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CHAPTER 14
**Introduction to Doctoral
Matters**

Pauline von Bonsdorff

This section provides an overview of the research of the doctoral students who participated in the FADS network. The texts reflect the state of their research at different stages of completion.¹ The assignment was to write a short text on what matters in the research, describing its significance, main ideas and objectives as well as the methods toward achievement.²

As described in Chapter One, the recruitment into FADS emphasized research in the core area of art education, that is, research linking art and education in one way or another. As this bouquet of research projects shows, there are multiple ways of doing this: many roles of art in education (including forms of art and emphases on its functions) and many different concepts of education. However, these multiple roles are assets rather than obstacles: the variety of approaches, themes and methods contributes to making each participant more reflective of the specific nature of his or her own contribution.

In this brief introduction, I point out links between the projects. The projects do not fit neatly into certain categories, but connecting themes, objectives, and methodologies paints a contemporary picture of Finnish art education research. Finally, I also reflect upon how the researchers understand art and education, and how these concepts and practices are expanded, transformed, and critically analyzed in their work.

First, I address the themes or topics. Many of the projects deal with the *environment* in one sense or another, ranging from the urban to the natural, and from actual human habitats to the idea of nature. Tuukkanen investigates how curators at contemporary art festivals, working with new genre public art, contribute to urban space, while Huhmarniemi and Korsström-Magga address the northern rural

- 1 In Finland, a PhD should be completed in four years. However, many students have only part-time funding, which means that the work can take a much longer time. Moreover, the participants in FADS did not start their research at the same time.
- 2 What is your idea? What do you want to do or accomplish? What are the methods for achieving your goals and objectives? Why is your work important? What is the significance?

environment as subject to conflicting interests and life-styles. Ylirisku discusses environment or nature on a conceptual level, and as part of institutional educational practices, whereas in Piaścik's work, "wildness" appears both as a resource of the natural world and an important dimension of human subjectivity.

Subjectivity as elaborated and transformed in art educational and artistic practices is a theme that Piaścik shares with Snellman, Koivisto and Kalmanlehto. In Snellman's work subjectivity is played out as "affective pedagogy" in a workshop on contemporary art with young people. At issue in Koivisto's work is psychiatric disability as articulated by certain rap artists, escaping the simplistic binary alternatives of either embracing or evading disability. Kalmanlehto explores subjectivity as self-formation with Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's philosophy, elaborated through digital gameplay.

The *digital world*, which arguably is an aspect of both contemporary hybrid subjectivities and life-worlds or environments, is also contextualized, in different ways, in both Dufva's and Manninen's projects. Dufva explores creative coding theoretically and with applications in schools, and in vocational education in the arts. Manninen's research in schools that participated in a large European network demonstrates how digital media is a resource in cross-border communication and in the negotiation of identities, and in supporting multimodality and multiliteracy.

Finally, five of the research projects are either targeted at *schools* or vocational settings of art education, or they study processes that took place in these contexts. In addition to the aforementioned projects (Ylirisku, Snellman, Dufva, Manninen), Muyanja studies art education in primary schools in Uganda from a post-colonialist perspective, pointing out the gap between indigenous traditions of arts and crafts and arts as taught in school.

Transformation is a key notion in discourses of contemporary art education. This ethos is clearly recognizable in the objectives of the doctoral projects. Some have an emancipatory goal mainly targeted at individuals and connected in different ways to creativity (Piaścik, Snellman, Dufva), while others attempt to affect cultural imagery, values and meanings related to particular groups or geographical

areas through artistic projects and critical art education (Korsström-Magga, Huhmarniemi, Ylirisku, Koivisto). There are projects that aim at expanding or changing existing practices of art education (Manninen, Muyanja), and projects that expand art education towards including novel aesthetic and artistic practices (Dufva, Kalmanlehto). The project that represent a more traditional, analytic approach to their study objects does it in order to understand how art changes culture (Tuukkanen).

Many of the projects use some combination of mixed methods. Action research, or arts-based action research, characterizes several projects, at least to some extent (Huhmarniemi, Manninen, Korsström-Magga, Piaścik, Muyanja), while other projects use artistic or arts-based methods (Ylirisku, Snellman). Ethnographic methods such as interviews and (participatory) observation are included in several projects (those just mentioned plus Tuukkanen). Three projects apply a philosophical approach, either by working with a particular philosopher's texts (Kalmanlehto on Lacoue-Labarthe), by giving a specific concept a key role ("egress" in Koivisto), or by applying and working in the spirit of a particular ontology (Snellman with Deleuze and Guattari). All the projects can be characterized as representing a humanities approach, as the researcher is in a key role—with his or her skills, experiences, values, and goals.

What happens, then, to art and education in these projects? As for the scope of art, the projects encompass rap music and digital games in addition to the manifold field of contemporary visual arts. Thus, if we agree that "art" in art education stands for a particular kind of engagement with objects that provoke us and demand imaginary efforts, or for the articulation and elaboration of experience in the processes of creating works, then the FADS researchers show that art today is in new places, if also in places where we might expect to find it. Education, in the broad sense, is studied in the projects through showing the different mediating roles of art educators, such as teacher, curator, and facilitator or discussion partner. In addition, education in the fundamental sense of formation (from *Bildung* to public pedagogy) also appears as a process that is intrinsically and inevitably part of art.