.

**Figure 6 from top left:** Anne Keskivinkka, Vesa Pajala, Johanna Vaurio-Teräväinen, Kari Vattulainen, Tuula Välimäki, Jouni Mertanen, Johanna Puska, Kalevi Koskela, Mikko Leskelä, Tuija Salo, Tuomo Tapanila, Eetu Juujärvi, Tuula Tikkanen, Nea Nevalainen, Kimmo Hurri, Tarja Kaltiomaa, Marja-Liisa Kivistö, Arto Riekkinen, Lea Pöyhönen, Talvikki Skön, Jouni Haurinen, Pia Simonen, Risto Lammi, Miika Kinnunen, Raija Lähdesmäki, Ulla Tuomela, Lilla-Maria Haarala, Mikko Vapanen, Petri Saravuoma, Johanna Pietiläinen, Jarmo Frii, Heidi Wikström, Matti Autio, Nina Kilpinen, Eero Kukkonen, Noora Reinikainen.

# Visualizing contested geographies. The Polar Silk Road in Contemporary Art Practices.

**Elena Mazzi**

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"Places, spaces and situations do not solidify only into stable matter or things but are also active to environments that have a time of their own, a theme that forms a central part of how we should consider posthuman ecologies: multiple layers of time, dynamics and duration that extend much further than the anthropocentric bias would allow."

(Parikka, 2018, p. 56)

China has recently confirmed the future development of the so-called 'New Silk Road by Land and Sea', a global infrastructure strategy adopted by the Chinese Government in 2013. According to its promoters, the project should improve connectivity and cooperation between multiple countries spread across Asia, Africa, and Europe. It is supposed to be 6,300 km long and it should connect about 78 countries. The project is also formerly known as One Belt One Road (OBOR). Initially announced with the purpose of restoring the ancient Silk Route that connected Asia and Europe, the scope of the project has expanded over the years to include new territories and development initiatives. The New Silk Road involves the construction of a large network of roadways, railways, maritime ports, power grids, oil and gas pipelines, and associated infrastructure projects.

As the Arctic seas become increasingly navigable due to global warming and the consequent melting of the ice sheet, the access to new resources is drastically enhanced, as promoters now get to lay their hands on no less than 20% of the world's oil, gas, uranium, gold, platinum and zinc reserves. One of the aims of my PhD dissertation is to develop research-based speculative encounters between geopolitics and visual culture in relation to the Polar Silk Road commercial project.

This chapter is the first step towards a more articulated research where I aim to bring the territorial and cultural landscapes crossed by the Polar Silk Road to the forefront of contemporary art practices. The research revolves around the following questions: How do we visualise contested landscapes today? How can artistic practices and theoretical

research contribute to delineate new experimental tools that may grasp the complexity of our times? Would it be possible to define new forms of knowledge starting from alliances and interactions between humans and non humans living in contested landscapes? If so, what methodology should be followed to define this process in the frame of Arctic regions?

The Polar Silk Road is a very interesting case study because it speaks not only of climate change, but it entangles matters of geopolitics, economy, environment, posthumanism in an area of the world that is complex to define from a geological perspective, subjected to rapid changes, where intricate relationships between natural resources and humans are woven. As Nurmenniemi (2018) states in the essay *Midden messiness*, "the current global crises of ecosystems have to be tackled on all intertwined fronts. It is an unequally distributed issue, not separate from cultural values, language, economy, technological developments, colonisation and other forms of systemic violence" (pp. 14–15).

The potential of imagination and the inclusion of practices of listening and re-learning how to use basic tools such as bodies, gestures, drawing can help in defining and including new methods of visualisation, linking disciplines together. The Polar Silk Road will be my area of investigation. My research is based on the work of theorists such as Guattari, Augé, Parikka, Ingold and Haraway but also on the contribution of visual artists. I am particularly referring to practitioners who have already put into practice the process of connecting, bridging, listening and giving voices to humans and non-humans in contested landscapes such as Mirko Nikolic, Rona Kennedy, Maria Huhmarniemi, Ignacio Acosta, Terike Haapoja, Ursula Biemann, among others.

## Cene After 2000

Environment, social relations and human subjectivity are strongly intertwined in contemporary art practices. Guattari was the first theorist who outlined this relationship through the definition of three different ecological registers (Guattari, 1984). These have been questioned in different ways and approaches through the Nineties and 2000s by artists and architects such as Yona Friedman, Stalker, Urban-Think Tank collective (U-TT), Marjetica Potrč and Mathiueu Duperrex, philosophers such as Deleuze, Augé, Rancière and anthropologists like La Cecla and Ingold, just to mention a few.

In the early 2000s, the scientific definition of Anthropocene marked an intertwining of geological Earth time and human history, suggesting an accelerated version of human impacts on the planet (Crutzen, 2002), defined by an imbalance in the stocks and flows

of major elements in the planetary machinery (Steffen et al., 2007). The Anthropocene influenced the contemporary debate not merely as a geological notion but as a reflection on politics of visual culture (Mirzoeff, 2014) and as a demand to rewrite the genealogies of cultural theories. However, despite its relevance, the Anthropocene might not be the best conceptual solution to address complex interlinks among scientific analysis of natural processes, political agendas, economic drives and the affective desire that still governs the very tightly fossil-fuelled state of the contemporary era (Parikka, 2018; Demos, 2017). The term Anthropocene, by emphasizing the 'anthropos' and etymologically ignoring other species, portrayed itself as the result of a human species act; that is why many other definitions were put forward, such as Capitalocene or Chthulucene (Moore, 2013; Haraway, 2015) as places to slow down and reverse the Anthropocene. Drawing on Haraway's thought, I consider the notion of Chtulucene especially interesting for the intense commitment and collaborative work with other earthlings, where humans are only a part of the whole.

Going back to the Anthropocene, the focal point of it was the scientific analysis around the future of geological eras, prevalently determined by the oceans and especially the melting ice (Wolff, 2014). Here I wonder if we are able to look at geological changes overcoming the culpability aspect raised by Chun (2015). I would rather question this issue by envisioning the entanglement of politics, nature, social science, visual art, design and philosophy.

## Visualization of Contested Landscapes

How do we visualise contested landscapes today? Can artistic practices come to grips with territories affected by multilayered activities, where human action is modifying the materiality of the Earth in such a quick time frame? How can artistic practices and theoretical research contribute to delineate new experimental tools that may grasp the complexity of our times?

In his essay *Cartographies of Environmental Arts*, Jussi Parikka (2018) recalls how "it is by now a truism to state that our environments are complex and constituted of multiple scales of reference, agency and time" (p. 42). This is why artists are exploring new ways of observing, practising and engaging with specific places. Landscapes are no longer understood only as natural spaces, and are rather considered as "mixed arrangements of knowledge and ecology" (p. 43).

In Finland, many artists and art theorists have sought to envision a post-fossil society exploring multispecies communities. The European project 'Frontiers in Retreat - Multi-

disciplinary Approaches to Ecology in Contemporary Art, 2013–2018 -' which I was part of, has played a crucial role in this process, as it revolved around art as a means to structure and analyse new methodologies tackling environmental issues, scientific studies, and on site analysis. Here matter and meaning are not seen as separate but as entangled, addressing principles of co-constitution, symbiogenesis and sympoiesis (Haraway, 2016).

The word 'Frontiers' in *Frontiers in Retreat*, initially referred to the notion of pioneer fronts used by historians to mark the boundary between the known and the unknown, it is here proposed as contexts that actually provide insights into the complex web of human-induced forces at play in the ongoing processes of change (Elfving, 2018).

This reflection connects to my artistic practice, particularly to the first artwork I dedicated to the contested landscape of the Polar Silk Road. Between 2019 and 2021 I collected media articles, books, writings related to this project, thanks to a research grant from Kone Foundation. My research on this topic actually started in 2018, soon after my residency at the Skaftfell Centre for the Arts in Iceland in 2018 - an artist residency program hidden in a remote yet increasingly touristy fjord in Iceland. That is where I heard that the first icebreaker had succeeded in crossing the Arctic from China, reaching the port of Akureyri, not that far from where I was, proving that it was possible to create a new commercial route even in winter time. Since that moment, I realised that the Polar Silk Road could potentially change the entire geopolitical world asset as we know it. However, our global trajectories were affected even more drastically by the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

I decided I needed to experiment with a new visual and written language to translate what I was reading about, and moving images would be the best medium to do that, for they allowed me to include different levels of narration. In preparation for the film I recorded in 2021 I interviewed journalists, diplomats, philosophers, scientists and lawyers specialised in Arctic issues. Journalistic and economic analyses around this topic were already available (De Maria, 2019), but art practice delving on these issues was lacking. While filming in Iceland, I decided to meet some of the people interviewed by Italian journalist Marzio Mian - founder of the non profit organization *The Arctic Times Project* - to ask them about the latest developments regarding the construction process, local decisions, needs and struggles. The final work documented some key places of this transition, such as the possible new port of Finnafjörður in the North-east of the island and the nearby CIAO Institute, the new meteorological-astronomical observatory founded to cement the agreement between China and Iceland, countries that are in the process of defining the new trade route in the Arctic.
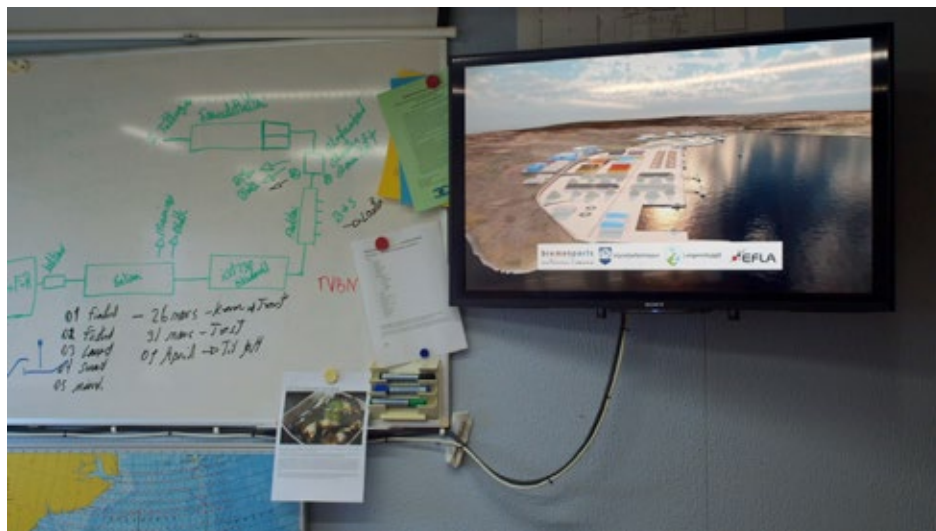
**Figure 1.** Mazzi, E. (2021). *The Upcoming Polar Silk Road* [still from video artwork]. The image shows the possible new port of Finnafjörður. Photograph: Elena Mazzi, 2021.



**Figure 2.** Mazzi, E. (2021). *The Upcoming Polar Silk Road* [still from video artwork]. The image shows *the CIAO Observatory*. Photograph: Elena Mazzi, 2021.

From the interviews I did on site (to local politicians, engineers, researchers, fishermen and farmers) I extracted words and fragments that were included in the final artwork, alternating the video images led by a background voice interpreting a script mixing fictional and real information, adopting a mockumentary approach. All images were filmed by myself and my crew, except for the rendering of the port plan, and video recordings of installed cameras on top of the CIAO observatory.

Going back to Parikka's considerations,

> in the context of ecology in art practices, the evaluative criteria of who, where, when, how connect to ethical issues of why, why not: art connects to assumed liberties of experimentation, which are still constrained by their situations and infrastructures as conditions of the very same experiments". [...] "But those terms of landscape - frontier, lab, museum, observatory and more - carry with them a whole range of connotations that are important when considering the wider field of knowledge about, and in, those border zones where geopolitics and environmental issues meet. (p. 45)

That is why the choice of filming inside and around the CIAO Observatory was crucial for me: the observatory is the place that embodies all the contradictions of the ongoing change: a research centre dealing with ecological issues closely linked to the territory in which it operates is a targeted and acute choice, which shifts the point of view of both the viewer and the investor supporting the project.

By listening to different human voices, in this film I collected and investigated what the impact of the Polar Silk Road could be on the possible receiving country, by following the planned route (China-Iceland). This video is intended only as an exercise of listening and rewriting, towards a more complex approach I will develop in the upcoming months/years of work.

## Against an Overarching Mapping System

Ever since their invention, maps often followed grids, especially in the past. In the seventeenth century, artists drawing maps had to follow specific rules, checked by commissioners. After that, they were replaced under the monarchy by surveyors and geometers. It was then the turn of architects, urban planners and geographers, who lately got access to another technology, the digital data of GIS. That is when maps get out of the grid to get lost in space (Aït-Touati et al., 2022).

In any case, the fundamental approach adopted when creating maps remains the same: an external point of view, a vertical line linking the human eye to the representation of the world. Maps have always had a specific function, from discovering the world to defining borders. Nowadays, artists are starting to look at territories differently, using new tools for visual representation.

As anthropologist and writer Matteo Meschiari (2019) states,

> geography deals essentially with the imaginary, and what really matters in a map is precisely what is missing. Anyone who does not understand this elementary fact has misunderstood the primary vocation of geography, cartography, exploration: to move the imaginary, to move with it. (p. 11)

How can we define new tools for visual representation without an anthropocentric bias? A great example is presented in the book *Terra Forma - a book of speculative maps* (Aït-Touati et al., 2022) where authors present seven models of representation: Soil, Point of Life, Living Landscapes, Borders, Space-Time, (Re)sources, (Re)collection. They start from the "liquid space" described by Francesco Careri in his book *Walkscapes. Camminare come pratica estetica* (2006) - a moving and unpredictable world where islands disappear, species go extinct, ecosystems are desertified, wars break out over water, seafronts are submerged, and valleys are flooded. Here the authors use maps to try to "reread territories through the prism of habitability" (Aït-Touati et al., 2022, p. 186) by means of experimental representations, diagrams, models, outlines, maps, to make visible the invisible and explore ways of locating ourselves in the world.

Going back to the XX century, art historian Leo Steinberg introduced the concept of the flatbed picture plane in a lecture given at the Museum of Modern Art in 1968. The "flatbed" refers to his assertion that the essential verticality of the picture plane in painting had recently been substituted by a fundamental horizontality, like that of a flatbed printing press. For Steinberg (1972), the flatbed picture plane is "any receptor surface on which objects are scattered, on which data is entered, on which information may be received, printed, impressed - whether coherently or in confusion" (p. 84). Importantly, Steinberg's "flatbed" is an abstract substrate, but it is also an irreducibly material one, that is, something onto which "objects are scattered" or "data entered" (p. 84).

I find this concept of the flatbed picture plane particularly interesting, especially if contextualised in a world dominated by verticality, hierarchical structure and top-down approaches. I assume this is a good starting point in changing perspective at the world. What if we switched vertical vision for a horizontal one? How would that work? Would artists be able to apply this vision in their work?

**1** The maps are drawn based on tales of exploration. Explorers travel the world and return to tell of their journey: the lands discovered, the people encountered there, the available resources . . .
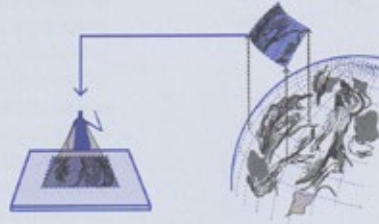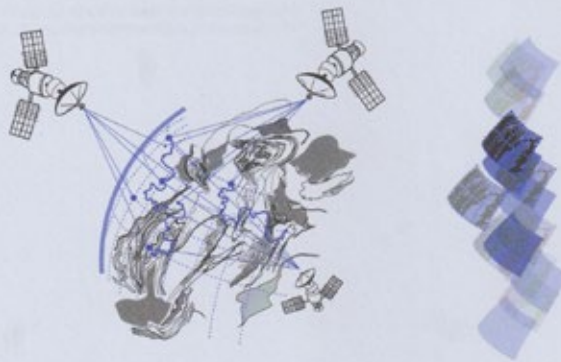
**2** The cartographer drafts the maps in their workshop and then distributes them to the next explorers.
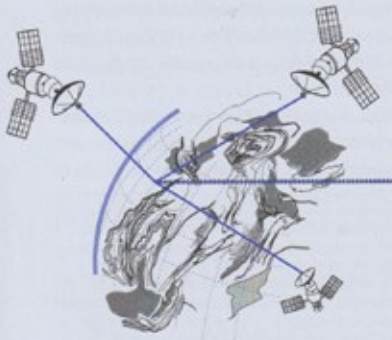
**3** Technological progress: satellites around the planet *map* the Earth. Aerial photographs are sent back to Earth and reconstituted on giant IT servers. Geolocalization is invented: any device with a signal traceable by satellite can be located precisely by its latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates.

**4** Satellites produce maps. The cartographer's drawing is replaced by the machine's "objective" bird's-eye view. Maps are now accessible everywhere, by anyone, and can be used for many tasks, some personal (orienting oneself) and some professional (analyzing and planning the future of territories).
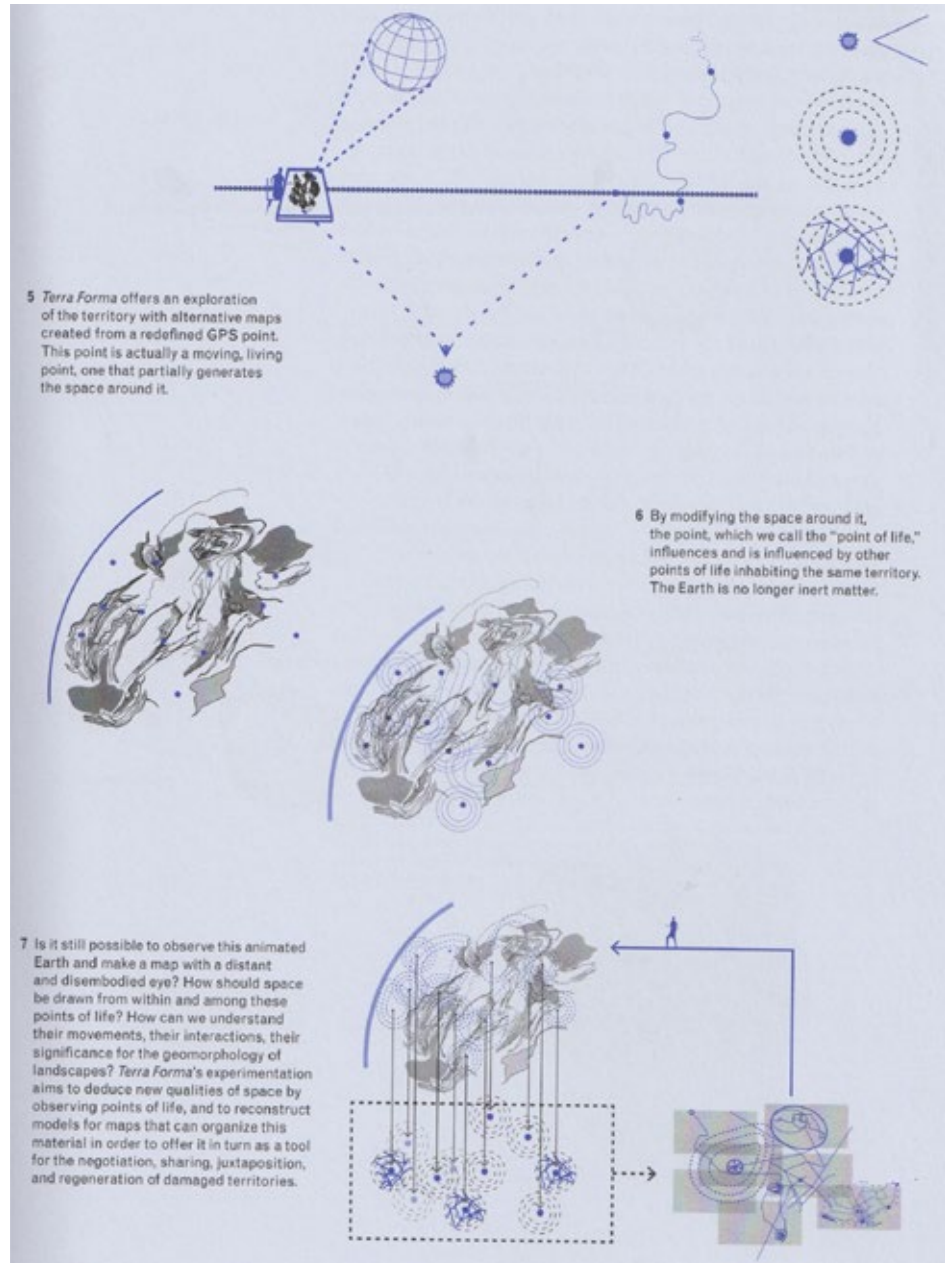
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**5** *Terra Forma* offers an exploration of the territory with alternative maps created from a redefined GPS point. This point is actually a moving, living point, one that partially generates the space around it.

**6** By modifying the space around it, the point, which we call the "point of life," influences and is influenced by other points of life inhabiting the same territory. The Earth is no longer inert matter.

**7** Is it still possible to observe this animated Earth and make a map with a distant and disembodied eye? How should space be drawn from within and among these points of life? How can we understand their movements, their interactions, their significance for the geomorphology of landscapes? *Terra Forma*'s experimentation aims to deduce new qualities of space by observing points of life, and to reconstruct models for maps that can organize this material in order to offer it in turn as a tool for the negotiation, sharing, juxtaposition, and regeneration of damaged territories.

**Figure 3.** Brief history of mapmaking and introduction to Terra Forma method (Aït-Touati et al., 2022, pp. 14–15).

I developed the concept of the flatbed picture plane in the installation *Sápmi Flatbed* I realized for the Luleå Biennial 2022. Invited to work with local archaeologists, I tried to study, collect, and put together different voices. I started from the research led by the archaeologists and their on-site dialogue with Sami local communities to find out traces of the ancient trade route. From there, I delved into the close relationship Sami people have with non-humans, to investigate and perceive the landscape in which they have used to live and move.

In 2021 I was invited to participate in the Luleå Biennial (2022)—Craft & Art, in Swedish Lapland (Norrbotten region). The exhibition did not have an overarching theme, avoiding to "impose an outsider frame on a geography that has a complex history and one that we neither live or were born in" curators Onkar Kular and Chistina Zetterlund write in the press release of the biennial (2022). Indeed, they started working by listening and learning from the region, collecting stories and local facts. Kular and Zetterlund (2022) decided to formulate four principles to follow during the research process:

> - *Beyond border thinking,* to think beyond established boundaries between crafts and arts, to go beyond sharp divisions between practices, people, traditions and places.

> - *Decentering,* to generate dialogues with places and people, listen, learn and not to impose, to avoid things through predetermined hierarchies and value standards.

> - *Earthed imagination,* to identify practices that shift imagination from the individual to the collective, to allow us to consider the world we inhabit and leave behind.

> - *Custodianship,* to work with an overall ecology of the biennial, to manage its resources and to take care of them for future hosts.

Extractivism is a growing presence in the region. This area has been continuously depicted as empty, with its resources waiting to be used, while multinational mining corporations are already operating in the area.

The biennial proposed a very interesting thread, named *crafting beyond the wasteland,* mostly based on conversations, involving locals, Sami people and starting from local materials. The conversations opened up discussions on different forms of colonialism in the world, united by the aim of conquering land and extracting resources.

They worked with a constellation of partners, spaces, organisations, sharing principles and making kin and geographies of friendships throughout different types of

collaborations. At the same time, the biennial used where possible recycled materials, displays, structures, even maintaining continuity with the graphic design of the previous biennial.

In my case, I have been invited to collaborate with archaeologists working on the project GLAS – Glaciär arkeologi i Sápmi (Glacial Archaeology in Sápmi). They collect materials that emerge and become accessible as glacial ice melt. Here, I decided to follow the research process itself, rather than its results, and to explore the conditions in which knowledge is created. I had the opportunity to meet archaeologists Markus Fjellström and Jannica Grimbe and follow their research in progress during a two-week residency in different locations of Swedish Lapland. I immediately noticed the importance of the body postures, gestures and actions used by the archaeologists. They do not only search in the ground; they have to understand where objects could be in an incredibly vast area with a very low population. That is why dialogue with local commu-
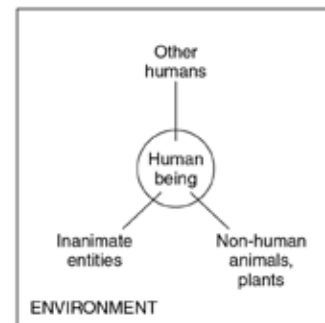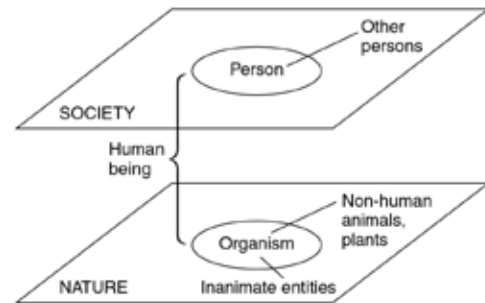


**Figure 4** Western anthropological (above) and hunter-gatherer (below) economies of knowledge (Ingold, 2000, p. 55).

**Figure 5.** Mazzi, E. (2022). *Sápmi Flatbed* [Installation] Norrbottens Museum, as part of the Luleå Biennial (2022)—Craft & Art. Photograph: Elena Mazzi, 2022.

nities is fundamental: they have to search for old commercial routes used by indigenous to move across lands and territories, to exchange and sell food, products, and to let reindeer move during seasons.

As Tim Ingold writes in *The perception of the environment - essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*:

> Hunting and gathering are operations that take place in nature, consisting of interactions between human organisms with 'needs', and environmental resources with the potential to satisfy them. Only after having been extracted is the food transferred to the domain of society, wherein its distribution is governed by a schema for sharing, a schema inscribed in the social relations which the economic practices of sharing serve to reproduce. [...] In Figure 4 this anthropological conception of the economy of knowledge is contrasted with that of the people themselves. In their account

**Figure 6.** Map of the Arctic seen by Sami, and presented at the Ájtte Museum (Sami Museum) in Jokkmokk, Swedish Lapland. Photograph: Elena Mazzi, 2022.

> (lower diagram) there are not two worlds, of nature and society, but just one, saturated with personal powers, and embracing both humans, the animals and plants on which they depend, and the features of the landscape in which they live and move. (Ingold, 2000, pp. 56–57).

I started to catalogue objects found by archaeologists while meeting them in different locations of the area taken into account, and I decided to include them in a livable installation, an environment where the public could be physically involved in the horizontal process of searching, unfolding, analysing, finding, being together. The installation is a multi-dimensional rug made from several layers of recycled textiles that invite the viewer inside.

I proposed a fundamental shift in perspective from the conventional, vertical axis of knowledge work that relies on observations and extractions, to a horizontal perspective

revolving around the idea of connecting with the earth and spending time among the people and non-humans that live in and with the land. Each layer consists of a different attempt of mapping: first of all, the Arctic seen from the Sami perspective. The Arctic, always squeezed in the western perspective and in western cartography, is much bigger and it has a completely different shape in the image defined by Sami people, presented in the Sami museum in Jokkmokk. On the second layer, the selected area by the archaeologists to search for materials in the melting ice. On the third layer, concentric levels of land where objects found until now by the archaeologists can be searched by the public by moving, lifting and touching the artwork. Here, the use of touch, shape, texture of the recycled materials and imagination are potential connectors to define the relationship between existing materiality, hidden resources, past and present worlds. The title - *Sápmi Flatbed -* comes from Leo Steinberg's concept of the "flatbed picture plane", where a "flatbed" is a recipient of methods, information, narratives, and objects, as explained before.

## Conclusions

Perceiving the environment we live in is a complex process. It can not be done in the same way in any specific territory we are looking at, so it is important to search for new tools to represent it. Maps can become living tools, they do not only represent archival material we refer to, or devices to be guided from afar in the landscape. The environment keeps on changing very fast, and we can not only rely on digital tools to read the world.

Walking in the landscape remains the first direct and immediate means to enter a complex and dynamic geographical scenario (Ingold, 2008). It is a way to interact and exchange reciprocally, following rhizomatic directions and dimensions. The slow movement of walking in the landscape allows us to have the right concentration to consider possible ways of reading it, including multiple factors.

Meschiari (2018) writes:

> Between a map and a place there is some real relationship, albeit symbolic. Between a map and the mind a relationship of reading, of interpretation, of construction of systems of correspondences is established which is just as real. If the place changes the map must also change, otherwise the map is *old*, while if only the map changes, the mind considers it *wrong*. (pp. 139–140)

The current geopolitical situation pushes us to go in search of new sources, new areas rich in minerals, while we should instead save species, protect the soil, in a word, slow down and care. The Arctic, as well as many areas of South America and Africa, is taken by storm, in a rush to explore territories difficult to reach, considered marginal. They become part of the new geographies of exploitation. What was previously considered a geographical, philosophical, literary myth due to its impracticability and geographical conformation of the ice, is now "an immense archipelago undergoing dramatic transformation, open to ever more tame travels, with 4-zero tourist offers, made accessible for the first time in 100,000 years by global warming" (Meschiari, 2019, p. 12).

At the same time, the feeling of having an unlimited world to conquer has been replaced by a growing awareness of "planetary boundaries". The innocence of the first travellers has been lost, and we now know that such expeditions are fatal, says Aït-Touati (2022, p. 9). Who is the 'we' representing? Is it the majority of the population? The human population? Or can 'we' speak also for other living beings? The possibility of making other living beings visible can come from the visual arts, including them in tools of visualisation, and this was the attempt of Terra Forma, to "document the living as well as their traces, to generate maps based on bodies, rather than on topographies, frontiers, and territorial borders" (Aït-Touati et al., 2022, p. 10). With the digital revolution, we are now able to reveal the metamorphosis of territories, but "they lack in narrative, an assemblage of stories told, a multiplicity of people and narrators that allow a map to become a synthesis, to be simultaneously unique and multiple" (Aït-Touati et al., 2022, p. 12).

Artists have already started to work on giving voices to other living beings by using different media such as performance, written texts, interventions in public space, audiovisual installations and workshops as ways to start (material and somatic) conversations. I think about Mirko Nikolic, Rona Kennedy, Maria Huhmarniemi, Ignacio Acosta, Terike Haapoja and Ursula Biemann, just to mention a few.

Artists, researchers and visual designers have to keep on proposing new possibilities, new methodologies to define the challenging geography we live in, to be aware of what is happening. Listening to a multitude of living beings, re-learning how to use basic tools such as bodies, gestures, drawing as new languages is at the base to start open discussions between disciplines, to embrace the civil society, the places of the city and of daily life beyond the spaces specifically dedicated to art.

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# Connecting the Past -
# Evaluating an Indigenous Sámi Heritage Search Portal in Schools

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**O**ne of the key trends shaping the future is digitalization, which is currently happening in all life sectors. While digitalization opens up many imaginary futures with novel technologies and applications, it can also help us to connect with the past. In this chapter, we address how the past and the future can be connected in the design process of the indigenous Sámi digital heritage archives search portal. The search portal connects the digital archives of individual memory organizations and provides new means to access the Sámi cultural heritage collections that are geographically distributed. The portal brings together centuries-old cultural records and modern technology. When considering the large portion of the Sámi cultural heritage artifacts which have been scattered around Europe and beyond, digital technologies can provide an important channel for the Sámi community in connecting with one's own past.

The search portal was designed and developed by following the user-centric design methodology, which emphasizes integrating the potential users as part of the design activities throughout the whole design process. As part of the user-centric design process, Sámi school children and their teachers were involved in trying out the prototype version of the search portal, with which they could access the old historical materials related to Sámi culture.

In this chapter, we present the process and findings of the school pilots conducted at Vuotso and Kilpisjärvi schools in Lapland, Finland, and feedback collected through interviews and field study observations. The pilots bind together the cultural education and the design process of the digital service, e.g. its user interface design. We also discuss how interactive technologies can be applied to the cultural heritage context and be used by museums and archives. In the potential futures, it is expected that different historical materials can be accessed in digital form over a distance, which eases up connecting with one's own past, but also provides opportunities for education and research. Digital access can provide new means for the repatriation and returning of cultural artifacts.

## Background

### *Possibilities of Digital Access to Cultural Heritage*

Digitalization is one of the big trends happening globally in every life sector, and it is also a key factor in the future memory organizations such as museums and archives. Digitalization of information has already brought about significant changes to museums and archives, as the traditional modes of preserving, accessing, and sharing information have been transformed by the integration of digital technologies. The capacity to have collections in digital form and connect online has enabled museums and archives to store, organize, and disseminate their collections to wider audiences and over a distance. Especially the Covid-19 pandemic gave a push for digital and remotely accessible virtual visits to access cultural heritage artifacts (Samaroudi et al., 2020).

New digital services, such as virtual exhibitions on cultural heritage are emerging. The discussion on digital cultural heritage services continuously brings up that digital access is needed for offering remote access to exhibitions as well as for enriching the possibilities to present cultural heritage content to wider audiences, and it is the future trend to go (Geng, 2023; Li, Nie & Ye, 2022; Müller 2021). However, it is generally regarded that the user experience of digitally accessed cultural heritage services needs to be improved. Exploration of different possibilities of remote services and the improvement of the user experience with them is facing a growing demand (Li et al., 2022).

For instance, the transformation from a physical exhibition to a digital one brings benefits in accessibility but limitations in the user experience (Wolf et al., 2018). Wolf et al., (2018) conducted an experiment comparing a physical and virtual version of a museum exhibition and reported how the content accessibility from everybody, everywhere, and at any time was highlighted as the main benefit of VR, as well as a better ability to focus on the content. However, participants criticized that the authentic atmosphere was lost in VR.

As the research presented in this chapter is set in the geographical context of Lapland, it is relevant to mention digital applications for accessing cultural heritage developed in this geographical context. A mobile game to introduce Kemijärvi town history introduces historical characters and buildings of the local area (Luiro et al., 2019). The application was created to provide people, for instance school children, to have a playful opportunity to get to know the town's history. As another example of the prior art, the historical graveyard of old Salla was created as a 3D virtual world (Häkkilä et al., 2019). The interactive exhibition piece is now at the Salla Museum of War and Reconstruction, Finland, and can be used with a virtual headset offering an immersive experience.

The existence of ethical questions related to technology development has gained an increasing amount of attention in recent years. It has been pointed out that the introduction of emerging technologies brings up new ethical dilemmas (Dhirani et al., 2023). The ethical dimension of digital services for accessing cultural heritage has also been acknowledged (Häkkilä et al., 2020). On one hand, digital technologies allow more possibilities to present different viewpoints on the content and pluriversal perspectives on cultural heritage content and discussion (Häkkilä et al., 2022). For instance, Hirsch et al., (2022) have created augmented reality views at historical sites with tragic events, and present the moral dilemma with a provoking question "How would you have decided?" to the user. This stimulates a speculative and ethical discussion on historical events, mediated with digital technologies. Correll (2019) has demonstrated how different visualization techniques can have a significant role in drawing attention to the human side of historical events and uses the tragedies behind numbers in war history as an example. In the virtual representation of the Salla WW2 graveyard, Häkkilä et al., (2019) presented a visualization of the number of soldiers buried there, to provide a visual description of the magnitude of the tragedy of war in lost lives. On the other hand, providing digital access to cultural historical materials opens them up to large audiences and at the same time increases the risk of cultural appropriation (Häkkilä et al., 2022). It may also occur that augmenting or making virtual reality versions of historical artifacts is not always considered appropriate (Wolf et al., 2018).

### *Decolonizing Design*
Developing a digital tool for accessing indigenous Sámi cultural heritage archives inevitably also touches the discourse of decolonization. The decolonization movement is a socio-political movement aiming to recognize and dismantle the legacies of colonialism in modern societies. It recognizes that colonialism has had a significant and long-lasting impact on colonized people, touching on them widely and including political systems, economies, and cultures. From the colonized point of view, colonialism has meant, in addition to succumbing to institutional and legal power, the introduction of capitalism and alien cultural values, and leading to the erosion of existing communities (Duara, 2004, p. 4). Decolonizing promotes restoring the culture and cultural autonomy of the people that have formerly been colonized.

In recent years, the decolonization movement has gained more attention, and it has become increasingly intertwined with the identity-political struggles of marginalized groups, see e.g. (Atallah, 2016; Martineau, 2015; Nielsen, 2021). When introducing

digital technologies that link with the colonial history of such groups, the viewpoint of decolonizing design should be addressed. In systematic literature investigating the cross-sections of decolonizing design, cultural heritage, and technology, Paananen et al., (2022) reveal that although technology itself appears as neutral, it is applied through a lens of values that can be intertwined with politics and power.

When technological solutions are introduced and applied, the need to understand the local context and become culturally calibrated with it is highlighted (Kaplan 2004). To improve the risk of imposing colonialist values in the design, the design processes should be integrated with the local and cultural context. Paananen et al., (2022) highlight that this can be accomplished through participatory and co-creation approaches. Also, Greru (2018) has called for more participatory approaches in the context of decolonizing design.

### Indigenous Sámi Culture as the Design Context

The Sámi people's homeland, Sápmi, is located in the mid and northern parts of Norway and Sweden, northern Finland, and the Kola Peninsula, Russia. With 60 000–100 000 individuals the Sámi are an ethnic minority with their own culture and languages in the above-mentioned nation-states, and the only ethnic group which has been defined as indigenous people by the European Union, see e.g. (Lehtola 2005).

Archival materials on the history and culture of the Sámi people are scattered across the Nordic countries and the rest of Europe, even beyond that. Scholars and explorers have had an interest in Sápmi and Sámi people since the 17th century. With these travelers, different kinds of documents and materials, such as travel diaries, letters, photographs, drawings and other images, audio records, and films ended up outside the Sápmi, to the holdings of archives and other memory organizations, e.g. national archives and libraries, university and museum collections around Europe. Altogether, it has been a challenge to find and study these archival materials for the Sámi people e.g. for those studying their own family history, or for the Sámi culture and history studies in general.

The archival cultural heritage of the Indigenous People has been a topical issue among archive professionals. In 2019 the Expert Group on Indigenous Matters of the International Council on Archives (ICA) published a declaration *Tandalaya: Adelaide Declaration* which challenged the jurisdictional archives of the world to secure the Indigenous People's rights to their own cultural heritage. Among the topics discussed in this context are the return of the Indigenous People's cultural heritage in digitalized form, and ethical issues regarding the use of these often culturally sensitive materials when they can be openly accessed. (Kestilä 2020; Christen 2011; Mäkikalli et al., 2021)

## Designing Nuohtti Search portal

### *What is Nuohtti*

Nuohtti search tool for digital Sámi heritage archives is an online tool, where you can use one search word to search for materials from several different archives. Today, Nuohtti is open to everyone interested in the history and culture of the Sámi people. Above all, Nuohtti offers Sámi people the opportunity to get to know the historical materials of their own culture in more detail. Figure 1 illustrates the use of the search portal starting from its home page, where the user can type in a search term.

In addition to searching the digital archives with a keyword, the materials can be explored by selecting an area from a map, or by defining the historical period from the timeline, Figure 2, left. Technically, the service is built in such a way that its database can also be expanded and more archival materials can be brought out later, for example as they are digitized in European memory organizations. The technology used also enables
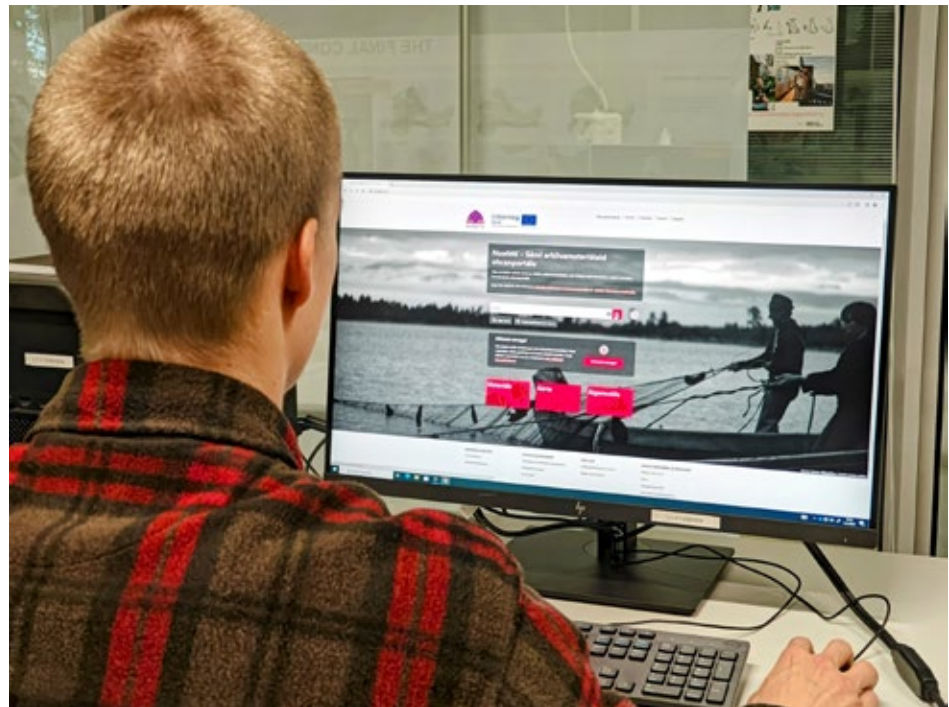


**Figure 1.** Using Nuohtti search portal and the starting page. Photograph: Matilda Kalving, 2023.
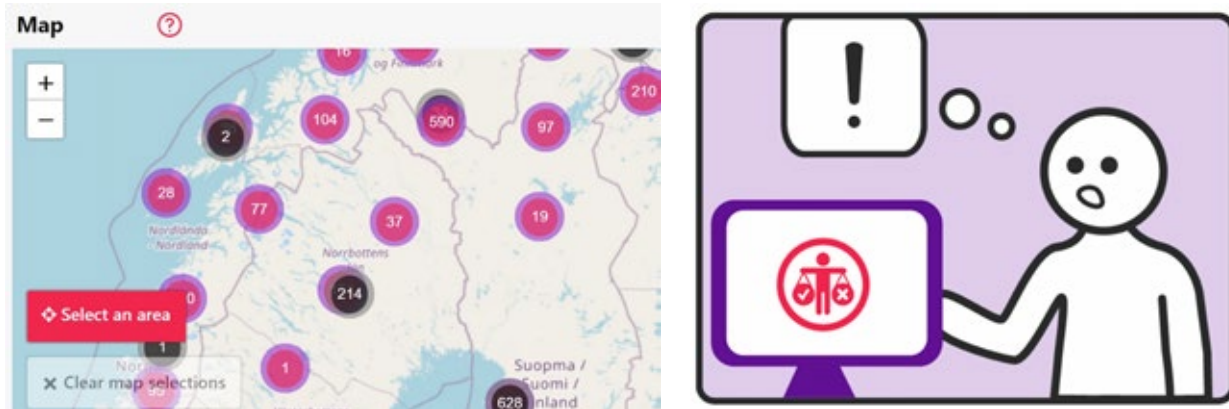
**Figure 2.** Nuohtti supports searching the archival materials with a map or timeline (left) and includes ethical guidelines for the material use (right). Design by Esa-Pekka Tuppi, 2020.

the implementation of language versions, including other Sámi languages. As an important part of the development process, ethical guidelines for the use of digital archives of Sámi cultural heritage materials were developed (Kestilä, 2020). The details of this process are described by Kestilä (2020). The ethical guidelines were integrated into the search service by using different user interface (UI) design solutions. Figure 2 (right) illustrates the visualization which is used to draw the user's attention to the ethical use of digital cultural heritage materials.

The Nuohtti search service was developed in the Interreg Nord project Digital Access to Sámi Heritage Archives, in cooperation with the Sámi Archives / National Archives of Finland, the Sámi Archives / the National Archives of Norway, the University of Lapland, the University of Oulu and the University of Umeå. At the end of the project, Nuohtti was transferred to the National Archives of Finland, and then further to the shared ownership of the National Archives of Norway, Sweden, and Finland. Nuohtti search portal was launched for public use on 2.2.2023., and it is today openly available for people to use. At the moment there are archival materials from the holdings of 32 memory organizations (archives and museums in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Germany), ca 95 000 records in all.

### User-Centric Design as an Approach
In designing and developing the Nuohtti search service, user-centric design (UCD) approach was applied. User-centric design approach places the end-user in the center of the

design process and seeks to involve them throughout the design process, emphasizing their central role (Norman, 2013). At the beginning of a typical UCD process, end-user research involving interviews and field observations is conducted. This information is then used to guide the following concept design phase. The concept design phase typically involves participatory design sessions to involve users in the design process. Towards the end of the design process, prototypes are evaluated through user testing, and the designs are refined based on the feedback received. Overall, user-centric design offers a holistic approach to product design, which will lead to an improved project outcome.

In the design case of Nuohtti, the technical framework and the current digital archive search tools by Finna search service were the starting point for the development. Finna search service is maintained and developed by National Library of Finland together with a large consortium. This set the basic framework for the features and rough UI layout for Nuohtti development. During the design and development process, feedback to improve the features, user interface, and user experience with the search portal was collected through numerous expert evaluations, user tests, and public demo sessions and pilots. In addition, the Sámi community was involved through the project steering committee, which included Sámi community representatives from Finland, Sweden, and Norway.

In the following, we describe piloting the Nuohtti prototype in a field study. The pilots were organized at two schools located in Finnish Lapland, with the target to reach out to the Sámi community. Piloting was conducted towards the end of the design and development project, and in UCD terms, it was in-the-wild testing of the prototype, in the field in authentic use context and with a functional prototype. In-the-wild testing sets high requirements to prototype maturity, as well as demand effort in setting up and running the studies (Häkkilä & Cheverst, 2019). However, even though in-situ studies with technology are time-consuming and costly, they are regarded as worth the trouble of organizing (Rogers et al., 2007). They provide valuable information, for instance, of the user experience in authentic use situations and of how the application is perceived by end-users.

## School Pilots

### *Set-up of the Pilots*
To evaluate the search portal, two pilot studies were organized. They were conducted in two schools located in northern Finland, which were known for their strong connections to the Sámi community. The first pilot (Kilpisjärvi pilot) included a pilot session with school children conducted remotely due to Covid-19 restrictions, and an open face-to-

**Figures 3 and 4.** Piloting the Nuohtti search portal in Kilpisjärvi. Photograph: Matilda Kalving, 2022.

face event after the school day, where the members of the local community were invited to explore the search portal and provided an opportunity for feedback. The second pilot (Vuotso pilot) was organized for school children and teachers.

The primary aim of the pilots was to evaluate the usability and ethical guidelines of the search portal and to reach out to the Sámi community. The pilots aimed to assess the usefulness of the search service in educational settings, where the search portal may be particularly relevant, and sought to provide feedback for the technical team and user interface designers about the improvement needs.

The first remote school pilot and the face-to-face pilot open to the whole community was conducted at Gilbbesjávrri Skuvla (Kilpisjärvi school). The remote pilot included 18 students and 4 teachers and consisted of presenting the search portal, letting the participants try searches, and open discussion. In the face-to-face pilot, the research data collection included a survey, a questionnaire to assess the participants' first impressions of the search portal, observation notes, and general discussion. The participants were welcomed to use the Nuohtti search portal to search Sámi cultural heritage materials as they pleased. In the survey, the participants were first asked whether they found the site easy to understand. After this, the participants were asked to give feedback about the search functions available on the site, such as the map and the timeline features. The questionnaire also included a question on the ethical guidelines provided on the site. Finally, an open-ended comment section was provided to share the overall impressions of the search portal and to offer additional feedback and suggestions.

The event was also attended by the researcher who was primarily responsible for the ethical guidelines, and who answered any questions that attendees had about the development of them. This open event was advertised on the community social media sites and by locals, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only two people attended the pilot. Despite the low turnout, the pilot provided valuable insights on the usability of the search service, which was later delivered to the technical development team.

The second pilot was conducted in Vuohču Skuvla (Vuotso school) and was divided into two sessions that were conducted on the same day in separate classrooms. The sessions involved the school's Sámi language classes, with seven and six children, respectively, age between 8-16 years, and one teacher in each session. The pilot sessions consisted of a presentation of the search portal and letting the participants test the portal, all of which were conducted in North Sámi language. After the testing, a small workshop was held in Swedish and Finnish.

During the workshop session, the participants were allowed to freely explore the search portal for digital Sámi archives. The workshop was constructed around two main tasks and four pre-selected archive pictures. The first question was "What did you like about the search engine?" and was presented on paper, with a printout of the screenshot presenting the search service results page, Figure 4. Attendees were encouraged to use post-it notes to indicate which parts of the page they particularly liked, and they were encouraged to provide their thoughts on their reasoning. The second task consisted of presenting three example search queries with three pictures found in the search portal, pre-selected by a researcher with Sámi heritage, who applied her knowledge of the area and culture to choose three local pictures. The pictures featured 1) a boy and a dog, 2) a man, a child, and a reindeer, and 3) a man and a kota. The schoolchildren were asked to explain which search results did they like the most and why. Attendees were also tasked to mark their favorite picture and explain in writing why they preferred that picture. Throughout the workshop, the researchers also encouraged the attendees to discuss their thoughts out loud.

### Feedback from the Pilots
With the two pilots, we were able to collect feedback from multiple sources, including the questionnaire, observation notes, and two workshops. By conducting these two pilots, we were able to evaluate the effectiveness of the search portal and ethical guidelines within the Sámi community and to gather feedback from community members, school personnel, and children.

Both participants providing feedback in the first (Kilpisjärvi) pilot indicated that they found the site to be user-friendly and that the search functions available on the site, such as the map and timeline features be effective. Both participants reported that they found the portal to be a valuable source of interesting information. Additionally, they expressed their optimism about the portal's future potential, as the number of available information sources including digitalized cultural heritage items increases.

Regarding the ethical guidelines integration into the Nuohtti user interface, valuable feedback was received. In the discussion phase in the end, both participants thought that the longer version of the ethical guidelines was seen as a necessary part of the service. However, at the same time, the participants anticipated that they were not likely to read the long text. As such, the comic strip visualization, Figure 2, was deemed necessary. Yet, the current visualization was wished to be improved for its clarity and purpose. Also, it was concluded that the ethical guidelines in the search tool should be made more visible to users to notice them. This feedback led to some adjustments in the next UI design iteration.

The second pilot conducted at Vuotso School highlighted that especially the ability to search the local history and knowledge connected with one's family heritage was interesting and meaningful when the Sámi heritage archives search portal was used. Attendees expressed their preferences for various parts of the search portal, and the local pictures provided a relevant context to the study. The responses to the first task indicated that the map and timeline features were greatly appreciated. One of the participants pointed out that the search results were restricted to artifacts and photos in European digital archives, and, similarly to the feedback from the Kilpisjärvi pilot, the participants were looking forward to getting access to even more archived materials. The researchers also observed that the children were much quicker and more confident to play with the features than adults. Methodologically, the post-it note method allowed giving feedback quickly and easily, and the open discussion encouraged attendees to share their thoughts and opinions.

The post-it notes collected during the second task were analyzed to determine the participants preferred example search result. We found that the picture of the boy and the dog received the highest number of notes, followed by the picture of a man and a kota, and the third, the picture of the men, children, and reindeer. The main reasons why the participants preferred the first picture were the presence of a dog, the overall quality, and the boy's interaction with the dog. Some also mentioned that the overall scenery and cool sled were a factor. The second most popular image was perceived as

aesthetically pleasing and effective due to its vintage quality. Both in the first and second tasks, it was clear that the school children participating in the pilot preferred cute animals or familiar scenes and people in the search results. The picture of the boy and the dog was the clear favorite, likely due to the cute and heartwarming nature of the picture.

During the discussion about the photos, one participant recognized a familiar person and shared stories of that person with the whole classroom. It was evident that they felt a strong connection to the places and were curious to know more. The enthusiasm displayed by the children for the search portal was a positive sign, indicating that it could potentially generate interest in learning more about their local area. School children were eager towards the service, as expressed e.g. with the comments "When can we use this?", and "I want to try this with my family!".

After the data collection, the information was compiled into reports that were presented to the project team as a whole and especially to the technical development group. These reports and presentations by the researchers provided a comprehensive overview of the data collected and provided useful information for the development of the service. The results can inform the development and implementation of the search portal and ethical guidelines that are tailored to the unique needs and perspectives of the Sámi community.

## Discussion

The user experience design of digital cultural heritage services needs to take into account cultural sensitivities, and this design approach must be integrated into different phases of the overall design process (Häkkilä et al., 2022). The pilot studies showed that the connection with the local history, the family heritage, and one's own culture were clearly the interesting aspects that rose the interest towards the search portal. As the search portal was still under testing and not yet published, the school children eagerly asked when it would be available so they could go home and try it with their families. The pilots highlighted the importance of involving community members in the development and implementation of the search portal and ethical guidelines, as the feedback could be passed on to the design and development teams to refine the features further. The field studies were also an important trial in testing the technical maturity and usability of the service prototype, and we were able to collect feedback to improve the UI layout and visualizations.

Digital access also provides a new flavor to the repatriation discussion related to the returning of cultural artifacts, which is a topical theme with indigenous cultural heritage (Harlin, 2018). During the pilot, it was pointed out that a wider inclusion of different Sámi heritage archives reaching beyond Europe would have been desired. This would also support finding lesser-known artifacts that may have been transported through emigration or other means. These questions are critical for promoting a more inclusive and comprehensive search portal and would be an important next step for further development. Digital access can provide new means for repatriation.

There are potential methodological limitations in the conducted workshops, such as the small number of participants and the limited number of pictures provided in the second workshop, or the potential for the researcher bias in selecting them. We aimed to tackle this by selecting example pictures from the same area, and by having a member of the Sámi community choose the final pictures. Future studies could expand the research presented here by including a wider range of images and other archive materials, and by involving more members from the indigenous Sámi community. It should also be noticed that the pilots described in this chapter did not focus on developing and evaluating the ethical guidelines, but the comments regarding them rose in the general discussions related to the Nuohtti prototype. This important topic was separately addressed as part of the development project with additional research and feedback collection (Kestilä, 2020).

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have described a field study using the Nuohtti search service for accessing digital Sámi heritage archives. When designing and developing Nuohtti, user-centric design approach was applied. Piloting Nuohtti service took place towards the end of the development project, and in-the-wild testing of the prototype in authentic use situations at schools and communities provided valuable feedback on the user experience and use cases of the service. The salient findings on usability and user experience were passed on to the technical team and UI designers for refining the search service user interface. Altogether, the interest in the search service for digital archives on Sámi heritage archives was high. In the school pilots, it was also evident that school children were fluent and confident in using a digital search service for Sámi cultural heritage.

Digital technologies can be used to bridge the past and the future. The Nuohtti search tool provides a new tool for indigenous Sámi people to search for information about their past and contributes to the decolonizing discussion on indigenous cultural heritage. The Nuohtti online service is now maintained by the national archives of Norway, Sweden, and Finland, as well as the Sámi archives of Norway and Finland, and is open for the public to use.

## Acknowledgments

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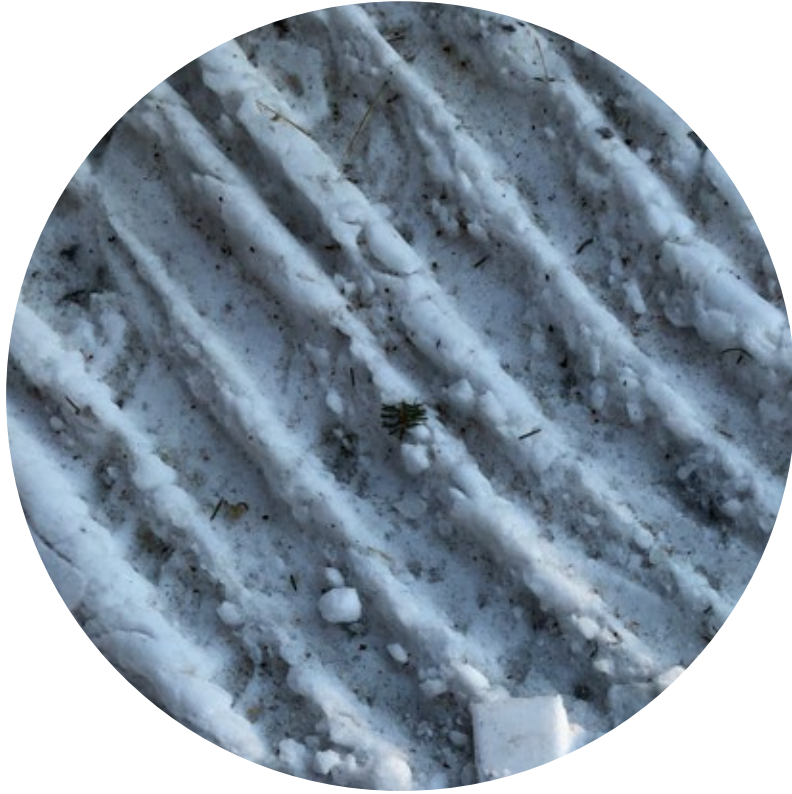
# Structural Moves in Norrland

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**B**ased in Umeå, Northern Sweden, this project looks at the phenomena of moving whole houses and other buildings. This practice occurs throughout Sweden, in the USA, New Zealand and other territories. Moving structures this way has occurred for over a hundred years. This research picks up the practice, initially through the potential spectacle of the event of moving structures, and then focuses on a more material and poetic aspect of the practice. It has not been researched in depth and much of what seems to be understood as a normal, if infrequent phenomena, raises questions about the use of resources, spatial planning and conceptions and representations of space and artifacts. There is also an appreciation of the substantial immediacy of process of moving a particular house, the aquired skills and knowledge of the mover, of materials and substances in the process and also how it stands in contrast to the production and representation of architecture and spatial plans framed through the conceptual and actual lens of digital screens.

The process of moving a particular house became the subject of documentation, from stages of preparation to the uplift, the unsettling, moving and settling. Through repeated visits to the sites of the house moves, it became possible to develop awareness of the history and extent of this practice. The house mover Magnus Mårtensson has more than forty years of experience of the history of house and building moving.

Part of the research was to re-visit original sites and the new location of the house after several months. This was a photographic and video documentation and material for re-thinking the process. The form of this was further photographic and video work, to record and project the mid-summer move, along with historic materials from the public library history collection and regional museums onto and into sites, buildings and surfaces.

This chapter has four parts. There are inserted transcripts of comments from a video interview with Magnus Mårtensson and his son Andreas Mårtensson (who had worked with Magnus on house moving). There is an historic overview of the practices of moving houses by James Benedict Brown. There is also a theoretical frame to the process of moving houses and the fourth section is a description of some of the creative and potentially

speculative re-presentation of the process and practice of moving buildings, which has been developed collaboratively with Robin Serjeant, through the Relate North Symposium at Yukon University in January 2023

The inserted transcripts develop the spatial significance of this particular form of building moving. It allows for close reading of the economy of the production of space, through this traditional process, which is associated with restrictions on the dimensions of the space. It occurs without the use of specialist cranes and cages.

> Its hard to use cranes because they use a lot of space. (Andreas Mårtensson)

> You need a huge crane to lift a light load – you need 2 cranes, so cranes is rarely an option. (Magnus Mårtensson)

## Moving Materials and Ways of Life

On a small bluff, a few kilometres from Harrsele, near Vännäs in Northern Sweden, stands a bright yellow farmhouse. Framed by two large red barns, home to forty head of cattle and a workshop that can be used to fix anything from a fuse to a forklift truck, the timber house sits on a foundation of large granite blocks. Clad in bright yellow painted timber, the house has stood there for more than one hundred and twenty years, overlooking broad valleys to the east and west. It is one of the oldest houses in the vicinity, but it started its life some 40km to the west. In the late nineteenth century, when inland travel was easier in the winter, it was moved to its current location. The house was disassembled, and its component parts were stacked on horse-drawn sledges. Its owners had realised that there would be better opportunities for them to farm the land elsewhere. So, the house would be moved.

Although absurd to outsiders, the process of moving houses (husflyttningar) in northern Sweden is quite common. A husflyttning will always draw a crowd of spectators and perhaps get a photograph in the local newspaper, but what is most remarkable about the act of moving a house is how unremarkable it is.

Historically, it was more common for timber houses to be disassembled, moved in carefully numbered pieces like the farmhouse described above, and reassembled on a new site.

Houses have been moved in Sweden for as long as houses have been built. When southern Scandinavian people started to colonise the north of Norway and Sweden, they did so in pursuit of trading relationships with the south. Whereas the indigenous Sámi peoples derived their living directly from the land and sea, southerners' survival in the

north was always framed by economic relationships with the south. Therefore, the southern Swedish relationship to the north has always been defined by economic pragmatism: the forest is a resource to be harvested, and the ground contains minerals to be mined. If a resource exists, a community will flourish to harvest it. If a resource is depleted or no longer economically viable, that community will inevitably diminish and disappear.

Whereas contemporary timber houses in Sweden are typically of frame construction, the oldest buildings are made of solid wood. Trees are felled and trunks are planed into pieces that are laid horizontally on top of one another. These beams are held together by tabs and grooves cut into the top and bottom. Wooden pegs or steel nails brace pieces together, contributing to a naturally sturdy and well insulated interior. Moving such a building was a matter of disassembling it and numbering the components so that they could be re-assembled in correct order. With the availability of vehicles powered by fossil-fuels, the possibility of moving a house in its entirety became conceivable.

So unimaginably vast were the forests of northern Sweden that the first Scandinavians to cut down trees for industrial purposes did so with no consideration for replanting. It was simply assumed that northern Sweden was so large that there would be enough raw material for a continuous wave of extraction. The 2022 decision of the Swedish Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications to allow a British company to start mining for iron ore in Kallak (Gállok in Sámi) represents the culmination of more than a century colonial pragmatism: the material exists; therefore, it should be extracted, irrespective of the harm to the environment or indigenous communities.

The first southerners who settled in the north cut down trees to clear land for agriculture, to build houses and to provide fuel. But if a place failed to be economically viable for settlement, so a house might move somewhere else. Today, the well documented depopulation of rural Sweden prompts dogmatic approaches to the built environment. Although constructing and operating buildings contributes approximately one third of all carbon emissions in Europe, the demolition of surplus housing occurs often. In 2021, municipal councils in the towns of Dorotea and Vilhelmina agreed independently of one another to demolish three large and serviceable blocks of apartments (Dahlgren, 2021, Johansson, 2021). Their useful economic lives were over, since it would be more expensive to keep them than to demolish them.

Built of masonry and concrete, the ends of their useful lives were in fact determined by their very immobility.

This material dimension is important. Whereas low-lying Denmark is naturally rich in clay and a consequent expertise in building in brick, Sweden is densely forested. The

abundance of wood has contributed to a rich culture of building with wood. Timber is also a more forgiving material, one that allows the untrained builder plenty of leniency. Wood buildings are flexible, fitting together in a way that allows for movement over time, as the dead load of the building, the live loads of its inhabitants, precipitation and wind act on it. Wooden buildings tolerate to no small degree twisting, flexing and racking.

This movement, both in the flexing of a building over time and in the movement of entire buildings from place to place, is contradictory to many of our cultural assumptions about housing. In most of the Romantic languages, the word for real estate is derived from some variant of immobilier (French), imobiliária (Portuguese) or immobiliare (Italian). The house is imagined as something that is immobile, and therefore worthy of a particular financial status. In northern Sweden, however, houses are moved so routinely that the economic questions are distilled to an almost asinine simplicity. On the website of one Swedish company that moves houses is the assertion that 'whether it is possible or not to move a house is usually a question of whether the house is worth more than the cost of moving it.'

Buildings have also been relocated for cultural reasons. With industrialisation in the late nineteenth century came a realisation that ways of living and working were being lost. In both Norway and Sweden, this led to the establishment of a number of open-ar museums to preserve built culture. In Oslo, the librarian and historian Hans Aall (1869–1946) established the Norsk Folkemuseum (Norwegian Folk Museum) in 1894, now home to a variety of buildings brought to Oslo from the different regions of the country. This includes the famous Gol Stave Church, built in the late twelfth century, which was saved by the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Norwegian Monuments (Fortidsminneforeningen) when a new church was proposed in 1880. In Sweden, the open-air museum Skansen was established in 1891 by Artur Hazelius (1833 - 1901). Hazelius, like Aall, was a folklorist concerned with the preservation of ways of life that were threatened by Scandinavia's rapid modernisation. He raised funds and established collections of objects, including buildings, as a record of what was regarded as the traditional way of Swedish life.

Inspired by Skansen, the Västerbottens Museum and adjacent open-air park Gammlia were established in Umeå in 1921. Gammlia established a collection of objects and buildings which represented the pre-industrial history of northern Sweden, albeit one that at first prioritised a southern and non-indigenous culture. The first building moved to Gammlia was a manor house from Sävar, built in 1806. Moved in 1921, it took 132 horse-drawn loads to bring the house in pieces to Gammlia. A gatehouse from Bureå

**Figure 2.** Historic house being lifted, to move from its site at Teg in the city of Umeå, Film Still. Photograph: Tonia Carless, 2021.

followed later in 1921, as well as a small cottage from Jämteböle in Vännäs. In 1955, a chapel built in 1802 on the island of Holmön that had been deconsecrated sixty years previously (and variously used for doing laundry and keeping livestock) was also moved.

Today, the open-air museums in Oslo, Stockholm and Umeå have used the relocation of houses and other culturally significant buildings to assemble and present an edited history of not only our built environment, but also our cultural environment. But like in any museum, the buildings risk reification: they become static objects removed from the context in which they were conceived. The ease with which these buildings were moved suggests that in Scandinavia there might exist another intellectual approach to understanding architectural context. As the iron ore mine at Kiruna, the largest in the world, has gradually expanded and undermined the city that services it, there has been a typically pragmatic approach to the problem: the city must be moved.

Understanding these movements, whether for economic or cultural purposes, and whether piecemeal or wholesale, gives us an opportunity to understand some of

the fundamental intellectual questions about our built environment. It may only be a house, and it may only draw a small crowd, but every husflyttning is an opportunity to see inside, underneath and in between the assumptions about that which is supposedly immobile.

## Husflyttningar as Culture and an Architecture of Degrowth

*Wide Load* is a performative architecture project, rethinking urban expansion through a process of return and exchange. Working with professional house movers, it is investigating the Northern Swedish practice of moving whole houses from one location to another. The research into the spatial politics of house-moving is particularly focused on the space between land and building and how this changes especially in this Arctic, frontier territory.The relationship between a building and its ground is a space in which to consider the material, economic and legal frameworks which construct ideas of Västerbotten and Norrland in Northern Sweden.

The project has created new visual works to consider some of the social, cultural and economic factors in the spaces between a building, and its location.

Husflyttningar is a compressed and conjoined set of terms that implies the action in and of itself. It translates as a change of location and the carrying of a house building from one place to another.

This process could be treated as a context of a full programme of research thinking, at different scales of understanding and relations. On a broad scale it could be used a form of opensource data on changes to the city and region, as an example of an architecture of degrowth, and as a study of deterritorialization and events, as potential resistance to the main neoliberal forms of urban development.

We consider a particular case study of a house moved from the city of Umeå in Northern Sweden to the rural context of Degernäs, ten kilometres away. The move is framed in part by flows of global capital, through Swedish nation–state polices particular to twentieth century globalization of commodity production and trading. "To the extent that transnational capital is no longer centred in a single metropole .. but rather a fluctuating web of connections between metropolitan regions and exploitable peripheries" (Sekula, 1995, p. 48) The move is also framed by knowledge that places are not defined by areas or boundaries on maps but "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings" (Massey, 1994, p. 154)

**Figure 1.** Collage of space underneath the house, between house and land. Photograph: Tonia Carless, 2021.

**Figure 2.** The moved house in its new rural site at Degernäs, after travelling ten kilometers. Photograph: Tonia Carless, 2021.

**Figure 3.** Umeå Kommun building across the garden of the moved house, Teg in the city of Umeå, after the house had departed. Photograph: Robin Serjeant, 2021.

**Figure 4.** Wrenched debris after the house had departed, Teg in the city of Umeå. Photograph: Robin Serjeant, 2021.

In considering the wider context, husflyttningar has to be understood as a particular form of arranging the human condition: the activity is a practice of not new building, but re-using, both materials, and interior spaces. It stands as a matter of architectural urgency and a response towards post-capitalist or de-growth societies, counter to exploitation of land, space and materials under the model of post industrial and rentier models of capitalism.

Current societies and cultures are under stress, from several factors that can be linked to climate crisis and Neoliberal spatial reconfiguration. David Harvey describes this as a form of capitalism that "builds a physical landscape appropriate to its own condition at a particular moment in time, only to have to destroy it, usually in the course of a crisis, at a subsequent point in time" (Harvey,1989, p.30) It is a form of acculturation, apportioning value in quite distinct ways. This is in part an economic flow but also one of aesthetic and representational consideration.

It also raises a particular discourse around sustainability and highlights that one of the problems of this as a term is that of the acceptance of market forces and of ideas of scarcity. In the act of husflyttningar, construction miles are radically minimised, so that it is a process which is not directly productive but largely re-distributive and recycled through a very basic set of materials in use, such as timbers, steels and stones. As a practice it is registered more within the field of haulage than architecture, but its economics are in part constructed by the regulations on housebuilding. The reuse potential has not yet been sufficiently or widely highlighted as being of significant environmental, ecological or social value.

> Housemoving isn't common enough for there to be special regulations for housemoving, but to move a house on the road you need a wide load permit, a permit for a heavy load, but it's the same process if you are moving a transformer or anything that's heavy on the road, there is no check box for 'house' in the permit applications it just 'heavy load'. You need a building permit and because there is no specific building permit for a moved house there is sometimes a problem because if you move a house to a new site it counts as a new construction, so it needs to follow the building codes of today. If you move a building from the seventies you might have to update the insulation and ventilation and things like that to comply with the current codes. (Andreas Mårtensson)

> Of course that's one motivation to move a house to not demolish it and to save the construction material but I wouldn't say it's a big factor in the decision to move a building but of course it is there more now than maybe twenty years ago. (Andreas Mårtensson)

The process has the capacity to be a model of long term sustainability in relation to changes in habitats, regional environments and reuse of building materials.

> Oftentimes if you have a building on a basement its not economical to bring the basement. If you want a basement on the new site it is often better to build a new basement in the ground floor and put it on the new basement but if it is a concrete slab it is better to move it with the slab. (Andreas Mårtensson )

The focus on 'renewable' sources of material, a common preoccupation of design and construction industries, is surely questionable, if what is renewable relies on intensive, industrialized practices to replace, for example, timber. The harms of these forestry models have been explored and researched, but both government and the powerful forestry industry continue to fail to change course.

Sustainability can more critically be re-framed as being about a distribution and allocation of resources, or as a problem of uneven distribution, rather than one of a lack of resources. "Scarcity itself isn't the problem, its actually the maintaining of scarcity which is the problem for capitalism. The argument is over the production of an artificial scarcity in order to conceal abundance" (Fisher, 2021, p. 44).

The project's approach has been to question the practice, and the production of space complicit with the overarching and vindicating ethic of growth and, through Andre Gorz's analysis of the concept of de-growth, to "reinvent the future through the liberating discovery [encouraged by the crises and dilemmas of the industrialised world] that it is possible to make more with less" (Gorz, 1987, p. 63).

Umeå in Northern Sweden is currently a place of rapid building and development and an ideal context to consider uneven development. Under the Neo-liberal agenda there is an ongoing imposition of market forces in the provision of public services of ownership, control and licensing or renting of things previously held in common. This agenda has effected a transformation of the Swedish Nation state from the project of making of an egalitarian society into one distorted by globalisation and this can be registered through the process of housemoving.

> The making of new geographies entails changes in and on the land. The owners of that land have everything to gain from these changes. They can benefit enormously from increases in land values and rising rents and property values on both land and the 'natural' resources contained therein. Those rising rents and property values depend on both investments in place and investments that change space relations in ways that add land value by improving accessibility. "Far from being a 'residual

class' of landed aristocrats and feudal lords, this landed developer interest takes an active role in making and remaking capitalism's geography as a means to enhance its income and its power."

Investments in rents on land, property, mines and raw materials thereby becomes an attractive proposition for all capitalists. The production of capitalism's geography is propelled onwards by the need to realise speculative gains on these assets. (Harvey, 2011, p.180)

Husflyttningar is a distinct form of de-territorialization, and re-territorialization Norrland and husflyttningar in particular offer a possible resistance through this mobility. The architecture itself has the capacity to explore a real world. It is an on-site solution to construction but has the advantages of a greater degree of adaptability to circumstance, as a reworking of the vernacular of previous societies.

It is a physical embodiment of knowledge evidenced through hands and works of Magnus Mårtensson in this particular case and, as such, can detach from the problems of contemporary digital mis-information as it is a process of physics and the physical properties of matter, of gravity and a fundamental relation to the earth.

How will this sit in the future forms of digital domain? In this future scheme of uneven development there are already ideas and an acceptance that some people will not have access to real experience, so that cities may only be travelled to and experienced as virtual for example (compounded by poverty of means, pandemics, security instabilities and more). The physical understanding of this form of moving architecture requires occupation and knowledges of the space, as well local administrative practices. This knowledge is specialist and gained through extensive experience.

He will do an estimate from the construction and size of the building and the weight and then on the permit from the road authorities you get a max[imum] allowed and sometimes you need to put it on a scale to confirm the weight. You load the building on the trailer and then put the scale under the tyres of the trailer. You need to know the weight before that because then its too late when you have it on the trailer. (Andreas Mårtensson )

I learned myself I couldn't ask anyone. (Magnus Mårtensson )

When he had been moving houses for 20 years we learned about an association, a International Association of House Movers (The actual name of the association

is IASM International Association of Structural movers), in the US. We became members and went for the annual conference and after working for 20 years moving buildings and never [meeting] another housemover he was suddenly in a hotel with 300 other housemovers. (Andreas Mårtensson )

If the soft dimensions of culture present and make the qualities of place, (such as through visual fields of architecture, painting, film, photography) and if this stands to some extent as a marker against the idea of modernist abstraction of space of development, how then can this be read in relation to the culture of husflyttningar?

One of the cultural constructions of Norrland is closely associated with the frontier condition and this emanates from the forest and its timber, and the mineral resources found in the region, with an idea of it being beyond or before the church, the state and other institutions. The early versions of these ideas were pre modernist, but have continued through C20th and still appear as a dominant idea of the state, various industries and through popular representations (Eriksson, 2010, Loeffler, 2005, Tidholm 2012). This emerges from a conception of so called 'free' land for settling and development.

Husflyttningar sits at the heart of different ideas of temporality and spontaneity. As a process it amplifies the mobile; it is also an evidence of displacement. This might be in contrast to or part of the history of stressed and displaced societies, and landscapes (environmentally, economically, and more). Some of the early supported settlements in Norrland around settlement by farming, or exploitation through mining are examples of these 'failed' settlements. It is the production of another social-spatial understanding of the lived environment of Norrland, in contradistinction to that being made through market forces. This connects to some of the histories of land appropriations and reclamation in the region, which includes the historic, sometimes misguided and desperate struggle by the inhabitants of Norrland to provide a living from the land for themselves and their families from the 1920s. David Loeffler develops a reading through archaeology of contested landscapes and territory and notes that the

establishment of the various types of cottages by the state on some of the most miserable acreage imaginable was accompanied by a flood of national romantic propaganda expounding the virtues of this enterprise. Seemingly divorced from reality, we are told how "Ditch digging is tough but beneficial work..." and that the removal of stones and boulders is not only "...pleasurable labour..." but under certain circumstances also a healthy and exciting game [quoted in Stavenow-Hidemark, 1967,

p. 68]. The economic viability of these homesteads was based on over optimistic expectations and unrealistic estimations on the part of the Government. Most of these farms collapsed within a single life time. The institutionalised loneliness and deprivation of this existence has left behind a bitterness that lives on. (Loeffler, 2005, p. 77).

Other contemporary appropriations of land includes that of claiming space for institutions during the 1960s, such as the establishing and siting of the new University of Umeå. In the contemporary context of the changing state and spaces of the city of Umeå the re-use and movement of buildings might be a mobilization to question the reproduction and replication of, for example, new modernist icons associated with global capital and the spatial reconfiguration of the city, through myriad apartment blocks. How do these new architectures rest on the land? How will they replace the existing cultures? Is it possible to raise the idea of not-building as a fundamental approach, to reposition husflyttningar as revolutionary?

If there is a slab in the ground you can move it if it is bricks too. (Magnus Mårtensson)

The particularity of this project is directed at a concrete understanding of some of the industries and practices underlying architecture production. The practices of land speculation, conversion of rural land to settlement, the rural depopulation and abandonment of places and buildings, material specifications, and building technologies are part of increasing applications of neoliberal economy in the region.

 An architecture of degrowth here is the idea that to construct (to build) contains within it the idea of its undoing and retrieval, and that is what is important and explicit. It is also vital as a process of relating to the land and has within it implicit values of mobilization. It is important through this project to consider the mobility of modernism and the actual lack of mobility of individuals and communities, even though they are subject to its economic forces (Eriksson, 2010). There are also implied questions of housemoving, such as: Where does it sit, why should it move? Who makes these decisions? To map the series of husflyttningar is to research this and to encircle and enframe the distinct causes of movement and the relations of the space.

There is a much needed materialist analysis of husflyttningar yet to be made, to consider the practices of re-use, the political-legal frameworks around space and settlement in Norrland, and further work on the poetics of moving buildings as a possible channel of ideas about de-growth, and radical sustainability. The approach to house relocation in

Norrland is and has been synonomous with ideas of sustainability, of an immediate and direct re-use potential that marks a negation of the value of architectural or urban design professions in their compliance with profit driven capital accumulation. The practice of house moving questions the narrative of development that so often is presented as the vindication of growth, and explanation of professional ethics.

## Visual Production in Space: Layered Images and Models

This research is concerned with the seemingly frequent professional disregard for things, surfaces, objects, built elements and domestic life and uses it to read the value construction of space in Norrland. It seeks to understand these phenomena and how artifacts create new readings of spatial programmes and histories. It proposes multi layered visual projection events. The knowledge constructed in preparation for the projection events (inside and outside of the moved house and along its journey of displacement) was developed through documenting dialogue with the owner, neighbours, house movers and during the event itself.

This method allows for a closer examination of the structure, materials and processes of dwelling and moving the dwelling, including the space between the existing house and its new location.

> It was heavy with the chimney and they did not want it so we took it out, but you could take it with the chimney too. (Magnus Mårtensson)

> That house was not so heavy, you have many axles, but its difficult if you go over a bridge or something and then its difficult. On the road it's the load per axle that's limiting but if you are on a bridge it's the total weight of the trailer and the house that's limiting. (Andreas Mårtensson )

One of the visual projection events was the projection of housemoving onto historic cabins (stuga) at the edges of lake Nydala and Tomtebo on the edges of the city of Umeå. It seemed an appropriate space to draw analysis about possible housemoving, to question how land and its occupation is valued in the city. To project the housemove onto these cabins during the demolition is a form of visual enquiry, and forms a connection across the two different but socially and economically connected spaces.

The recent development of Tomtebo on the edge of the city of Umeå, in the 1980s and 90s was concurrent with the beginning of the pollution of lake Nydala and its en-

**Figure 5.** Small Vision Projection event Inside the moved house Degernäs. Photograph: Tonia Carless, 2021.

**Figure 6.** Small Vision Projection event Inside the moved house, original 1929 plans projected onto kitchen chimney space. Photograph: Tonia Carless, 2021.
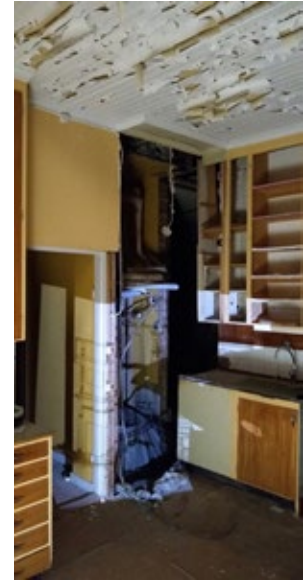
**Figure 7.** Small Vision projection event House in its original site, Teg in the city of Umeå projected into the house in its new site at Degernäs. Photograph: Tonia Carless, 2021.

**Figure 8.** Wrenched site and a new rural view out of the moved house, projected onto the side of Nydala cabin under demolition. Photograph: Tonia Carless, February 2022.

virons (from discussion with a local long-term resident). It was part of a widespread shift towards a globalization synonymous with mass consumption of landscape for tourism. It was and continues to be, stages of a market development in a process of further commodifying nature as part of the internal market colonisation and re-colonisation of Northern Sweden. The cabins at Nydala have a long and significant history of use for recreational purposes with a low density, sustainable approach to the land and its resources. The controversial demolition and repurposing of many of the Nydala lake cabins for the mass, private, developer-led appropriations is another example of this form of reconfiguration of space.

The departing and arriving points of the house moved, and many points along the way, become a phenomenon that draws people to a non-digital, social moment – albeit recording the event and sharing it digitally through social media, and media of news organisations.

> One part of it its always a big spectacle when you move it on the road you get a lot of attention. You get a lot of people. (Andreas Mårtensson )

Another aspect of the project has been to situate the house moving as something which can comment on the wider social implications of the shifting spatial reconfigurations. The projections develop analysis through the visual and aim to raise a discourse beyond the notion that a house or a city can simply be moved without social consequence. In the words of local local resident, Elvy Pearsson (2021) " it is easy to demolish, not so easy to build up houses and relations".

One project here is to understand how perspective changes with movement, for example inside the moved house, looking through the same windows at new and different views and from different directions and orientations as often the house is relocated and turned to a different orientation. This is a particular and extraordinary phenomenological, physical shift.

> That's something we learned in the US, before that we used rollers. When you move it straight away it's better with rollers but when you turn it around it's better with soap. (Magnus Mårtensson)

In the gathering crowds at Teg in the city of Umeå, on the midsummer evening of 2021, when the house was moved, the talk was of the historic house, its specific architectural and historic qualities and merits, and a positioning of this in relation to the city, as well as its loss as an asset and amenity for the neighbours and locality, as it moved off its original

plot. The everyday culture of moving buildings was less spoken, with the implication that moving buildings in itself is not culture but mechanical and structural process which was, none the less, experienced with great excitement.

This house has a caretaker history of the three generations of the Hallström family, with the grandfather occupying the house on a plot where there was also a previous house and then the house being cared for by the father, as a caretaker of its history, and the son moving the house as an act of continuing the family tradition and concerns for preserving the history and form of the house as a familial obligation. Moving the house out to Degernäs, and covering the costs of the move, the land purchase and land forming, and the cost of full refurbishment to re occupy could only hope to be covered in this particular instance because of the release of potential value of the land beneath the house. It is prime urban real estate and has the potential to maximize returns for the new developer purchaser of the land. This is a particular and distinct form of gentrification. What might have happened to the house without such rapid land value increase. Would it have been possible to preserve and re-use the house?

> The biggest motivation to move a building is economical or nostalgic or historical. The historic [house] that we moved in Ume, [Umeå] they couldn't destroy it because it was too old and they had to move it or else they couldn't sell it. (Magnus Mårtensson)

Documenting the move through photographs, drawings and video has focussed on material and substantial things, including the material of the house, its transformations of parts of domestic interior, the devices and tools used and constructed to carry out the move. This has the potential to develop readings of different forms of conceptual and physical, structural stress and load.

> You use more beams when it's a heavy house and stronger beams when its bigger. Its most difficult to calculate how big the beams are that you are going to use because if you take the small beams it will crack. The thin beams will flex too much so the house will crack. (Andreas Mårtensson)

In view of this focus on things, it is also important to use ephemeral media (light projections, digital modelling and drawings at this stage) and to investigate the ephemeral - the gap between house and land. It is proposed to make a model of the space under the house, at the point of its moving, which will in turn be moved, as a public event in transporting and settling that model.

The critical frame for the work and its relevance here was highlighted by Magnus Mårtensson outside the recorded interview session. It developed two particularly strong ideas, one was that the idea of the high value and quality of the house is set against the value of the landscape and context itself. The second is that the questions of location and of place, relates to ways of settling, on the ground and this also concerns extreme climatic, geographical, and economic conditions and mobility. It also has the pressing need to respond to the conditions of this latitude and that understanding comes from the physical terrain and physical, spatial, structural knowledges.

## Acknowledgements

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In the seven chapters contained in this book, twelve authors working in northern, Arctic and near Arctic countries explore the notion of 'Possible Futures' from different professional perspectives. The work of a diverse group of researchers, scholars, artists, designers and educators from Canada, Finland, France and Sweden is presented. The shared focus is encapsulated in the title, the tenth in the *Relate North* series. The speculative nature of the title calls for authors to think beyond the 'here and now' and so provides readers with a rich tapestry of accounts of applied practice and context-sensitive inquiry from photography to testing design prototypes. Although principally concerned with research and knowledge exchange in art and design education in the north and the Arctic, the contributors also touch on issues and topics that may have wider interest. For example, the sociocultural and geopolitical dimensions of living in rural and urban settings in northern, remote and peripheral regions. In each essay the idea of *possible futures* is about more than postulation, embracing art-infused praxis and inquiry with Indigenous and non-indigenous groups in the north and the Arctic. The book will be of interest to a wide constituency including, for example, anthropologists, cultural geographers, sociologists, artists, designers, art educators and practice-based researchers. In addition, the chapters will be relevant to undergraduate art and design students, postgraduate students in the arts or education and policymakers concerned with Arctic and northern issues relating to contemporary art, craft, design and education.

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