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Tradition and Innovation in Arctic Sustainable Art and Design

In this article we explore the discourse of traditions and innovations in art and design education in the North and the Arctic regions. In the first section we introduce the concept of Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design (AAD) that has been initiated in research conducted in the Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design network within the University of Arctic (ASAD). In the second section, we discuss the rapid changes and so-called ‘megatrends’ (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2011), facing Northern and Arctic communities, particularly climate change, globalisation, urbanisation, unemployment and shifting demographics require solutions. We are interested in how AAD addresses the challenges in the social, cultural and economic settings and post-colonial situation of the area. The Arctic and northern circumstances can be viewed as a ‘laboratory’ for a new genre of art and design education (Jokela & Coutts, 2018b; Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020). In the third section, we explore the potential of a sustainable intersection between northern cultural traditions and new innovation to foster cultural life in the Arctic. We discuss ways to strengthen vitality and regional development through art, design and culture based on our experiences and research by members of the ASAD network and the Arctic Arts Summit 2019 (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020). We also examine place-based regional

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development approaches and decolonisation and revitalisation activities in AAD education.

Keywords: *sustainable art and design, Arctic and Northern society, cultural tradition, innovation, globalization, urbanization, environment.*

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Традиции и инновации в устойчивом искусстве и дизайне Арктики

В статье мы рассматриваем дискурс традиций и инноваций в образовании в сфере искусства и дизайна на Севере и в Арктическом регионе. В первом разделе мы представляем концепцию Устойчивого арктического искусства и дизайна (AAD), которая берет свое начало в исследованиях, проводимых тематической сетью «Арктическое устойчивое искусство и дизайн» (ASAD) Университета Арктики. Во втором разделе мы обсуждаем стремительные изменения и так называемые мегатенденции (Совет Министров Северных Стран, 2011), с которыми сталкиваются северные и арктические сообщества, в частности изменения климата, глобализация, урбанизация, безработица и изменения демографической ситуации – все эти проблемы требуют решения. Нас интересует, как AAD помогает решать проблемы в социальной, культурной и экономической обстановке и в условиях постколониальной ситуации в регионе. Арктические и северные условия можно рассматривать как «лабораторию» для развития нового жанра художественного и дизайнерского образования (Йокел и Коуттс, 2018b, Хухмарниemi и Йокела, 2020). В третьем разделе мы исследуем потенциал устойчивых взаимосвязей между северными культурными традициями и инновациями последнего времени для развития культурной жизни в Арктике. Мы рассматриваем пути укрепления жизнеспособности и регионального развития через искусство, дизайн и культуру на основе нашего собственного опыта и исследований членов сети ASAD и на основе Арктического Саммита Искусств в 2019 году (Хухмарниemi и Йокела, 2020). Мы также рассматриваем подходы регионального развития на местах и мероприятия по деколонизации и активизации в обучении AAD (искусству и дизайну устойчивой Арктики).

Ключевые слова: *устойчивое искусство и дизайн, Арктика и северные сообщества, культурная традиция, инновации, глобализация, урбанизация, окружающая среда.*

Introduction

In this article we explore the discourse of traditions and innovations in art and design education in the North and the Arctic regions. In the first section we introduce the concept of *Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design (AAD)* that has been initiated in research conducted in the *Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design network* within the University of Arctic (ASAD). Since its inception in 2012, ASAD has sought to “identify and share contemporary and innovative practices in teaching, learning, research and knowledge exchange in the fields of arts, design and visual culture education” (ASAD, 2019). The organization is one of the thematic networks of the University of the Arctic that aim to “foster issues-based cooperation within networks that are focused but flexible enough to respond quickly to topical Arctic issues” (University of the Arctic, 2019).

In the second section, we discuss the rapid changes and so-called ‘megatrends’ (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2011), facing Northern and Arctic communities, particularly climate change, globalisation, urbanisation, unemployment and shifting demographics require solutions. We are interested in how AAD addresses the challenges in the social, cultural and economic settings and post-colonial situation of the area. On one hand, there is a cultural and linguistic diversity within the Arctic area due to the indigenous populations and other local people inhabiting the area, thus protecting cultural traditions is one of the key issues when discussing social and cultural sustainability here. On the other hand, the Arctic is developing into an important hub of the twenty-first century; industrially, socially and politically. We believe that the economic potential of the region should be harnessed in an innovative way that brings prosperity and guarantees the livelihood and positive social-cultural development of Arctic inhabitants and communities. The Arctic and northern circumstances can be viewed as a ‘laboratory’ for a new genre of art and design education (Jokela & Coutts, 2018b; Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020).

In the third section, we explore the potential of a sustainable intersection between northern cultural traditions and new innovation to foster cultural life in the Arctic. This is especially important in remote regions and in multi-ethnic communities. We discuss ways to strengthen vitality and regional development through art, design and culture based on our experiences and research by members of the ASAD network and the Arctic Arts Summit 2019 (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020). We also examine

place-based regional development approaches and decolonisation and revitalisation activities in AAD education.

In the context of indigenous art, cultural and educational research, decolonisation (Smith, 1999) had gained prominence. Kuokkanen (2000) suggested the idea of an 'indigenous paradigm', that would be based on concerns, worldviews and cultural practices at the core of indigenous perspective. She agreed Smith (1999) by stating that a key objective is to challenge the Western Eurocentric mindset as well as Western ways of knowing and researching. Thus, the need for decolonisation of the methodologies of indigenous research and education has been noticed. Indigenous paradigm and knowledge system have contributed to indigenous research in the areas of art, design and culture (Guttorm, 2014), and we need to develop, re-conceptualize practices and theories in teaching and learning art and design in Arctic. The term 'northern knowledge system' (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020) was derived from the indigenous knowledge system. It refers to shared traditions, a historic understanding of nature and the use of natural materials in Arctic crafts, arts and livelihoods. We propose that northern knowledge system has much to offer in art and design education and further research in needed on it.

The concept of innovation is often seen as almost the opposite of tradition. In the areas of art and design, for example, the notion of innovation often equates with original, new and unusual solutions (usually products) for business, market and commercial applications. In short, innovation is often linked in people's minds with novelty and even revolutionary approaches or inventions. Sometimes the concept is also associated with expensive solutions. The idea of tradition, however, is often associated with customs, conventions, habits even ritual and ceremony. Our view is that there may be fruitful ground to be explored in the intellectual and pragmatic space between the two notions just as there is much to be gained from locating theory and practise at the confluence of art, design and education.

What is Sustainable Arctic Art and Design?

Our model of AAD embraces both tradition and innovation. It melds contemporary art, service and product design and media productions when investigating Arctic themes, such as Arctic sustainability, heritage and future ways of representing ways of life and identity. AAD practise

may include, for example, productions made using indigenous art and non-indigenous art. As a concept, AAD includes a dimension of cultural politics, since it is used to highlight specificities of the art and design in Arctic and to promote cultural sustainability, diversity, ecological turn, transform of traditions as well as an awareness of cultural richness and diversity. AAD is a parallel concept to *Arctic art* (Jokela, Huhmarniemi & Hautala-Hirvioja, 2019; Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020) and is defined in a similar way through concepts of changing traditions, sustainability and political aspiration. The focus of our interest is on art, crafts and design productions that study, represent and reform local traditions, create new meanings with them and implement local knowledge on new forms of expression and innovation. In this article, we focus on AAD that is benefit-oriented, even though it might also have intrinsic value. AAD, especially place-based artistic production and service design, is expected to deliver innovative and creative solutions to problems faced by Arctic communities. The concept of applied visual arts (Jokela, 2013) is also used to promote the potential of arts to society and the wider economy.

Even if AAD is a well-established concept among the researchers in the ASAD network and beyond in the academy, artists and designers commonly identify themselves as Northerners rather than Arctic artists (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020). The concept of Nordicity would also be relevant for analysing art and design in the Arctic. It refers physical reality as well as to subjective experiences and social imaginaries, ideology including visions and values and so-called ‘total Nordicity’ that embodies world views, knowledge systems, know-how in the arts and humanities (Beaulé & De Coninck, 2018). However, the concept of the AAD, in our view, can be used to draw attention to the potential of intertwining art, design and innovation. AAD is based on an alternative way of seeing art, design and crafts as interwoven and integrated into ecocultural life in North – instead of dualistic Western way of separating art, design and crafts into disciplines of their own (Jokela, 2017; Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020). The approach, existing as it does in between art, design, craft and innovation is evident, for example, in Sámi duodji (Guttorm, 2015) and the community art of crafted sustainability (Härkönen, Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2018). Similarly, the development of snow and ice architecture (Jokela, 2014), public art implementing service design and co-design (Härkönen & Vuontisjärvi, 2018) and the creation of new arts-based

services for various sectors of society (Huhmarniemi, Kugapi, Miettinen & Laivamaa, Forthcoming) are further examples of AAD in action.

The discussion on sustainable development and sustainability more generally, has various connotations in Arctic research (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020; Tennberg, Lempinen & Pirnes, 2019). Typically, economic profit underpins political decisions and the direction of 'development' leading to large-scale and industrial use of natural resources. In contrast, the need for sustainability is argued to support efforts to protect fragile natural environments and communities at risk. This can lead to conflict among locals facing changes caused by globalisation and climate crises. Educational research has also added new layers of meaning to sustainable development and sustainability. It is increasingly argued, that education should not be for economy but for people and global good, therefore discourses have been reframed by education for sustainability (Clarke, 2012) and post-sustainability (Jickling & Sterling, 2017). In this article, we follow the definition of sustainability as practised beyond politics, by researchers Monica Tennberg, Hanna Lempinen and Susanna Pirnes (2019). In this sense, sustainability is a way of thinking; an effort to respect diverse traditions, localities and future imaginaries in the Arctic. We contend that Arctic sustainability demands development of creative practises, namely AAD, as well as a creative and renewable economy, cross-sectoral collaboration as well as collaboration between indigenous and non-indigenous cultures.

In the research carried out in ASAD, a special focus has been placed on the means of AAD to contribute to sustainability (Jokela & Coutts, 2018). Sustainability has been researched as part of art curatorial practice (Jónsdóttir, 2017), education (Macdonald & Jonsdottir, 2014) and in interventions in culturally diverse communities (Hiltunen, Mikkonen & Laitinen, Forthcoming), and benefits of inter- and transdisciplinary methods for cultural sustainability (Härkönen & Stöckell, 2019). Ethical procedures have been employed in all AAD interventions and methods for dialogue and long-term commitment have been emphasised (Huhmarniemi, 2019; Jokela, 2020)

Changes

Rapid ecological, social and cultural change in Arctic is affecting the wellbeing and cultures of people living in the region. Researchers in wide ranged of academic disciplines have noted these shifting circumstances.

Studies conducted by the Nordic Council of Ministers (2011) define evident 'megatrends' like climate change, globalisation and urbanisation that are taking place in the Arctic and Northern regions. Climate crises has profound consequences for the human and non-human inhabitants. Globalization and urbanization have significant impact on Arctic communities and their cultures. Young generation increasingly migrate from rural environments to urban settings. Concentration of population in larger towns and cities can be beneficial for AAD; cities are commonly seen as creative hubs where creative industries have potential to blossom. At the same time less people live full-time in villages. Social challenges, and difficulties or impossibility to maintain services in remote and shrinking villages has been seen as one need for development of Arctic service design. A complex set of factors are at play concerning not just where people live, but also issues of cultural identity: who are the people of the North, what is at the core of their culture and how they live in terms of economic well-being and socio-political dimensions (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2011).

An important factor for the development of AAD is the effect of the diversity of the ecosystems to the diversity of indigenous and non-indigenous cultures in the North and the Arctic. Ecosystems influence the types of social relations that are established in particular place-specific cultures. The social relations in fishing societies, for example, differ in many ways from those in agricultural societies, nomadic reindeer hearing communities and centres of international nature tourism. According researcher on Arctic studies, Kathrin Stephen (2018), the climate crisis has caused changes in traditional livelihoods such as harvesting, hunting and fishing cultures. Further on, these changes have a expanding impact on traditional knowledge, cultural identities and world views (Stephen, 2018). The climate crisis has brought about changes in the ecosystems and has had effects on socio-economic and political realities, which has affected the cultures and identity of arctic indigenous populations (Stephen, 2018). We argue this is the case also in many northern and arctic non-indigenous communities, whose culture is bound to nature and traditional livelihoods.

A further identifiable effect of globalisation and urbanisation is that young people from northern areas increasingly move south to seek a wider range of educational opportunity, normally to larger towns and cities. This has consequences for the smaller towns and villages, a

clear demographic trend towards an older population, unemployment amongst young people and a paucity of leisure and cultural activity. There can also be health and wellbeing issues related to loss of cultural identity (Karlsdóttir & Junsberg, 2015). According to literature researcher Daniel Chartier (2017) to understand the circumpolar world well, it is necessary to take into consideration the urban and non-urban problems that characterize it.

Following Chartier (2017), the North can be thought of as an 'intercultural laboratory' – a place where indigenous and non-indigenous peoples meet. It is estimated that there are around 4 million people living in the Arctic. That includes more than 40 indigenous groups and languages. Indigenous people account for 10% of the entire population of the Arctic (AHDR, 2015). The melding of cultures and lifestyles is common across the circumpolar region and this situation creates sociocultural challenges that can become politically charged in the postcolonial context of the area.

Place-making and regional development

Since the establishment of the ASAD network, in 2012, one of the prime issues of the research among the network was how to foster cultural life in the Arctic, especially in remote regions with multi-ethnic communities and how to strengthen vitality and regional development through art and culture.

Among ASAD partners, the art and design activities in northern locations and communities are closely connected to place-based strategy, which is also known as place-making and can also be understood as economic development strategy (Jokela et al, Forthcoming). Place-based strategies are extensively studied as part of the place-based art (Jokela, 2013) but they also involve using places and a community's capacities to make economic progress (Milone & Ventura, 2010; Vodden, Gibson, & Baldacchino, 2015). Building on existing infrastructures, skills and strengths, this approach focuses on culture and the unique features of particular places to boost existing businesses and create new ones and even attract new investment. According to Daniels, Baldacchino, and Vodden (2015), place-based strategy is a reaction to conventional top-down, single-sector, national-stage development projects. Thus, place-making can also be understood as an identity policy for remote, rural and peripheral places that are centres for their inhabitants.

But who's places we are talking about? The blending of indigenous cultures and other lifestyles of the people in Arctic is typical to the region. Complexity is a defining feature of the Arctic's ethnicity, as Kathrin Stephen (2018) describes by noting that there are various ways of defining who counts as indigenous. In addition to Indigenous cultures, there are also other cultural minorities with heritage, traditions, and cultural identities. As Chartier (2017) stresses, the Arctic is a multi-ethnic/cultural/lingual place.

Besides material and social relations, indigenous cultures of the Arctic carry spiritual and religious dimensions and values to nature (Helander-Renval, 2009) which are often reflected and represented in traditional arts, crafts and other form of cultural heritage. This calls for a certain cultural sensitivity in approaching AAD activities. Commercial design productions and items used to represent identities (such as clothing) cause emotional discussion on cultural appropriation and exploitation, if implemented outside of Indigenous community or by non-indigenous people. Visual symbols such as patterns and ornaments have significance in the continuation of cultures and even the sharing of world views (Joy, 2019; Kramvig & Flemmen, 2019; Minnakhmetova, Usenyuk-Kravchuk, & Konkova, 2019; Schilar & Keskitalo, 2018). Thus, seeing indigenous culture traditions as an economic resource cause alerting tensions and conflicts (see also Olsen et al., forthcoming; Smith, 1999). However, if members of indigenous peoples themselves are participating in the transformation of tradition into contemporary and economic products and services, then there is no, or very little, criticism.

According to cultural sustainability researchers Joost Dessein, Katriina Soini, Graham Fairclough and Lummina Horlings (2015), place-conscious education contributes to sustainability by strengthening connections between people and the worlds they inhabit. These educational methods can also initiate discussions of communities' hopes and trust for the future and they are beneficial for policymaking when engaging people in fostering sustainability and making visions for alternative ways of facing environmental, societal and cultural changes (Dessein, Soini, Fairclough & Horlings, 2015). Some art and design educators use implementations of place-based education (Greenwood 2008; Jokela 2013) to increase the understanding of place as an educational tool for sustainability and revitalisation of regional identity.

Revitalisation as innovation

Besides place-making and decolonisation, revitalisation has become a key process that aims to restore the values of traditions in the contemporary socio-cultural context. As a concept, revitalisation includes elements of both tradition and innovation, Auclair and Fairclough (2015) described revitalisation as a practice that renews and remakes cultural traditions that are part of the social construction.

Revitalisation does not mean returning to historical culture and identity that would be authentic or unmixed (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020). Revitalisation is always based on an interpretation of history that changes according to our sources of historical knowledge, as well as personal and communal perceptions, judgements and values. According Huhmarniemi and Jokela (2020) the needs identified for decolonisation and revitalisation show that similar processes should also be implemented in AAD activities in multi-ethnic communities and non-indigenous communities. Revitalisation by means of AAD does not refer only to cultural practices but also to places, villages and whole regions based on their local and regional originality and potential vitality.

Among ASAD members, revitalisation is used as an approach to achieve cultural sustainability. Its power is in the creation of cultural continuation, intergenerational knowledge, the reconstruction of traditional skills and support for local cultural identities (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020). Revitalisations can be also intercultural, with the aim of welcoming new community members or sharing cultural practises as enlargement of kin. Symbols, rituals and crafting methods can be studied as part of contemporary creation and new meanings can be given and associated with them. Political contemporary art shows one way of having inspiration from the past with valid participation to contemporary interests and value production (see eg. Guttorm, 2015; Horsberg Hansen, 2016; Igloliorte 2019). AAD also covers agency of renewing traditions in contemporary art (Jokela, 2013, 2017; Härkönen, Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2018; Stöckell, 2018), as well as in socially engage art and community-based art education (Hiltunen 2009; Hiltunen & Zemtsova, 2014; Gårdvik, Stoll & Sörmo, 2014) and in growing field of creative tourism (Kugapi, Miettinen & Laivamaa, Forthcoming).

Merging traditions and innovation: towards renewable creative economies in the Arctic

Studies among ASAD partners have shown that there are various opportunities in remote and peripheral areas for innovative applications of AAD that respect tradition and sustain ecosystems (Jokela et al. forthcoming). We agree with Petrov (2014) and Vodden, Gibson and Baldacchino (2015) in arguing that innovation in the creative economy is not restricted to cities and innovation hubs only, but there are certain challenges in the Arctic. According to studies, the Arctic needs to generate more human capital by investing in its people to keep them in the region (Karsdottir et. al., 2015, 2017; Petrov, 2016). The advent of what is often referred to as the “knowledge economy” necessitates the enhancement of human skills and creativity, which will be key to the next stage of the development process towards AAD as a creative renewable methodology (Jokela et al., Forthcoming). This calls for novel models for educating artists and designers for the Arctic. Artists with traditional artistic training may lack the will and skills to work as entrepreneurs and producers of services (Huhmarniemi & Jokela 2019; Kugapi, Huhmarniemi & Laivamaa, forthcoming) and they may not have enough specific knowledge about the Arctic to apply their skills to particular northern circumstances.

The material heritage of the Arctic is often connected to handicraft and the skilful use of natural materials. Anyhow, primary industries exploiting natural resources have traditionally been the foundation of the Nordic Arctic economy. In many communities the expectation of economic growth is still laid on industries such as mining. According Olsen et al (2016), Karlsdottir et al. (2017) and Nordic Council of Ministers (2018) this is changing now and recent studies show that the Arctic areas hold several economic opportunities especially for young people in less traditional industries. Sustainable natural resource extraction forms the basis for more recent business opportunities, like the bio-economy and more knowledge-intensive activities such as research, development and innovation. Growing industries such as responsible tourism and creative industries, also show promise – for example cultural events, locally produced food, international media and film productions, and craft-based design and services.

According to Karlsdottir et al. (2017), there is already evidence of the positive impact of education to the regional development and well-being. Access to vocational and higher education opportunities, as well

as lifelong learning, is fundamental for local capacities, empowerment and human resources and for the competitiveness of companies in the Arctic regions. The growing University towns of Rovaniemi in Finland and Tromsø in Norway are examples of locations where the population is increasing and that does not happen through traditional industries alone. This is largely thanks to several educational institutions which attract young people from the region but also outside and even from abroad. These cities are very international which also support creative synergy. Based on long term involvement in higher education we believe that education for sustainability in the art and design field will play an important role in the future of the North and the Arctic.

Conclusion

The potential for creative and sustainable development that might be drawn from the seemingly opposite notions of innovation and tradition has been at the core of this short article. In addition, we have sought to share our experience of research and praxis at the nexus of art, design and education which we believe offers possibilities that we have only just begun to tap into.

As drivers of the Arctic future, art and design higher education institutions and universities should lay the groundwork for the formation of multidisciplinary and interprofessional creative collaboration. The ASAD network is aiming to do just that. Art and design innovations must be implemented through culturally sensitive and place-based strategies to respond to the challenges and ensure sustainability in the North and the Arctic. Higher art and design education has an important role to secure creative human capacity and promotion of sustainable future in Arctic.

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