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Article

Arctic Arts with Pride: Discourses on Arctic Arts, Culture and Sustainability

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Abstract: There has been growing interest in Arctic arts and culture as well as in sustainability among artists, researchers, and policy makers. However, until recently, the comprehension of Arctic arts and culture within the framework of sustainable development has remained vague. In this study, by analysing diverse debates from the Arctic Arts Summit 2019 in Rovaniemi, we investigate how the arts and culture sector promotes Arctic sustainability. An analysis of abstracts, conclusions, blogs and newspaper articles reflecting the presentations, art events, exhibitions and dialogues showed that the discourse on sustainability is organised around five themes: (1) global politics and ecological crises as part of the cultural politics of the Arctic; (2) indigenous and non-indigenous Arctic arts and culture; (3) 'handmade' and the material culture of the Arctic; (4) place-making, revitalisation and regional development; and (5) economy and sustainability. These partly interlinked themes have relevance for policy making, defining principles for arts and culture funding, artistic practice and research on the Arctic. In addition, education and artistic training are important for all of the five themes; therefore, resources for educational institutions are crucial for the sustainable future of the Arctic. Arts, culture and education have the potential to empower people in the Arctic, increase cultural pride, educate and inform global audiences and create connectedness between the past, present and future. Arts, culture and education contribute to Arctic sustainability.

Keywords: Arctic arts; sustainability; sustainable culture; cultural sustainability; cultural policy; creative economy; higher education; political art; indigenous cultures

1. Introduction: Arctic Arts, Sustainability and Arctic Arts Summit 2019

The sustainable development of the Arctic and Arctic sustainability is defined in many ways and for many purposes [1–4]. Three well-known and commonly implemented variations are ecological, social and economic sustainability. In the Arctic, discussions on sustainability are most often associated with natural resources and both ecological and economic dimensions. In this article, the themes covered include the arts as political encounters, education for sustainability through arts and culture and the economic potential of creative industries. We discuss these topics in the framework of cultural sustainability, which is seen as a fourth variation of sustainable development or as an aspect integrated into ecological, social and economic approaches [5]. We also ponder the potential of arts and culture to enhance sustainability amid changes in the Arctic and around the globe. Interest in the Arctic has been growing both inside and outside the region, in parallel with an emphasis on the Arctic as a barometer for climate crisis, competition for natural resources and cultural, social, economic and political transformations caused by globalisation [2,6].

The following countries are members of the Arctic Council: Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States (US). Four million people live in the north of these countries, including more than 40 indigenous groups representing 10% of the entire Arctic population, as noted by the Arctic Human Development Report [7]. Reports from

the Nordic Council of Ministers [8,9] have defined certain ‘megatrends’ taking place in the Arctic. The climate crisis is one of them, and global warming is happening much faster in the Arctic than anywhere else, with serious consequences for local communities. In the Arctic, livelihoods, cultural traditions and world views are bound to nature, and thus, megatrends, such as the climate crisis, have immediate influences on society. Another notable trend is globalisation related to mass-tourism and the exploitation of natural resources, such as oil, gas and minerals, harmfully impacting nature and its fragile ecosystems. Globalisation has also resulted in a shift from the rural to the urban in terms of economic activity, livelihoods and cultural life. This process is complex, changing cultural and locational identities and challenging the well-being of the population, regional development and the vitality of cultural heritage among local cultures. In addition, political structures, communication and the distribution of power, demographics, and social and cultural relations are impacted [8,9]. Hanna Lempinen, a researcher on Arctic sustainability [10], explained that when considering Arctic cultures and their sustainability, the emphasis is on change. Furthermore, although the ongoing societal and environmental changes are fast and unpredictable, the importance of local cultures for development has been recognised [10].

Changing ecosystems and the socio-economic transformations interwoven into them have impacted the cultures and identities of the Arctic; for example, altered harvesting, hunting and fishing patterns have affected cultures, identifications and the value of traditional knowledge [2]. The concept of eco-cultural resilience, which emphasises that ecological and cultural processes are interlinked, calls for renewal and innovative thinking when facing these changes [5]. Arts, culture and educational practices are expected to enhance resilience and creativity and, thus, have significance for the people in the Arctic.

Arctic cities, as well as rural villages and communities, share a variety of common challenges. Arctic communities have a mix of populations, each with its own languages and traditions. Increasingly, young people in the Arctic are sent to the south or to larger cities to be educated. Thus, the youth of the Arctic are expected to move from their homes for education and employment. In addition, educational opportunities determine the settlement choices of those in smaller communities [11,12]. In many villages and small towns, this has led to an erosion of the social fabric and associated problems, such as ageing populations and a lack of intergenerational cultural activities. Also, challenges have appeared in terms of well-being and the continuation and revitalisation of cultural identity and traditions. Need for educational and cultural institutions and organisations is evident.

At the same time, since the impacts of the climate crisis and globalisation on the Arctic are better recognised than before, there is also more research on the means for and potential of art education and arts-based methods in social work and informal education [13–16]. In addition, research has been conducted on the creative economy and the use of arts and culture in, for example, sustainable Arctic tourism [17–20]. Recently, researchers, as well as educational and cultural institutions, have been demanding a stronger focus on arts and culture and their potential for enhancing sustainability. Furthermore, public bodies in the Arctic countries have developed national Arctic strategies, although art and culture are not prioritised within them [10].

Aiming to address some of the above issues, the second international Arctic Arts Summit (AAS) took place in Rovaniemi, Finland, in June 2019. The first one was held in Harstad, Norway, in 2017. Representatives of ministries from Arctic countries, cultural and educational institutions, non-governmental organisations and artist unions discussed arts, culture, sustainability and circumpolar collaboration. The event aimed to strengthen international interaction, the vitality of the arts and culture sector and implementation of art in other sectors of society such as regional development. The discussions of the three-day event were arranged into a Pre-Summit day consisting of meetings, Policy Day with key-speakers and panel discussion and Hands On day with seven parallel sessions: (1) Arts in the Arctic, (2) Challenges and Opportunities, (3) Sustainable Development, (4) Creative Capacity Building, (5) Networking, Cooperating and collaborating: Creating powerful circumpolar infrastructures, (6) Research Findings and Reformed Questions on Arctic Arts and

Culture, and (7) Workshops. Discussion were accompanied by a comprehensive art programme, including exhibitions, concerts and performances, produced by art institutions and organisations in Lapland in collaboration with their Arctic partners. While contemporary art can be a powerful means to investigate, report and assimilate critical issues into the public consciousness [13,15,16,21,22], the AAS 2019 art programme made provocative as well as sensitive contributions to the dialogue through exhibitions and performances. The authors of this article led the AAS 2019, designed the overall themes of the discussions together with international and national advisory boards and evaluated the event according to set aims.

The AAS 2019 was successful in creating cross-sectoral dialogue: the forum brought together academics, members of the art world, officials, politicians and entrepreneurs in a unique way. Over 450 participants from more than 20 countries took part in the event. Finland had served for two years as the chair of the Arctic Council — the intergovernmental forum that aims to promote cooperation and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants [23]—and interest in Arctic issues was high in Finland, as attested by the country's 180 participants. A few previous and parallel political events challenged the preparations for the AAS 2019. The Arctic Council held the Arctic Ministerial Meeting in Rovaniemi in May 2019, just a month before the AAS 2019. The event received lots of media attention but was deemed to be a disappointment as no joint declarations were made [23,24]. In the Arctic Council meeting, the discourse on friendship and peace in the Arctic shifted to an aggressive-sounding description of the Arctic as a space for strategic competition [24]. As a result, Professor Timo Koivurova, director of the Arctic Centre [24], raised the question of whether the meeting had brought an end to the so-called Rovaniemi Arctic spirit, the mutual goal of fostering peace and international co-operation in the Arctic since the end of the Cold War. In addition, the National Parade on the Flag Day of the Finnish Defence Forces was held in Rovaniemi at the same time as the AAS 2019. Approximately 1000 troops and 49 vehicles from the Finnish Army, Air Force and other military organisations took part in the parade, accompanied by Air Force and Army aircraft in the sky [25]. As such, the political atmosphere in the Arctic and in Rovaniemi did not seem as peaceful and hopeful as we had expected.

Tensions have continued in Finland and elsewhere in the Arctic after the AAS 2019, especially around indigenous issues. Finland has not ratified the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 1989 (ILO-convention 169) due to political disagreements and conflicted debates between the Sámi people and the so-called non-status Sámi [26]; the discussion became heated once again during the Sámi Parliament election in October 2019. Meanwhile, in Russia, the Arctic Indigenous Rights Group was shut down. Moscow's city court ruled to disband the group, which has provided wide-ranging assistance to the peoples of the Russian North, Siberia and the Far East [27]. In terms of environmental concerns and conflicts between local and national interests, Canada's Trans Mountain Pipeline continues to generate debate over energy policy in Canada and in the international media. In Whitehorse, the proposed G7G Railway would carry Albertan bitumen across indigenous land in Yukon to terminals in Alaska. What is common to these conflicts is the way they are seen as risks to traditional ways of life, livelihoods and the continuation of culture. These are just some examples highlighting the topical nature of themes on Arctic cultures, communities and their sustainability, as well as the kinds of issues that environmentally and socially engaged artists are involved in in the Arctic.

In this article, we analyse the discourse on sustainable Arctic arts and culture from the AAS 2019 and research literature. Specifically, the research data is twofold: (1) panel discussion abstracts, conclusions that the chairs of the panel discussion wrote to us, blogs and newspaper articles reflecting on the presentations, art events, exhibitions and notes of dialogues at the summit, and (2) research literature on arts and culture in Arctic and sustainability in Arctic. The discourse analyses which served as the research methods helped us to identify the construction of visions and challenged in the Arctic arts and sustainability as well how they are framed. We have arranged our analysis according to five themes that appeared to have a high relevance in the research data: (1) global politics and ecological crises as part of the cultural politics of the Arctic; (2) indigenous and non-indigenous Arctic arts and

culture; (3) handmade and material culture; (4) place-making, revitalisation and regional development and (5) economy and sustainability. We identified these themes by reading and analysing the research data in relation to previous research: in this article we present the analysis from both of the AAS 2019 and existing literature.

2. The Impact of Arctic Arts on Diverse Sectors of Society and Culture

We use the term *Arctic arts* to refer to contemporary art, design and media productions discussing Arctic themes and sustainability in the Arctic. This concept was introduced in research by the Arctic Sustainable Arts and Design network within the University of the Arctic [28–32]. We mainly use it to discuss arts, crafts and design productions that reflect and reform the cultural heritage or create new forms of expression based on Arctic nature, culture and topical discussions. Arctic arts reform and present northern and Arctic knowledge and create connectedness between the past, present and future. The concept includes indigenous and non-indigenous art, as well as art blending the two, and it is politically loaded in that it is used to identify the specificities of the arts and culture in the Arctic and promote sustainability and diversity [33]. The concept of Arctic arts also refers to an alternative way of seeing art, design and crafts as interwoven as well as integrated into daily living—in contrast to the dualistic Western culture of separating art, design and crafts into distinct disciplines [34,35]. This idea is derived from indigenous scholars in the Arctic, such as Sámi artist and researcher Gunvor Guttorm [36]. In addition, Arctic arts have the potential to contribute to the sense of a human being's relation to a more-than-human world, to the animal kingdom and the land. In the Arctic, a deep and interactive relation to nonhuman nature is a principal element of many cultures, and it is often reflected and presented in the arts. Globally, researchers of sustainability call for fostering nature connectedness and a comprehension of the human being's relation to nonhuman nature [37]. Arctic arts have the potential role of enhancing the understanding of the human's place in the world.

A parallel discussion on Arctic arts takes place through the concept of *northern art* [38,39]. In this article, when we discuss Arctic arts, we are referring to the arts and cultures of the circumpolar region, the northern lands of the world's eight northernmost countries who are members of the Arctic Council. The terms *north* and *northern* indicate direction, orientation, or even atmospheric or aesthetic qualities. In cultural studies, the north is often associated with solitude, night-time and a cold, hostile emotional climate [40]. Similarly, winter is seen as a cold, oppressive period in Western cultures, while Arctic indigenous peoples see snow as an ally and a friend [41]. Even if the concept of Arctic arts is evident to the authors, we are aware that many artists in the Arctic identify themselves as northerners rather than Arctic artists. The concept of *Nordicity* is also relevant when discussing the arts and culture of the Arctic. *Nordicity* is defined in Canadian research and can be used to refer to a physical reality, as well as to subjective experiences, the imaginary and ideological, including visions and values. So-called total *Nordicity* embodies worldviews, knowledge systems, know-how, arts and humanities [42].

In this article, we have chosen to use the concept of *sustainability* instead of *sustainable development*, knowing that these concepts are politically charged and carry various connotations in relation to the Arctic region, culture and politics. Sustainable development is commonly understood as a condition that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In the context of the Arctic, this kind of development is complex because Western development, for example, as a result of growing southern cities, higher standards of living and increased needs for natural resources, has put at risk the continuation of Arctic cultures and livelihoods. Differentiating itself from sustainable development, the discussion of Arctic sustainability is often influenced by rhetoric about fragile ecosystems and human communities, namely indigenous communities, and is the opposite of a resource frontier [3]. On the other hand, the concept of Arctic sustainable development has a focus on change, while sustaining can be associated with conserving and preserving, even in a negative sense. Frequently, preservation politics cause local conflicts since many of the inhabitants depend on income from the use of natural resources. Whereas the concept of sustainable development would draw attention to Arctic change as a potential space for human

growth on individual, collective and cultural levels, we follow the definition of sustainability coined by researchers Monica Tennberg, Hanna Lempinen and Susanna Pirnes [4], who understand sustainability as a practice beyond politics and frame it as a social practice and a way of understanding the world. This way of using the concept of sustainability is in line with educational studies, in which education for sustainable development has been rethought and refocused on education for sustainability [43] or on post-sustainability [44] to avoid the demand for eternal economic growth exceeding planetary boundaries. We perceive that the Arctic's sustainable future requires progress that respects the fragility of its natural environment as well as the diversity of local cultures and people and is not dominated by the global market.

There is cultural and linguistic diversity within the Arctic due to the indigenous populations and other local people inhabiting the area. At the AAS 2019, Sámi artists, researchers and policy makers were very well represented because the event took place in Rovaniemi, located in Northern Scandinavia, where most of the Sámi people live. Of the 40 indigenous groups in the Arctic, several Sámi cultures are active in Scandinavia and the Russian North. The Sámi are an indigenous people with their own cultures, languages and, to an extent, livelihoods. Contemporary Sámi art has been recognised in Nordic countries [45–50]. The Sámi pedagogy, developed in collaboration with other indigenous education models, responds to the educational needs of the Sámi people and creates theories and practices on their own premises [51–53]. Culturally oriented Sámi research covers many issues, such as self-determination and decolonialisation [54,55], indigenism [56], transiting traditions [37], cultural history [57,58], religion and cosmology [59,60] and the North as a particular way of knowing and being [61,62]. These fields of educational, cultural and political research are relevant for developing arts and culture policies and enhancing sustainability. Their relevance clearly goes beyond indigenous cultures, as a variety of non-indigenous Arctic cultures share parallel histories, corresponding positions and challenges.

Although the Arctic is culturally rich and diverse, *Arcticfication* is a trend presenting the Arctic as a cold and snowy destination, devoid of people. As Tennberg, Lempinen and Pirnes [4] explained, the imaginaries of the Arctic as the home of the polar bear or an uninhabited, infinite pool of natural resources does not resonate with lived and experienced realities. According to literature professor Daniel Chartier [38], this phenomenon has long roots in Western arts and research, in which the Arctic has historically been marginalised as the 'Imaginary North'—an empty and horizontal landscape—instead of as a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-lingual place with a rich cultural history and living traditions. The increase in Arcticfication since the 1980s has not happened by itself. Efforts to brand the Arctic for the global market as a magical, spectacular and wild arena for extreme and even ecstatic experiences are intentional, as professor in the social sciences Willy Guneriusen explained in his research on how the identity of Northern Norway had been re-defined when promoting the town of Tromsø [63]. Arcticfication has also been increased by tourism marketing, and presentations of magnificent landscapes trigger touristic demand [64,65]. Arcticfication can also be defined as a social process creating new geographical images of northern Europe as part of the Arctic, on the one hand, and new social, economic and political relations on the other hand [6]. Artists and the creative sector in general may benefit from Arcticfication, but they also have the agency to reflect on and depict the changes in the nature and culture of the Arctic as insiders, thereby expanding global understanding of the region.

Meanwhile, the participatory turn in contemporary art has increased the use of arts-based methods in diverse sectors of society, including in the Arctic [14,66]. In the fields of art education and socially engaged art, the potential of arts-based methods is seen in terms of human growth and well-being, a sense of cultural identity, community enhancement, empowerment and the ability to support dialogues and experiences of the meaningfulness of life [67–73]. Co-design practices can also contribute to the well-being of those on the periphery, along with other disadvantaged or underserved communities [74–77]. Also, the value of arts and culture in regional development and place-based

regional development work are now studied and discussed in Scandinavia [78] and in rural islands and remote regions in Canada, respectively [79].

Even if the societal and economic potential of arts and culture is studied, the national strategies of Arctic countries deal with culture in a narrow and limited way. When culture is addressed in the strategy texts, it is most often done in the specific context of the region's indigenous peoples [10]. Thus, the value of the cultures of non-indigenous residents, who represent the majority of the people in the circumpolar North, is not recognised in the strategies [10]. Also, the *Arctic Human Development Report* states that indigenous culture is increasingly valued as a resource; furthermore, the Arctic is seen as marketable in terms of tourism, as well as in other areas [7]. Elements of Arctic culture and nature, such as the Arctic state of mind, the Arctic wilderness, the resource base, local experiences and concept of homeland, have shifted from being causes of isolation and marginalisation to a kind of advantage in contemporary identity politics [7]. However, although this may be true to some extent, it is worth noting that the Western colonisation of Arctic indigenous cultures has caused ongoing structural violence [80]. While the ongoing impact of colonisation and cultural suppression is often described as intergenerational historical trauma, the structural inequality has led to a lack of well-being among Arctic indigenous peoples [80]. Thus, opinions about considering indigenous cultures as an economic resource are divided [81,82]. Cultural appropriation and exploitation, which often take place through visual symbols and cultural productions, is judged to be unacceptable by representatives of indigenous cultures, as well as by several researchers of sustainability in the Arctic [60,83–85].

Cultural sustainability must be seen as an important variation of sustainability, to be considered along with ecological, economic and social sustainability, or interwoven into all other aspects of sustainability since culture is both an enabler and a driver of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Researchers Katriina Soini and Inger Birkeland [5] analysed aspects of cultural sustainability and explained that related discourses fall into seven storylines: heritage, vitality, economic viability, diversity, locality, ecocultural resilience and eco-cultural civilisation. These discourses are relevant in the changing Arctic and in debates of livelihoods and growing industries such as tourism [86]. Soini and Birkeland [5] explained that eco-cultural civilisation, as one thread in the sustainability discourses, refers to an ecological shift in the values and behaviours of people. The need for eco-cultural civilisation has its roots in the climate crisis and social injustice. Eco-cultural civilisation can be achieved from cultural activities as well as from formal and informal education and has immense importance in achieving the overall aims of sustainability. In addition, ecocultural civilisation can support cultural resilience. Increasing an eco-cultural civilisation is one of the aims of the Arctic arts; Arctic artists need to inform, educate and transform their global audiences. Artistic and cultural production have the potential to impact on shifts of values and lifestyles to help them become more sustainable [22,86]. In addition, artists and cultural organisations in the Arctic need to have supporting infrastructures that enable their work.

3. Five Themes on Arctic Arts, Culture and Sustainability

3.1. Global Politics and Ecological Crises as Part of the Cultural Politics in the Arctic

The AAS 2019 was based on the notion of the Arctic as a 'laboratory' of sustainable cultural politics. The concept of the laboratory referred to the idea of northern conditions as an environment for developing and piloting new arts-based strategies and methods and cross-sectoral collaborations. The idea of the Arctic regions as test sites for implementing alternative regional development strategies based on creative capital and knowledge-based and cultural economies was proposed by Associate Professor Andrey N. Petrov [87] and reframed by professors Timo Jokela and Glen Coutts [33] in terms of education and sustainability. At the AAS 2019, we were particularly interested in how art addresses the effects of rapid changes in social, cultural and economic settings and the postcolonial reality of the area. Today, the Arctic is viewed industrially, socially and politically as a hub of the twenty-first century [88]. In light of global trends related to searching for ideas to protect local ecosystems, creating

favourable living conditions and enhancing human well-being, the Arctic can be seen as a testing ground for daring and ethically and environmentally friendly experiments and for protecting and activating the cultural capital of local communities [33,89].

Some of the political aims of the AAS 2019 were to support the arts and culture sector in circumpolar collaboration and to recognise, develop and promote sustainable and responsible models of action and long-term partnerships, as well as infrastructures in the creative field. While planning the AAS 2019, one of the aims was to bring knowledge of the importance of arts and culture organisations to the Arctic Council, which is a central policy maker for Arctic developments. In addition, we pondered the relevance of Arctic issues for organisations that deal with indigenous cultures' rights globally, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

As noted above, the overall political climate of Arctic collaboration was strained by the tension at the Rovaniemi Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council one month before the AAS 2019. Attempts to draft a final declaration failed because the US would not agree to approve a document that mentioned climate change, while the other member states disagreed on eliminating discussion of the importance of climate views [23]. In addition, Finland did not have a minister of culture at the time, so it did not have a ministerial representative at the AAS 2019. Political voices from the US, Denmark and Canada were also absent. In both Denmark and Canada, parliamentary elections were cited as the reason for the lack of official high-level representatives at the AAS 2019. The hardest critique expressed during the AAS 2019 concerned these issues, while Jens-Eirik Larsen, a Norwegian political journalist, wrote newspaper articles on how the authorities in the Arctic countries do not want the voices of the arts and culture sector to gain importance in institutionalised Arctic cooperation efforts, such as the Arctic Council [90,91]:

There is no political force behind the vague dream of the arts and culture sector to play a role in the Arctic Council, which, over the past twenty years, has become central to Arctic developments. And no one in the cultural world has dared to formulate this as a deafening requirement [90].

(Translated from Norwegian by authors.)

Megatrends, as well as geo-political influences in the Arctic, such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, colonialism, global interest on exploitation of natural resources and military presence are central issues for Arctic politics [92,93]. In addition, tension between the US and Russia affects neighbouring countries, as well as Europe and the entire Arctic. A recent example of this is the US sanctions on the Nord Stream project, which were imposed at the end of 2019. Geo-politics are also present in cultural politics. However, Larsen [91] noted that the presentations and discussions at the AAS 2019 did not sufficiently concern global politics and megatrends:

The culture must translate the lab exercises and the academic discussions into concrete and bold input into a cultural policy for the northern areas. For the Arctic, the lab does not change. The Arctic is changing into an international game, to the benefit of those who take globalised reality seriously [91].

(Translated from Norwegian by authors.)

While the official representatives of the Arctic nations dodged political statements, some of the AAS 2019 artistic performances addressed politics and the battle between southern interest in natural resources and concern among locals in the Arctic. The Norwegian ensemble, The Northern Assembly, consisting of musician Amund Sjølie Sveen, dancer Liv Hanne Haugen and composer Erik Stifjell, performed a carnivalistic performance titled 'Nordting'. The performance laid out a confrontation between growing cities in the south and the Arctic as a land of natural resources and exploitation. Audience members were invited to participate in a series of polls that increased awareness of Arctic geography and political and economic power structures. As part of this activity, the participants voted for the independence of the North. This performance was reflected in many of the articles on the results of the AAS 2019 [91,94,95].

The discussions at the AAS 2019 covered ways that artists and designers tackle difficult social, cultural and environmental issues. One of the panel-discussion chairs, Glen Coutts [96], summarised the debate by stating that artists address power-relations such as colonisation, feminist perspectives and extractionist culture; acknowledge the power of languages and forms for promoting agency and voice; and create representations that handle future imaginaries. Research on Arctic art and its potential to politically impact society, empower communities and transfer human values is in line with these notions [22,97–99].

In the Arctic, many artists have strong voices in politically tense discussions, as examined by art historians Tuija Hautala-Hirvioja [48] and Hanna Horsberg-Hansen [49,50]. The diverse agencies of Arctic artists and art projects and their beholders and participants were themes for the panel discussion ‘Agencies of Art and Artists in the Arctic’, chaired by Professor Svein Aamold. He stated in his abstract that climate change, extractivism, national state politics and regional interests are circumstances for artists in the Arctic, impacting identities and belonging [100]. In his conclusion, Aamold stated that by reactivating historical avant-garde art, for which ideas and actions provoking change are fundamental, we may invigorate our history and our memory in a deeper understanding of ourselves [100]. He also reflected that while communication is central to artistic projects, our actual engagement with space may add awareness, attachment and responsibility to immediate neighbourhoods and the environment at large.

The debate on the ways Arctic artists participate in political conversations is an essential result of the AAS 2019. While a stronger presence of actual politics at the summit would have been beneficial for policy development and regional and national decision making, artists and cultural activists in the Arctic benefitted from networking and discussing with other artists, curators, researchers and policy makers. An event such as the AAS 2019 has the potential to empower artists and cultural workers and thus support their abilities to impact society and participate in (global and local) environmental politics. To further support artists’ capacities to involve themselves in Arctic politics, it is important that education, mentoring and networking events for artists are organised in the regions where the local knowledge exists and conflicts are actualised.

3.2. Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Arctic Arts and Culture

Complexity is a defining feature of Arctic ethnicity, as Kathrin Stephen, a senior fellow at The Arctic Institute, highlighted in her article by noting that there are various ways of defining who counts as indigenous [2]. In addition to indigenous cultures, there are other cultural minorities with heritages, traditions and cultural identities. As Chartier [38] stressed, the Arctic is a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-lingual place; the blending of indigenous cultures and other lifestyles of the peoples in the Arctic is typical for the region. Cultural policy researcher Maria Hirvi-Ijäs [93] described this well in her conclusion at the AAS 2019: ‘Identities can be defined by countless prismatic constellations’. At the summit, dialogues between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples were promoted so that they could meet, collaborate, learn from each other and initiate future collaboration according to joint interests on Arctic sustainability.

Recent studies of integration and related concepts, such as multiculturalism, interculturalism and cultural diversity, highlight the two-way integration of various cultures into local cultures and vice versa. In this way, integration can be seen as a method of learning [69,101,102]. At the same time, cultural diversity is appreciated as something valuable and worth protecting, since it is an element of cultural sustainability [5]. Indigenous artists and their contemporary productions had visible roles in the AAS 2019 programme. The essential aims of the event included celebrating indigenous artists as well as their collaborations with other Arctic artists.

A variety of issues relevant to indigenous arts and culture were discussed in panel discussions. Themes around the indigenisation process, decolonising strategies and revitalisation were focus areas. Áile Aikio, a Sámi policy researcher and chair of the panel discussion ‘Indigenous Museums and Art Centres’, [56] presented questions about how to curate exhibitions on indigenous art in ways that

would foster community empowerment. Aikio stated that the following questions are relevant for memory institutions working on indigenous land and indigenous issues:

How can we curate and produce indigenous exhibitions in a sustainable, fair and equal way that is meaningful for the indigenous communities? How to break the conventional representation of the indigenous in exhibitions and create a counterforce to the deep-rooted idea of the indigenous cultures as passive and unable to modernize? How to dispel the longstanding mistrust of the indigenous individuals and communities towards the western institutions that are caused by the dark heritage of cultural institutions, the unjust and violent actions of the past and exploitation of the indigenous ancestors, individuals and communities?

[56]

According to Stephen [2], indigenous peoples in the Arctic are characterised as the group most vulnerable to the societal impacts of a changing Arctic. At the same time, they are increasingly the subject of research as rights-holders and active participants in governance, law, politics and research [2]. In contemporary art, as well as in academic research, indigenous voices are becoming more prominent. This was referenced in AAS 2019 presentations when some representatives of ministries and funding institutions said that indigenous artists are representing their nations in international art events. For example, Sámi artist Outi Pieski represented Finland, and Inuit video production Isuma represented Canada in Venice Biennale in 2019. Isuma is a video artwork by artists Zacharias Kunuk, Norman Cohn, Paul Apak and Pauloosie Qulitalik. It illuminates Canada's forced relocation of the Inuit people in the 1950s and the power of the media today to reclaim history. Since the 1990s, indigenous artists have utilised photography art, video art and other contemporary art forms to analyse their own heritage and worldviews and apply discourses on their cultural rights and political aims such as land use to their art [45–50].

The chair of the panel discussion 'Culture, Politics and Cultural Politics', Hanna Lempinen, [103] summarised one of the themes in the panel discussion by stating that the situations and challenges of indigenous cultures are without a doubt different from those of local/national/non-indigenous/majority cultures. Themes that were underlined from both perspectives were self-determination and participation. Participants voiced that decisions regarding or touching upon cultures and cultural life in the Arctic should be made in the region by the people living there [103]. Some of the discussion at the AAS 2019 included specific issues on promoting indigenous art. For example, participants pondered whether white-walled museums are suitable for showing indigenous art, whether non-indigenous peoples should be allowed to judge indigenous art and who should be allowed to appropriate materials and narratives [104]. Contributors demanded that representatives of indigenous peoples be involved in peer reviewing processes and decision making for exhibition programmes, awards and scholarships.

Discussions on the indigenisation process of memory institutions have parallel discourses in education and art education. In her research, Sámi education specialist Pigga Keskitalo [51] stressed the importance of paradigm change and decolonisation in Sámi schools and education to counteract colonisation. Keskitalo followed Linda Tuhiwai Smith's [81] vision of decolonisation as a long-term process that requires dismantling the power of administrative, cultural, linguistic and psychological colonialism. Sámi researcher Rauna Kuokkanen [54] suggested the idea of an 'indigenous paradigm' that would refocus or 're-centre' research on concerns, worldviews and cultural practices from an indigenous perspective with a key objective being to challenge the Western Eurocentric mindset. Smith [81] also questioned Western ways of knowing and researching, calling for the decolonisation of the methodologies of indigenous research. Many scholars have argued that the indigenous knowledge system has much to offer as a basis for indigenous research in the areas of art, design and culture [37].

Meanwhile, there is a trap in seeing Arctic art as only an indigenous practice. While the climate crisis and globalisation affect the social life, well-being and cultures of people living in the region in a very unstoppable way, they call for collaboration and mutual understanding between indigenous cultures and other cultures in the Arctic. Multicultural and intercultural communities in the Arctic

share many characteristics, development issues and challenges. Lempinen [103] concluded that circumpolar mobility and collaboration are means of contributing to appreciating cultural diversity, as well as establishing a sense of being ‘northerners with pride’, which is crucial for the vitality of Arctic cultures and cultural life. There is evidence that cultural mentoring, including teaching arts and crafts, can support a sense of cultural pride [105] toward one’s own culture [106,107]. Educated artists and art teachers are needed to carry out cultural animation and cultural mentoring for Arctic pride, as well as socially engaged art and art projects, to create dialogue and empower culturally diverse communities.

3.3. *Handmade’ and the Material Culture of the Arctic*

Since the early 2000s, there has been growing interest in the material culture of the Arctic in parallel with a materialistic turn in contemporary theory. New materialism can be seen as a paradigm shift that moved the focus from texts to makers, spaces, places and materiality [108,109]. At the AAS 2019, the material culture of the Arctic was in focus through panel discussions held in collaboration with the Nordic Culture Fund under the theme ‘Handmade’, which was a focus of the shared project grants in 2016–2018 of the Nordic Culture Fund. The fund has supported many handmade-themed projects in the northernmost parts of Nordic countries. The theme focuses on contemporary crafting and has a strong position in the Nordic countries, as well as in Arctic arts.

The Nordic Culture Fund representatives described the background of the theme of handmade as being connected to craft as part of various art forms, to the need for tactile experiences, as a tool for expressing positions in society and to transitions of traditions where institutions join together to face global challenges [110]. As Benny Marcel, the director of the fund [110], explained, the grant projects have supported cultural diversity and makers in marginal positions, shaken boundaries between institutions, genres and cultures and interpreted what it means to be Nordic. The variety of funded projects has included local initiatives with international networks [110].

The University of Lapland, the host of the AAS 2019, has been conducting two international contemporary art projects with the support of handmade-themed grants [36,111,112]. The concept of *crafting sustainability* has been used to refer to the dialogue formed through handcraft, contemporary art methods as a shared cultural heritage between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples [36], and education for sustainable development through crafts pedagogy [113]. Crafting can be applied to intercultural dialogue because people worldwide, especially from rural regions, have experiences of crafting by themselves or with family members [36], and these shared experiences are valuable when connecting with people from other cultures. Thus, crafting has been implemented in community art practices [36]. We describe the nature of the shared dialogic heritage of the Arctic as the Northern knowledge system, following ideas of an indigenous knowledge system that consists of traditions, a historic understanding of humans’ interactive and responsible nature relations and the use of natural materials in livelihoods.

Hirvi-Ijäs [93] stated in her reflection on the AAS 2019 that research on Arctic art conducted in university collaborations with design-oriented research at the forefront covers a meaningful, active issue:

What is now theorised as new materialism is perceived here as a basis. Art is not separated from craft, the cultural heritage is reflected from the perspective of practice. The inclusive research field brings together contemporary art, all types of design, crafts, technology and media. The concept of art history may give way to the anthropological and political [93].

(Translated from Swedish by the authors.)

In addition, at the AAS 2019, participants pondered whether the focus on the material heritage of the Arctic and the contemporary art of crafting has resulted in stereotypes and prejudices. Participants pondered if Arctic art and its makers always express political positions and use traditional materials and crafts in their works, as was concluded by Anastasia Patsey [114], chair of the sessions ‘Curators Talk: Distinctive Features of Arctic Art’. Obviously, Arctic artists do not need to implement traditional

arts or crafts in order to continue their own cultures, as Inuit curator and researcher Heather Igloliorte stated in her research [115]. She described how many Inuit artists are fascinated with the idea of making representations of their land and animals through various media, such as media art.

While some of the discussion blamed crafting for causing stereotypical images of Arctic arts, contemporary craft can be considered a method of expression that reflects, reforms and presents Northern knowledge. At the AAS 2019, some voices highlighted educational structures to increase expertise in Arctic arts and contemporary craft. Ekaterina Sharova [116], a curator of one of the exhibitions and chair of the panel discussion 'Mother Power', underlined the need to include folk arts in education at schools and in universities. She stated that the heritage of northern folk arts is not known to wider audiences, especially youth. The model of teaching traditional crafts in art academies, as is done in indigenous educational institutions [117], could be implemented widely in the Arctic, and elsewhere. Another opportunity for artists and art teacher training in the Arctic is the project-based learning model, in which students become involved with local communities, learn material culture from locals and transmit traditions with local community members as part of socially and environmentally engaged art projects [36,118]. Thus, the development of artist education methods and practices in the Arctic has relevance beyond the Arctic.

3.4. Revitalisation, Place-Making and Regional Development

One of the issues that ran through the various presentations and panel discussions at the AAS 2019 was how to foster cultural life in the Arctic, especially in remote regions, and how to strengthen vitality and regional development through art and culture. In addition to decolonialisation [81], which has gained importance in the context of indigenous studies and cultural activism, revitalisation has become a key process that aims to restore the values of traditions in the contemporary socio-cultural context. Revitalisation does not mean returning to history, culture and identity that would be authentic or unmixed. 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. The discussed needs for decolonisation and revitalisation show that similar processes should also be implemented in multi-ethnic communities and non-indigenous communities.

Revitalisation is described as a practice that renews and remakes cultural traditions that are part of the social construction [119]. It is an approach to achieving cultural sustainability. Its power is in the creation of cultural continuation, the reconstruction of ancestors' skills and support of local cultural identities. Revitalisations can be intergenerational and intercultural, with the aim of transmitting traditional knowledge, artistry and cultural practices to new generations and new community members. Forgotten symbols, rituals and crafts can also be studied, and new meanings can be created for them as the traditional and the modern are constantly reformed in contemporary art [36,37,49,112,120,121], community-based art education [68,106,122,123] and even in the context of arts-based creative tourism [86]. In fact, today's contemporary art, as well as cultural practices, whether created through education or as cultural services (such as creative tourism), may eventually become traditions.

Inuit researchers Ashlee Cunsolo, Inez Shiwak and Michele Wood studied revitalisation together with the IlikKuset-Ilingannet cultural programme [105]. They discussed the potential of youth mentorship programmes for cultural preservation, promotion and sustainability and underlined cultural pride as an essential result of learning traditional skills, sharing stories and bringing generations together. They explained that the mentorship programme has helped individuals and communities become stronger and more resilient to any type of change [105]. Their analyses are in line with those of Maria Huhmarniemi, Mirja Hiltunen and Timo Jokela [124], who argued that the transformation of values, the fostering of agency and eco-cultural resilience, the revitalisation of traditions and the empowerment of individuals and communities are potential effects of artistic and educational activities carried out in a place-specific manner with communities.

Revitalisation does not refer only to language, arts, crafts and other cultural practices but also to places, villages and whole regions based on their local and regional originality and potential vitality. Place-based strategies are considered an opposition to conventional top-down, single-sector and national-stage development projects [125]. At the AAS 2019, the potential of place-based artistic and cultural work was discussed mainly in the context of artist education and pedagogy. The participants considered how art, design and education might have roles to play in the revitalisation of regional cultural heritage.

According to cultural sustainability researchers Joost Dessein, Katriina Soini, Graham Fairclough and Lummina Horlings [37], place-conscious and place-responsive teaching contribute to sustainability by strengthening connections between people and the worlds they inhabit. Place-conscious methods can also initiate discussions of communities' hopes for the future, and they are beneficial for policymaking and even politics when engaging citizens in making future imaginaries and fostering sustainability [37]. Some art and design educators use implementations of place-based education [118,126,127] to increase the understanding of place as an educational tool for sustainability. In the Arctic, place-based education is often implemented with the aims of decolonisation and revitalisation. These paradigm changes have led to a re-evaluation of how art and design should be taught in schools and universities and have highlighted the aims of culturally sensitive approaches in art education and artists training. Art education researchers have presented arts-based methods for strengthening cultural identity, revitalisation and decolonisation of small communities through place-specific approaches [33,68,71,118,128]. Some of the main goals are the survival of regional cultures combined with the inhabitants' cultural self-determination and securing social and economic stability for communities and their place-specific and culturally sensitive approaches [33].

According to Igloliorte [115], Inuit artists constantly deepen their knowledge of their longstanding creative practices while also innovating to ensure that these practices thrive and contribute to shared knowledge that continues traditions but is also progressing. She stated that ingenuity is the tradition of creative Inuit people, and the authors think the same can be said about Arctic arts in general. Discourses on Arctic arts have an underlying notion that the role of arts and culture is crucial for the well-being of the Arctic peoples and all of society. In addition to inevitable changes in culture, art is seen as a catalyst of change; thus, resources for making art and developing art and art education are needed. Jokela, Huhmarniemi and Hautala-Hirvioja [34] stated the following in their contribution to the book *Arctic Art in the Time of Change*, launched at the AAS 2019 and shared with key participants:

While searching for new ideas and concepts, art always shakes and breaks rules — it criticises, challenges, and proposes alternative ways for making and knowing. In finding new kinds of opportunities, art has the potential to be influential in society for making Arctic lives better and Arctic communities stronger. Art creates meanings, symbols and values that are not measurable in numbers. We need to make sure that Arctic art design and craft retains its ability to transform and renew itself continuously.

[34]

3.5. Economy and Sustainability

Artists and other people counted as producing creative capital are critical for economic development and socio-economic transformation in the Arctic as they have the agency to impact economic reinvention and the revitalisation of cultures [87]. Discussion on economic sustainability at the AAS 2019 touched on both creative industries and the working conditions of contemporary artists and non-governmental cultural organisations. Overall, creative industries include advertising, architecture, design, music, the performing arts, publishing, research and development [129]. However, these industries were referred to from the specific viewpoints of the film industry, of city development and of tourism collaborations, such as snow and ice architecture. The concept of *creative economy* emphasises the significance and added value of culture and creativity in the economy, and the concept of *renewable economies* underscores the sustainability of these industries in opposition to the industrial

use of natural resources. In the Arctic, creative industries are expected to generate sustainable business opportunities that benefit the economy while also maintaining and boosting local place-based and ecological businesses [20]. The expectations and principles of Arctic arts are closely related to those of cultural and creative industries and creative economies [129].

Many creative industries are not place-bound. Consequently, they can be conducted in remote regions, as well as in creative centres in cities. Key questions included how Arctic cities and villages can attract creative and social capital. Some industries, such as film, benefit from the Arctic landscape and the hype around Arctic cultures. For example, Baldur Þórir Guðmundsson, senior advisor at the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in Iceland and a musician, described how the government-based support system has lured international movie productions to Iceland and given jobs to a variety of artists and experts in the country's media industry. Despite this, one can argue that these productions mainly boost tourism businesses, which provide infrastructures for movie makers and welcome tourists who are impressed by those movies. The panel discussion on indigenous film industries was chaired by Sámi film commissioner Liisa Holmberg and covered issues such as how the indigenous film industry will give work and hope to indigenous youth, shape the future of the locals and contribute to the global film industry.

Responsible tourism and creative industries were spotlighted as growing sectors in the Arctic; they include cultural events, locally produced food, handicrafts, art and film production which create work for people [82]. According to the Nordic Council of Ministers [9], Northern Scandinavia has the potential to become internationally established as a forerunner for sustainable creative business development, innovation and research. Investment in creative industries could create economic, social and cultural value and growth from films, tourism and indigenous cultural businesses. Meanwhile, Petrov [87] stated that indigenous Arctic communities are strong in their cultural creative capital but often weak in entrepreneurial capital, which challenges profitmaking in cultural economies in indigenous communities.

As Petrov [87] described, artists and cultural organisations have a transfer effect on the creative economy because creative capital coincides with the attractiveness of the region, and creative synergy is a critical condition for utilising local creative capacities. In addition to the discussion on how arts and culture secure sustainable economies in the Arctic, a strong statement on a lack of support and funding for art was introduced. The core message was that current funding practices do not make it possible to create and contribute to sustainable cultural politics. Indigenous cultural activities, the university sector and art all require longer-term funding mechanisms [101]. The lack of truly circumpolar funding mechanisms was also underlined by Lempinen [101]. Although the growing interest in the Arctic has also raised attention on the value of Arctic arts, Chair Anastasia Patsey [114] stressed that funding should not be based on changing trends. In addition, Chair Lea O'Loughlin called for sustainability through support structures:

Support and funding for networks and network development to help alleviate the administrative burden of ambitious projects and to provide amplified advocacy was also strongly advocated for. There was a great deal of discussion and agreement about the lack of sustainability in current arts production systems, with a pressure to constantly produce more work, make everything new (as opposed to touring existing work), and the erosion of mental health resulting from the increasingly poor working conditions imposed on practitioners.

[130]

Visual arts were discussed through the lens of arts management; many artists live in remote locations, and private and public customers who buy art and share funding are mostly located in centres in the south, at least in Scandinavia [131]. It was pondered whether art managers and digital channels could support artists' careers in the Arctic and whether regional art markets could be established where the maker culture is strong but audiences might not be used to buying arts and crafts from

artists and artisans [131]. Participants stressed the need for collaboration and raised the ideas of joint Arctic arts websites and online portfolios.

There is evidence that education has a positive impact in the Arctic; access to vocational and higher education and lifelong learning are fundamental for individual development and for the competitiveness of companies in the Arctic [132]. University towns are growing, even though they do not have heavy industries. Based on the importance of Arctic arts universities and the knowledge economy, and the impact of arts and culture on other sectors of society, Jokela and Coutts [33] stated that arts and design education has leverage for Arctic sustainability. While the economy is expected to shift from raw natural resources to creative industries [12,20,87], we agree with Petrov [12] that creative human capital is critical for economic development as an engine of economic reinvention and regional revitalisation. The development of Arctic arts, design, creative industries, *renewable economies* and education is crucial for a sustainable future.

4. Conclusions

Analyses of the discourses in AAS 2019 show that Arctic artists have agency in discussions of geo-politics, climate crisis, environmental conflicts, social and cultural issues, and the relation of human beings to the animal kingdom and the land. Artists address colonisation and the exploitation of natural resources, empower local communities, create future imaginaries and foster alternative images of the Arctic. The AAS 2019 supported artists and the arts and culture sector by fostering networking and creating a forum for sharing knowledge and know-how on joint challenges and possibilities.

Arctic indigenous artists, researchers and policy makers were strongly present at the AAS 2019 and were active in defining the themes of the discourses. Issues specifically concerning indigenous cultures were the focus of many panel discussions. Meanwhile, participants also expressed that indigenous cultures and other lifestyles of the peoples in the Arctic are blending. The concept of Northern knowledge systems describes the way non-indigenous cultures also have valid nature-bound traditions and know-how that is worth revitalising. During the AAS 2019, participants demanded that non-indigenous Arctic cultures also be incorporated in national policies and strategies, and not only due to their economic impact. They also demanded that self-determination and participation in decisions regarding cultures and cultural life in the Arctic should be made by the people living in the region. Circumpolar mobility and collaboration were seen as means for contributing to the appreciation of cultural diversity as well as to the sense of being northerners with pride. As an event, the AAS 2019 enhanced this sense.

New materialism, a paradigm shift in contemporary theory, has importance in the Arctic since arts are understood to include contemporary forms of expression, as well as traditional crafts and contemporary art based on crafts. The concept of crafting sustainability is implemented in projects where dialogue, revitalisation and empowerment are created through crafting. In addition, *Arctic crafted sustainability* describes new initiatives for developing a culturally sensitive creative economy in the Arctic. Place-making and revitalisation are means of promoting the continuation of Arctic and Northern knowledge systems and are essential concepts for discussing traditions in transition and educational strategies. Artist education in the Arctic is momentous; sustainability needs creative capacities and capabilities. When artists are educated in the region, they gain knowledge and commit to participate in Arctic politics and conduct socially and environmentally engaged art. Meanings, symbols and values created in artistic processes are important for identities, place-making and Arctic pride. We need to make sure that Arctic arts, design and crafts retain their vitality to contribute to sustainability.

Creative capital can foster the economy as a complement or alternative to extractionist cultures and resource-based development, which causes conflicts in the region. Arcticification supports some industries, such as the film industry, which then impacts communities by giving hope and work to people living in the region and contributing to the sense of being northerners with pride. Moreover, there is the potential to develop sustainable tourism in collaboration with artists and creative industries. Art, cultural life and artists as community members have importance for creative synergy in order

to attract other creative capital to the region, which can be seen as one of the reasons to guarantee regional support for artists. While Arctic artists would benefit from increased support for circumpolar collaborations, ecological sustainability must be included in all cultural policies. In addition, the ways in which arts can increase eco-cultural civilisation must be further developed.

The discourses covered at the AAS 2019 are essential not only for cultural sustainability in the Arctic but also for elsewhere. Arctic environments and social-cultural settings can work as laboratories for innovative arts and arenas in which context-sensitive methods for art and design can be developed as well as models for cultural policies and arts funding supporting regional development and creative synergy. This is not only relevant for the Arctic but also for the rest of the world, especially areas that qualify as peripheral and as having culturally sensitive interactions.

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