

Abstract for 4th Conference on Arts-Based and Artistic Research
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The potential of orienteering for arts-based research as a means to rethink sustainable education

The presentation relates to the conference theme of arts-based research and diversified communities of scholarship. My doctoral research studies practice-based knowledge of sustainability and ecology in art education as well as environmentally oriented art education pedagogies utilized in the field. To study this topic, in-depth interviews are conducted with professional art educators working in public school context.

The pedagogical key concepts emerging through the initial processing of the data are: education for sustainability, transformative learning, holistic education, and hybrid forms of pedagogy that merge art and environmental issues.

Broader aim of the research is to study the human relations with environment and natural resources and ethical dimensions of this. Considering the ongoing environmental crisis and forced mass migration there is an urgency to realign education and epistemological understandings with this wicked global situation. While art and education create a natural context and means to rethink this knowledge and to reform the pedagogical practices and influence general attitudes, this has not materialized on large scale in the day to day functioning of Finnish schools. Even though the teachers recognize this and the new national curriculum promotes sustainability and eco-social civilization.

Developing the conceptual and theoretical approach framed by phenomenology and to process the complex and multi-dimensional knowledge gathered through colloquial interviews, the researcher became increasingly aware of the disconnects between the professional realities of the interviewed teachers and the idealistic goals of education toward sustainability and ecojustice.

It became essential to study the researcher's personal position and relationship with athletic outdoor experiences for her to advance with her study and analysis. While she was already practicing orienteering on a regular basis, this practice became a systematic embodied, arts-based research practice. Originally orienteering is a sport with a background in military skill training. Seen as a structured game, in orienteering you try to find a given number of check points marked in the map as swiftly as you can with the help of a compass.

The practice grew into a systematic dialogue between the embodied practice (athletic experience in semi-urban forests) and various theories and philosophies. As the researcher adopted an artistic orientation and attitude for this practice, she further altered herself to experiment the limits and boundaries of physicality and subjective experience. The goal of this practice then became to examine the paradox between control and openness and experiences of self as a subject vs. a subject.

The presenter will initially cover the foundational ideas of her doctoral dissertation study followed by a description and examples from her embodied arts-based practice of orienteering as a form of research. To conclude the presenter discusses how studying her personal position redirected and reoriented her interview-based research of environmental art education practiced by Finnish art teachers.