

Exploration into Possible Futures 2020, Pt.2 – Age of Ecologies

*Online event summary
of June 16, 2020*

On 16 June, the second out of three online seminars took place during the "Exploration into Possible Futures 2020" project, focusing on ecology, future, agency, and local perspectives in the complex context of sustainability!

Named "Age of Ecologies" it examined how ecological, cultural, and resilient change emerges in the circumpolar north; how sustainable development and resilience appear in artistic, scientific, and social practices.

Again, gathering almost 30 participants from across the Northern Dimension, the seminar was moderated by Antti Tenetz, regional artist and coordinator of the project at Arts Promotion Centre Finland. He again explained the status quo of the project, especially when the originally planned expedition was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

During his introduction, Antti also emphasized that the CO₂ levels have been above all historical recordings since the 1950s, which is something we need to keep in mind especially when living in the north where changes happen much faster than in the southern hemisphere. However, Antti pointed out that, during the pandemic lockdowns, there were factual evidence we can reduce the CO₂ much faster than thought.

He also introduced the listeners with all 4 modules carried out during the project revolving around multiple types of sustainability – social, environmental, economic, and cultural.

The programme was launched with a video work by visual artist Arttu Nieminen. He could not be present; instead, he sent a video from his next site of work, explaining the video that concerned prophecies on natural causes.

The first full keynote "Some thoughts on possible Arctic futures", was presented by Markku Heikkilä, head of science communications, Arctic Centre, University of Lapland. He began dwelling into his own memories in the last 50 years, related to northern policies, nature and cultures changing; sometimes for the best, many times for the worse. Markku examined some of the lost past of the Arctic, including gone fauna (that also includes human beings as species), but also indigenous communities that were moved from smaller villages to social housing. What is the future for such cultures? Can it thrive, or will it become only an ornament tomorrow?

Instead, industrial activity has slowed down, and some areas are becoming less polluted and are turning back to peace. However, it has not stopped the climate change. There are few problems though - no one has any idea how long the climate change will last; and no one really knows what the plans in the Arctic for the superpowers like Russia and China are.

Markku finished his presentation with a rhetorical question – who can be called an Arctic person? He had an example of a Filipino man, who is living in Svalbard. When can you start calling him an Arctic man? Who is to say who becomes Arctic? Such questions are important to answer if we want to see a sustainable Arctic community in the future.

Next presentation was on sound practices by Dr. Sergey Kostyrko, artist and associate professor at the Faculty of Applied Mathematics and Control Processes, Saint Petersburg State University. He focused on three in-depth themes during his speech – music improvisation as sociological phenomena; data sonification principle in the context of science art projects; and field recording process and its connection with soundscape ecology.

Sergey reflected on lots of theory as well as on his experience as a sound artist, observer or others' work, and producer of events and recordings. Through the 3 themes mentioned earlier, he managed to explain sound as an utterly physical phenomena as well as an artistic, abstract, metaphysical substance.

Sergey also investigated another theme – migration, and how it changes all domains of economy, sociology, ecology. After all, also art and music since sound itself is also a migration of particles. He finished the presentation on possible collaborative forms of science and art – both can inspire each other, bring new knowledge, develop projects and their theoretical basis, as well as art can present complex ideas and work as a catalyst.

The next presentation “Northern resilience - Solving ecological problems through art and science” was presented by Riikka Karppinen, politician and environmental influencer. She began with talking about her experience in environmental activism and being a vice president of the Green Party in Finland. Her case study was Viiankiaapa – a preserved peatland territory where industrial test drilling was initiated already in 2004. In 2010, Riikka became vocal against the company.

In 2017, she began collaborating with Amanda Martikainen, an opera performer to bring multimedia performances to Viiankiaapa. Soon after dozens of dance performances, photo exhibitions, lectures, hikes, and seminars by dozens of activists, artists, researchers and others followed to emphasize the challenges of the preserved territory, its ethics, practices, and future.

In 2021, a book will be published on Viiankiaapa. Explaining the situation and the land via art and science, the book will focus on the history of culture, ecology, conservation, and livelihood of the area.

The final presentation of the day “Social-ecological resilience in a warming Arctic” was provided by Bruce Forbes, research professor at University of Lapland. Living there for 19 years, he presented multiple observations on nature changes and tribes in a video recording, then followed by a livestream speech.

The observations were related to both activities that are caused by precautions and careless activities of humanity, from migration to farming or foresting. However, Bruce's work has been focused mostly to reindeerers and the impact climate change makes to their lives. He recalled his experience when talks about environmental challenges began, how it was tied to political misconduct, industry,

The first seminar, *Age of Agency*, reflected on ecological aspects of transient agency in the era of climate change. The third event, "Age of Change - Possible Futures", will take place on 12 August and explore future in perspective of art, science and local knowledges.

All the seminars are free of charge, but registration is needed to get a link to the event platform Google Meets. You can join the event from your computer or phone. Video recording will be provided to all registered participants. He quoted one of his friends, who claimed that life in the Arctic is change. Although, in recent years, there has been a political catalyst to it that has caused issues that could have been prevented as well as the local communities have had no voice in accepting these changes.

PROGRAMME

Moderator: Antti Tenetz, Regional Artists, Arts Promotion Centre Finland

- Introduction to Exploration into Possible Futures, Antti Tenetz, regional artist
- AWARENESS Video work, Arttu Nieminen, visual artist
- Some thoughts on possible Arctic futures, Markku Heikkilä, head of science communications, Arctic Centre, University of Lapland
- Sound practices, Sergey Kostyrko, Artist and Ph.D/Solid Mechanics, associate professor at the Faculty of Applied Mathematics and Control Processes, Saint Petersburg State University
- Viiankiaapa - Northern resilience - Solving ecological problems through art and science, Riikka Karppinen, politician and environmental influencer
- Social-ecological resilience in a warming Arctic, Bruce Forbes, research professor

Our speakers:

- Markku Heikkilä, MSc. Markku Heikkilä works since 2010 as the Head of science communications in the Arctic Centre, University of Lapland. As a former journalist, he has keenly followed the developments in international Northern and Arctic co-operation from its early stages and for this work, he got the State award for public information in 1997. He has written several books on these topics and the latest one, "If we lose the Arctic", came out in 2019. It describes three decades of the Finnish Arctic politics. At the Arctic Centre, his science communication work includes popularizing Arctic information for various audiences and participating to Arctic related policy work and stakeholder contacts. He also leads the international biannual Rovaniemi Arctic Spirit conferences.

- Sergey Kostyrko, musician, PhD and associate professor in St. Petersburg State University with a main interest in improvisational music. He is also a sound artist focusing on science and bioart projects. In his

presentation, he will discuss some of the soundmaking and listening practices from the sustainable development perspective.

Main highlights of the presentation:

music improvisation which considered as a social phenomenon;

data sonification with examples where studies in neuroscience, cell biology and population migration are merged with sound art;

field recording and its connection with a soundscape ecology.

Please, check also the following links:

<https://dinzuartefacts.bandcamp.com/album/synchronized>

<https://cyland.bandcamp.com/album/caa-41>

<https://soundcloud.com/sergey-kostyrko-fieldrec/>

- Bruce Forbes. Professor Forbes has a background in applied ecology and geography in northern high latitudes, with special emphasis on permafrost regions. His experience is circumpolar, encompassing studies of rapid land use and climate change in Alaska, the Canadian High Arctic, various regions of northern Russia, and northernmost Fennoscandia. His approach is strongly interdisciplinary and participatory, aiming for the co-production of knowledge, particularly concerning local and regional stakeholder-driven research questions. He has conducted fieldwork annually in the Arctic for over 35 years.

- Riikka Karppinen is an environmental activist, vice-chairperson of Green Party and a municipal councillor in Sodankylä. She started an effective campaign against a mining company at age of 15 to raise awareness of mining industry's injurious effects on nature. In the online seminar she will give her presentation on topic: Case Viiankiaapa - Northern resilience - Solving ecological problems in through art and science

- Arttu Nieminen is a visual artist based in Rovaniemi and active member of Magneetti -Northern Area Culture Association. His video works, live acts and installations concentrate on momentary being and presence. He explores transition between man-made and so-called wild but human influenced environments. With his mobile gear he follows the pulse of urban atmospheres and tracks his vision in the shades of a reindeer path around the northern wilderness. Arttus' short films and short fictions have been shown in several festivals nationally and internationally.

Video work Awareness is a neuro-cinematic dive into surreal prophecy, where awareness of mankind tries to reach to the heavens before it is too late.

"In this film I reflect on the human mind, cultural evolution and the state of our world and climate change through an abstract symmetry, mantra type poetry and drastic cutting, to form a neuro-cinematic dive into surreal prophecy. "

PROJECT

Exploration into Possible Futures is a sub-project of Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture, Creating New Practices of Sustainability – Cross-sectorial creativity in the era of Climate Change - project which focuses on examining four pillars of sustainability in relation to local resilience at north.

Project is based on the idea that art and culture can serve as activators for developing social discourse in an eco-social and cultural direction as a response to climate change. In this transition towards more resilient and sustainable thinking, expertise in art and culture can offer numerous development views and actions that significantly support multilateral regional cooperation.

The end result of Exploration into Possible Futures will be joint artistic-scientific output carried out by Arts Promotion Centre Finland in collaboration with independent curating group FridayMilk (Murmansk), Magneetti (Northern Media Culture Organization Rovaniemi), and other partners.

The project is funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture. Project is implemented by Arts Promotion Centre Finland in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland.