



Research Innovation: Advancing Arts-based Research Methods to Make Sense of Micro-moments Framed by Dementia

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Abstract

In this article we discuss how to develop methodological tools to guide social innovation in the arts and health movement. We approach this question by making research within Artful Dementia Research Lab as transparent as possible by 1) describing study designs 2) presenting arts-based datasets, and 3) giving insight into what we define as aesthetic analysis. We outline four premisses of situated art intervention research and what it can add to practice-led research. We close with an invitation to the reader to further discuss how to make arts-based research methods more visible and bringing them to the table of established research standards.

Keywords: arts-based research, situated art intervention, aesthetic analysis, practice-led research, dementia

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Entrée

The objective of this article is to present, discuss and further develop arts-based research methods to make our research process as transparent as possible to researchers, artists and the arts and dementia community. We address this need by exploring the following research question: *how to develop methodological tools to guide social innovation in the arts and health movement?* We focus specifically on dementia which is here understood as an ‘actor’ than can play out differently in aesthetically important moments that emerge during interactions between researchers, artists, residents in a local care home and their formal and informal carers.

Research is based on the prerequisite that results must emerge by means of recognised methods described in a way that is transparent and ethically credible. However, the specific practical, emotional, embodied, and relational challenges in the craft of arts-based research often remain obscure. Furthermore, discussions on research methods have, according to Helga Eggebø (2020, p. 107) ‘a tendency to focus on methodological approaches and epistemological prerequisites rather than the practical analytical work’. After more than 20 years of research experience in drama, theatre, and music, we are concerned with how we can make arts-based research processes more transparent and simultaneously provide the reader with insights into our theoretical and methodological framework. We work with complex ethical and aesthetical questions, such as: How to translate aesthetic processes into research data? How can people with dementia participate on equal terms in community science? How can arts-based research framed by dementia be conducted alongside open research practices?

As we are primarily looking for novel research methods that could enable us to develop new understandings of dementia and new ways of being together with people living with dementia, this article is part of a larger knowledge cycle that gives insight into how we are studying dementia in relation to citizenship, co-creativity, relational consent and how we are developing arts-based methods and research innovation together with people living with dementia.

Artful Dementia Research Lab

In recent years, we have been associated with Artful Dementia Research Lab at UiT The Arctic University of Norway, which conducts research on innovative

understandings of ageing and dementia.³ Based on experimental interventions with the creative and performative arts, our researchers advance knowledge of how to enact dementia beyond individual human loss, promote research-based cultural change, and increase awareness about how to create meaningful reciprocal relationships between people living with and without dementia. Series of situated art interventions thereby become a mode of social science knowledge generation (Mittner, 2021). Together with the community we are developing arts-based practices that have the potential to guide everyday life with dementia (Mittner, Basting & ADLab, 2022). Citizenship research has become a driving force in an ongoing paradigm shift that seeks to understand how people living with dementia can become active citizens and thus contribute to society (Birt et al., 2017).

Arts-based research performed in a health and social science context must involve a high degree of ethical reflection on the part of the researcher. She must take into account the agency of the arts and current regulations governing researchers such as guidelines from the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH) (2016)⁴, the Vancouver Convention⁵, the Declaration of Helsinki,⁶ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).⁷ These rights and research ethics frameworks provide advice on how research projects can be planned, approved and implemented in accordance with good research ethics practice.⁸

We are researching the edges of applied traditions (Nicholson, 2005) in health studies and social sciences. Encounters between differently abled people present methodological challenges when we co-create research through creative play (Gjørsum, 2010). This may involve sensory play between people, between people and other bodies and materials (such as animals, flowers, props, scenography) or

³ <https://uit.no/research/adlab>

⁴ <https://www.forskningsetikk.no/en/guidelines/social-sciences-humanities-law-and-theology/guidelines-for-research-ethics-in-the-social-sciences-humanities-law-and-theology/>

⁵ <http://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.forskningsetikk.no/ressurser/fbib/lover-retningslinjer/helsinkideklarasjonen/>

⁷ <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/sub/eos-notatbasen/notatene/2014/aug/forslag-til-personvernforordning/id2433856/>

⁸ <https://www.forskningsetikk.no/retningslinjer/hum-sam/forskningsetiske-retningslinjer-for-samfunnsvitenskap-humaniora-juss-og-teologi/>

non-material items (such as sound, movement or dramaturgy). We are entering an unknown landscape with our research design, one that stretches the conventions of arts-based, health, and social science research. When research questions that are socially relevant (such as what it could mean to live with dementia) can hardly be answered by established qualitative research methods (e.g., interviews, participatory observation, fieldwork), we need to develop creative approaches to solve the problem. Our methods need be developed interdisciplinary and collectively (together with people who are part in the problem being studied) to create knowledge that is relevant to the community to which we belong. Thus, all practices that evolve in the field, the research methods themselves, become part of this new knowledge. Since few research has been conducted co-creatively within the field of art and dementia (Zeilig et al., 2018) and clear method descriptions are rare, we find a need to describe and justify our methodological considerations and decisions that are formed by the relations that emerge in our interactions. For example, when we capture micro moments from the field by creating small scenes during the data analyse process (e.g. a fine art universe, a poetic universe, and an applied theatre universe) we can study our shifting understanding of dementia from an experience of disability towards an experience of possibility (Mittner, Dalby & Gjørnum, 2022). Our research results are very much based on creativity, imagination, improvisation, and playfulness during the analytical process which starts in the field, continues in conversations and writings, and finally makes sense in the readers heart, body, and mind (Bresler, 2006).

Within the health sector we are witnessing a social movement which is leading to increased awareness of the role of the arts when people interact and communicate (Daykin, 2019). People with dual competence in art and research or in art and health are gaining increasing legitimacy for their work, and the arts and artistic work are being progressively valued, legitimised, and funded. While art as medicine and art as entertainment are still very much part of prevailing discourses, researchers and politicians have started to focus on reciprocal creative practices that promotes social relationships and the fact that good relationships 'are a major determinant of health' (Yoeli et al., 2021:95). By discussing situated art intervention (Mittner, 2021) as a specific research design this article contributes to arts-based research methodology conducted within arts and health. It addresses a need to develop new research designs that could explore the potential inherent in arts-based research, in which there is 'a focus on relationships, the positive gaze of the artist and the inherent value of art itself' (Yoeli et al., 2020:104).

We will now present three projects designed as situated art interventions in which we have seen that the arts opened spaces of possibilities for all who became involved: Shorelines, Co-creative ChurchLab and StopMotion (fig. 1)

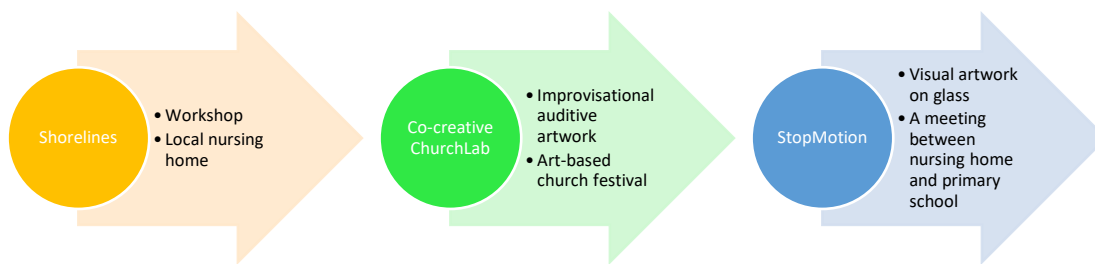


Figure 1. Three situated art interventions conducted within Artful Dementia Research Lab between 2018 and 2021.

In the following section we will give short examples to illustrate study designs and more specifically how artists-cum-researchers facilitate co-creative art sessions involving people living with dementia and their loved ones, healthcare staff and volunteers. We will further outline how arts-based research data was co-created by presenting three unique arts-based data sets derived from situated art intervention research. Finally, we describe what we mean by aesthetic analysis of micro-moments framed by dementia based on our empirical material. What we present as three separate phases (1. Study design, 2. Data creation and 3. Aesthetic analysis) is in everyday reality of practice-led research both temporarily, locally, and materially intertwined. We close with four premisses of situated art intervention research and invite the reader to further discuss how arts-based research can become part of established research methods.

Theoretical platforms

Study design, data creation, and aesthetic analysis can neither be regarded as separate nor linear processes within the arts-based research cycle (Butler-Kisber, 2018; Knowles, 2008; Leavy, 2018). Arts-based research is practice-led, highly relational, improvisatory, and situated within the performative research paradigm (Østern et al., 2021). This connects to relational art, relational aesthetics, and the relational thinking of current art theory (Bourriaud, 2007; Veal, 2014). Mutuality, reciprocity, relationality, communality, and connectivity are qualities which the arts bring into the research process. Art, according to Dewey, demonstrates the gratuitous falsity of notions that divide overt and executive activity from thought and feeling and thus separate mind and matter (Dewey, 1934).

Those thoughts resonate with the emerging field of new materialism and non-representational theory (Barad, 2003; Boyd & Edwards, 2019). While the notion of interaction 'assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action (Barad, 2007:33). The concept of intra-action means that any interaction changes the source in which the impulse originates. In the moment we entangle with each other, something changes between and within us. Thus, the 'we' is in co-creative art sessions under a constant state of becoming. Transferred to our work within Artful Dementia Research Lab, this implies further that it cannot be taken for granted what 'art' or 'dementia' mean. Rather, meaning is recreated when we come together, create together, and collectively strive to make sense of the relationships that emerge through intra-action. When people intra-act within reciprocally aesthetic experiences (Dewey, 1934), understanding of a micro-moment can change fundamentally, thereby generating new knowledge about what the moment is about in the social-aesthetic encounter. The distinction between who 'offers assistance' and who 'receives assistance' becomes less relevant for the co-creative processes as it is in, for example, art as therapy or art as entertainment. For the analytical process it is primarily of interest what happens between people and materials.

When researching together with people living with dementia, the knowledge creating takes place in aesthetic encounters that are always already mutual (Dewey, 1934) and multisensory. This connects to performative ethnography (Denzin, 2004) and sensory ethnography defined by Sarah Pink 'as a process of creating and representing knowledge or ways of knowing that are based on ethnographers' own experiences and the ways these intersect with the persons, places and things encountered during that process' (Pink, 2009: 35).

As art and research intersect in the field of arts-based research new roles emerge, such as for example the 'artistic researcher' or 'artist-researcher'⁹ which privileges art-making (Knowles, 2008:31) or more generally the 'artist-scholar' (Daichendt, 2012) or the 'research-artist', defined as 'the existential nexus upon which the research rotates, deviates, and gyrates presenting through performance critical self-reflexive analysis of her own experiences of dissonance and discovery with others"

⁹ <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/>

(Spry, 2011: 205). Those novel terms of practices indicate a shift from either-or towards as-well-as. While institutionalized art practices tend to nurture an elitist notion of art, institutionalized academic practices keeps an interest in separating artists from researchers (Jeffers, 1993; Impett, 2017). However, some artists and researchers blur the lines through their practices and become what we call artists-cum-researchers. As both researchers and artists they aim to make sense of the world and share what they have created with a broader community.

In our role as artists-cum-researchers we break with established subject-object positions and other dichotomies and focus on examining what happens in between. We are thus not primarily concerned about who is making art and who is viewing it, who is healthy and who is ill, who disposes over knowledge and who needs it, who gives and who receives or who cares and who is cared for. We rather experiment with how to co-create art and research with people living with dementia and their carers, and based on that, conceive what it could mean to live with dementia and explore innovative everyday practices framed by dementia.

Study designs

Possibility spaces provided by the arts are liminal spaces (Koro et al., 2020) that transform those gaps that emerge between distinctions related to age (young/old), occupation (researcher/artist) or health (living with a diagnosis/not living with a diagnosis). Within co-creative spaces, those distinctions seem to transform and sometimes even dissolve. We have seen in our research that the gap between those who are living with dementia and those who are not living with dementia can transform from the notion of disability into a space of possibility (Mittner, Dalby & Gjørnum, 2021).

Project 1: Shorelines

To address challenges of dementia care, we initiated in 2019 the four-year arts-based research project, Shorelines, at a residential care home in Northern Norway. Two researchers¹⁰ conducted a series of workshops in 2020 to explore various drama-based methods together with a group of residents, healthcare personnel and relatives. The material that derived from the sessions build the basis to explore in

¹⁰ Professor Rikke Gürgens Gjørnum as the supervisor and Karoline Dalby as a PhD-candidate.

how consent can be understood as an aesthetic process. Applied theatre is a joint process of investigation in which those who become involved enter an imaginary world that is created when two or more people in a shared space present 'as if' actions through body and voice (Szatkowski, 1985). During the sessions a variety of dramatic conventions become central (figure, fable, time, space) in the use of dramatic elements (symbol, ritual, rhythm, tension, contrast) and dramaturgical choice (focus, interpretation, turning point, style, narrative form). A dramatic convention means the form, genre, type, style, or opportunity of expression one can employ to tell, reflect and express oneself in drama work (Neelands & Goode, 2015). The conventions chosen by the group during the Shorelines project were improvisation, character, image theatre, clowning, narration, dramatization, movement, and tableau.¹¹

We joined Shorelines in the role of facilitators, and we examined how the residents expressed themselves and created ideas, impulses, and energy to interact with the group. Being part of aesthetic processes we experienced the significance of establishing a relationship with the residents, intra-acting by adapting ourselves to individuals' verbal and physical language, being sensitive to what happens in the moment by developing a presence, and by showing directedness towards the participants in the workshop. What happens within the artists-cum-researchers is widely framed by the interplay between the aesthetic experience, sensory ethnography, and real-time analysis. Through abduction, i.e., alternating between theory and practice, data collection and data analysis, and between fieldwork and writing, we had to plan, implement, and evaluate to make sense of the micro-moments framed by dementia.

Project 2: Co-creative ChurchLab

In autumn 2020, we facilitated a collaboration between the Trondenesdagene Church Art Festival¹² and residents living with dementia because we wanted to change the view of dementia through art, culture and play so that everyone, including people with dementia, can be treated on an equal basis and can talk to each other, irrespective of whatever diagnosis they may have (Mittner & Gjørøum, 2021; Rolland, 2020). The

¹¹ The results of the whole Shorelines project will be published in several articles by Karoline Dalby, Lilli Mittner and Rikke Gürgens Gjørøum in 2022–2024.

¹² <https://trondenesdagene.no/program/co-creative-churchlab/>

Co-creative ChurchLab was part of the 'the Connectivity Room research cycle' (NSD no. 446214), where we worked on developing and inventing various art interventions in public facilities such as libraries, museums, and churches rather than in nursing homes. The goal of this project was to develop an experimental research platform of community research in which every stage of the research process was open in the sense that we wanted to share data with the public and show how we analyse and reflect on what ethics are at risk. The gathering during of the Co-creative ChurchLab during Trondenesdagene was the first production in what was to become a series of gatherings under the Connectivity Room umbrella (fig. 2).



Figure 2. Creating a circle, art, and connectivity. The study design of the ChurchLab enabled artists-cum-researchers, co-researchers and co-creators to enact dementia beyond human individual loss. ©Thomas Rolland/ADLab [CC-BY-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/)

We wanted to highlight good practices in which people are given the opportunity to express what they are thinking and feeling through more than just words. We focused on the theme of love and examined how the church interior could invite people into an improvisational auditive artwork. The session was facilitated through a collaboration between three musicians, two drama teachers, a museum educator, and a deacon:

A circle of chairs in the choir in the mediaeval church formed the meeting place. Everyone was facing each other. Smiles, glances, uncertain expectation. Old props in a chest in the centre – all connected to ‘love’. A bridal veil, a christening gown, old archive photos, hymn books. A session of conversations and use of the props. Anxiously, I then started the audio recording and got started by reading aloud from Astrid Lindgren’s love story to her parents – this was the prelude to making radio theatre together. Everyone relaxed and there was laughter (Researcher’s journal).

There was no clear dramaturgical plan for storytelling in a circle. We asked the participants what Anne Basting (2020) calls ‘beautiful questions’ to prompt associations to the pictures and props: What do you dream about? What are the people in the photo feeling? What happened immediately before this moment? What will happen after this moment? Where is your safe haven? What does happiness mean to you? On the basis of these aesthetic impulses, we started recording improvised radio theatre as a group, using instruments and lines from a novel.

Project 3: StopMotion

When the coronavirus pandemic put a complete stop to all physical meetings, we as researchers had to find new ways to situate art-based research within everyday life practices of the residential care home we were collaborating with. The Covid-19 pandemic had left its mark everywhere in society. Arts-based research could adapt quickly and respond creatively to the new situation and changed research conditions. We know that there is a clear connection between people’s access to social networks and their mental and physical health (Fyrand, 2016), so there was reason to be concerned that people were being isolated from most of their everyday social activities. Our goal was to maintain the interesting creative collaboration with the residents at the local nursing home. We therefore developed a project together with the artist Torgeir Riise, in which we could create art through a window. Inspired by the street artist Blu¹³ and the work ‘Big Bang Big Boom’, we created an installation across the window with children from the local primary school on one side and residents and healthcare personnel on the other side. Everyone was provided with

¹³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMoKcsN8wM8>

cardboard, scissors, felt pens and glue and given free rein to create. With the aid of documentation provided by NRK (Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation) for filming and journalistic work on both sides of the glass, we found that everyone became engaged in the session. The local cultural activities officer at the care home said that:

From my point of view, the atmosphere and result were quite different to what I expected. There was much more enthusiasm than I had imagined, and the genuine feeling of delight was almost tangible. Suddenly, no one was suffering from aches and pains or unpleasant emotions. Thoughts concentrated around the children and everything that was happening at the window. All the patients diagnosed with dementia wanted to join in. In their own way, everyone joined in. Some people cut things out with scissors, others drew on the window with felt pens and the third group sang together. We were in our own bubble in the session. No one could disturb us, and we even forgot the cameras around us. The children outside kept in constant contact and had new ideas for communication. That was impressive (Logbook, cultural activities employee).

Those of us standing on the outside worked together with the children and contributed to the art work that emerged on the glass with their own spirit and ideas. From the inside, the cultural activities employee observed:

It was also really sweet that the residents gradually started to tire, but just wanted to carry on. They did not want to withdraw, and that was really good to see. A great many of them “woke up” and really experienced a sense of achievement by communicating with others without language. There was no doubt that there was a great deal of communication between the children and the residents of the nursing home. The good atmosphere continued into the ward and was infectious. The singing and fun also continued afterwards (Logbook, cultural activities employee).

The children and residents maintained their concentration for a very long time and experienced the interactive connection as meaningful. One of the children wrote in their logbook as follows:

What I thought was fun was that an old lady was drawing around my hand. It was fun that someone was paying attention while I was drawing on the window It was cool that we could communicate with the old

people who were inside the nursing home. I thought it was fun to be there and draw on the windows and cut out and draw and make different figures of ... the masterpiece (Logbook, pupil).

Data show that the majority of those who were involved that day (artists-cum-researchers, children, residents, journalists, assistants) felt that the co-creative session was meaningful to each of them. The positive response from the residents (who often sit relatively passively) or healthcare personnel (who often struggle with drowsiness among the residents) or children (who often do not know how to communicate with older people in ways that make sense in their own universe), was very surprising to us. There was a real delight on both sides of the window, although children were aware of the Coronavirus:

It was a bit sad that we could not go in or talk to them, but maybe when the Coronavirus is over, maybe we could go in. I think that the old people would think it would be fun if we could go and visit (Logbook, pupil).

Arts-based datasets

All three of the projects described created a large amount of qualitative data. Brad Haseman (2006) argues that projects like these can be defined as a form of performative and practice-led research:

Presentational forms are not bound by the linear and sequential constraints of discursive or arithmetic writing. Rather their “very functioning as symbols depends on the fact that they are involved in a simultaneous, integral presentation” (Langer, 1957: 97). And so when research findings are made as presentational forms they deploy symbolic data in the material forms of practice; forms of still and moving images; forms of music and sound; forms of live action and digital code (Haseman, 2006. p. 102).

Arts-based research is always performative and practice-led, but not necessarily the other way round. Arts-based research privileges the senses, creative practices and art as process and product. The data material which arts-based researchers handle, and which we in our role as artists-cum-researchers are left with after the field work constitute a mix of verbal documentation (logbooks, interviews, fieldwork) and physical experience (artistic experience, videos, poetic texts, audio recordings of monologues/dialogues, drawings). Hence, the data derived from our three projects,

as shown in the model below are traces of what happens in practice-led research when the field bites back (fig. 3).

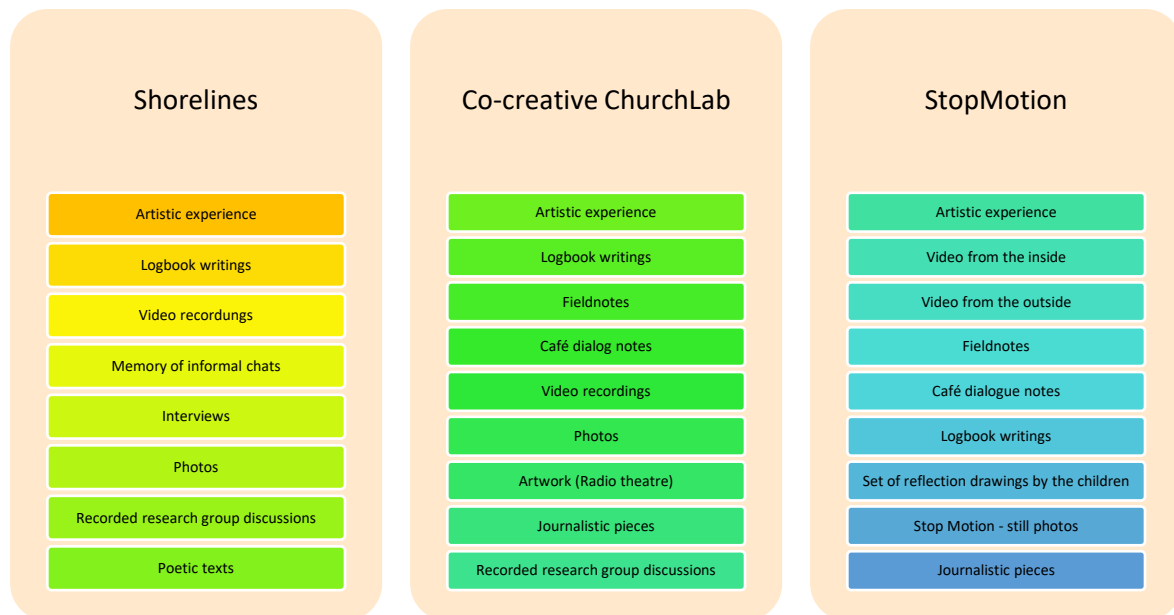


Figure 3. Examples of datasets derived from arts-based practices as pre-requisites of aesthetic analysis

The *Co-creative ChurchLab* was documented by means of photo, video, and audio of the artistic experience, as well as logbooks, café discussions and the research team's decision to identify and record the moments that intuitively occurred in the group sessions. The researcher-cum-artist transcribed the reflections that emerged during the post-session café discussion. All the data were then discussed in several post-session meetings, in which specifically issues concerning dissemination and consent to use of photos and videos were discussed in detail. Arctic University of Norway's photographer and communications adviser and the local dementia coordinator, who were both active participants in ChurchLab, were given a central role in the project when the time came to processing the data and disseminating them in the public sphere. Their involvement in the sessions made sure that text and photos were communicated in an ethically responsible manner in national newspapers, forskning.no (a research newspaper) and local media. This was to ensure compliance with Article 9 – Accessibility, in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which states:

To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, parties shall take appropriate measures to

ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, [...] , to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas.¹⁴

Aesthetic experiences made during the *Co-creative ChurchLab* build the basis to developed consent procedures based on relational aesthetics and co-creative processes.

In the *StopMotion* project, the process of data creation was different. Here, we collaborated with NRK and the editorial staff for the programme *Norge Rundt* to ensure that professional video recordings and photos were taken on both sides of the window when the children, residents, artists, and researchers set out to create interactive artwork at the window (fig. 4). We thereby set up the technical equipment that ensured document the session at every stage, using the method of communicating the experiences of the participants to a journalist. The broadcast team edited and cut the documentarary material to a narrative which brought local journalism into a citizen science perspective.¹⁵ The children's logbooks (n=21) and drawings (n=19) were also important contributions to the research in terms of understanding what their perception of the situation was (fig. 5). The drawings create a further dimension to the dataset (Hopperstad, 2005; Strømsvold, 2015) in addition to the verbal logbooks and documentary build on journalistic premisses.¹⁶

¹⁴<https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/26633b70910a44049dc065af217cb201/konvensjon-om-rettighetene-til-mennesker-med-nedsatt-funksjonsevne.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.nrk.no/tromsogfinnmark/hjertegodt-mote-med-demensrammede-og-skolebarn-i-harstad-1.15313702>

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fxwvs6hRTo>



Figure 4. Intra-acting through the window of a care home in times of Covid-19. ©Thomas Rolland/ADLab [CC-BY-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/)

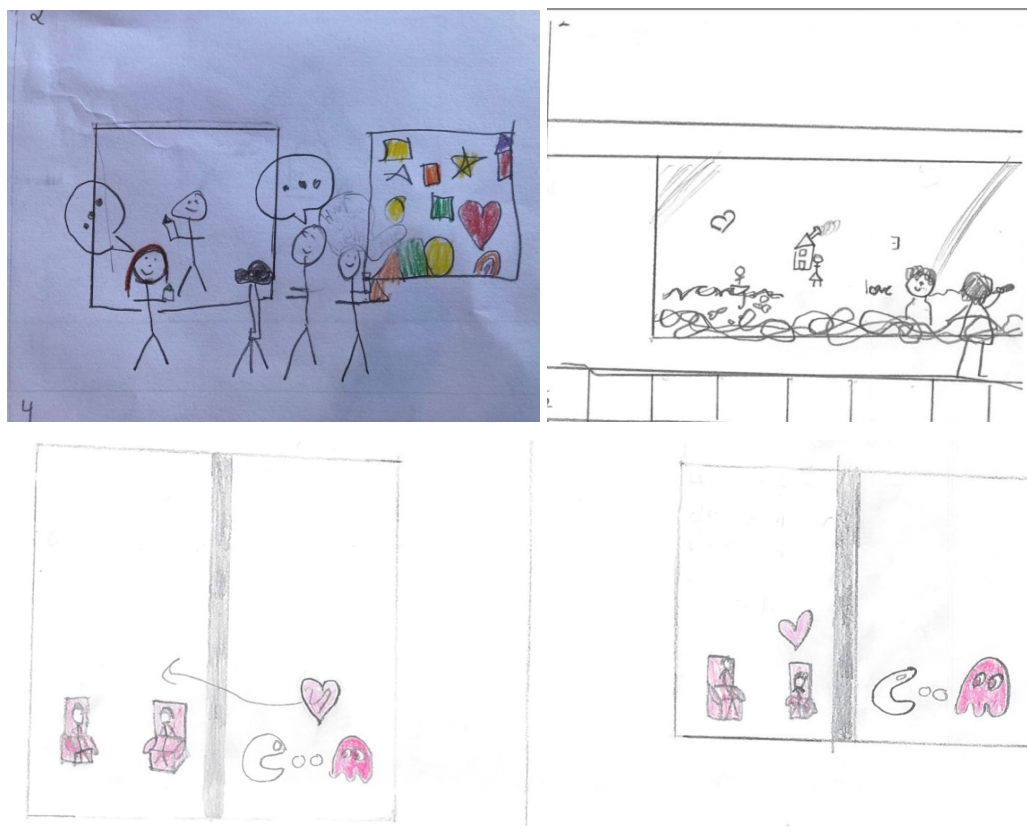


Figure 5. Drawing as aesthetic analysis. Children making sense of the world through cartoons. ©Thomas Rolland/ADLab [CC-BY-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/)

Aesthetic analysis

We conduct our analytical work as an abductive process continuously oscillating between practice and theory. The analysis of the arts-based data as an act of making sense of micro-moments framed by dementia is performed jointly by all those who become involved during the research process (Eggebo, 2020). In our research the

data analysis cannot be separate from data collection but is already taking place as part of the aesthetic experience within a continuum of moments (Keady et al., 2020). It is the encounter that creates knowledge in the form of shared understanding of what a specific situation is about. Intra-action that takes place and relationships that emerge are the results of a collective effort. By encouraging a creative process without a fully detailed plan demands from each member of the group to create meaning. The joint analysis process thereby starts already when we are in the field.

Creating arts-based datasets and making sense of micro-moments collectively can be seen as part of the researchers' social mission within community science. When academia, arts and care home practices meet in a joint exploration there is an opportunity to drive innovation in the health sector (Willumsen & Ødegård, 2020). When we leave the field and are left with a unique set of arts-based data the analytical work continues in discussions and writing processes. We have coined this process that starts in the field and continues each time the arts-based data is revisited as 'aesthetic analysis' (Mittner, Dalby & Gjørnum, 2022). For example, we process field notes through a creative writing process, turning them into performative field accounts, short poems or dialogues that re-enact the aesthetic experiences partially. This process has features in common with more traditional qualitative methods such as thematic analysis, in which the research team:

immerses itself in the data material by reading through all the data, making notes, highlighting text and writing in the margin, making a list of ideas about what themes they have seen in the data material, and working through the data, looking for as many interesting themes and patterns as possible, identifying general themes and organising all the sub-themes and excerpts accordingly, critically reviewing all the themes, double-checking whether they match the data and if necessary revising them, finding suitable names for all the themes – names that capture the essence and give the reader insight into what it is about, and write the publication (Eggebø, 2020: p. 109)

Like Eggebø's (2020) collective method, the aesthetic analysis of the dataset that we developed is a collective process through several sessions of brain storming, art viewing, object handling, acting, creative writing, and discussions in the team. Practice and theory come together through our reflections on small micro-moments documented from the field. In the analysis, we try to dive into individual moments and

interpret what happens between all 'who and that' become involved. We look at the video, read logbooks, listen to audio recordings, interpret drawings, and process our own aesthetic experiences from our embodied memories by putting words to them in the discussions.

One example of an aesthetic analysis is the research film *Artful Dementia* (Mittner et al., 2020). The film reflects on our innovative arts-based method bringing together actions and voices from health care professionals, people living with dementia and their next of kin and research artists (fig. 6). The film was composed by micro-moments of what happened in the field and short clips from conversations. Having been part of the co-creative sessions people wanted to make sense of what they just experienced. The kaleidoscope of micro-moments presented in the film form the research results that are simultaneously raw data, analysis and dissemination. All the perspectives presented in the film can be seen as part of a larger project of understanding dementia beyond human individual loss (Ursin & Lotherington, 2018; Zeilig et al., 2018). The film gives insight into the research process and is therefore an important element of open research allowing the readers themselves to examine what type of data our analysis is based on.



Figure 6. Ethnographic research film as aesthetic analysis. ©ADLab [CC-BY-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/)

A key premise of aesthetic analysis is that those who are discussing the material *must* have been part of the processes that created the moments that are analysed. Both during and after the workshops, informal chats tend to develop between the participants. We document these as data, because they are important elements of an

open, transparent, and democratic analysis process in which the aim is to include as many voices as possible. Through writing individual logbooks, the further significance of the experience is created through 'writing down thoughts' (Lie, 2012). This is an important part of the analytical process towards academic publication in which implicit and embodied knowledge is made explicit. The individual and more poetic language that is chosen in a creative and associative writing process can further enhance understandings of complex situations. Crowhurst & Emslie (2020) describe those arts-based pathways to thinking as follows:

We see fable-ing as a reflective and as a diffractive and imaginative strategy that might be put to use to produce real change in the real world. We imagine practitioners using a combination of techniques including systematic reflection, squiggling, fable-ing and action research to support the imagining of what might be (Crowhurst & Emslie, 2020: p. 99).

Fable-ing and fable writing helps us to put words to basic new concepts to understand micro-moment framed by dementia. We ask each other why a specific micro-moment was special, and what the mechanisms behind a specific aesthetic experience might be. Video recordings of the workshops can be experienced from a different point of view after the logbook has been re-written or theoretical frameworks has been discussed.

Sometimes, workshops result in actual products (paintings, drawings, theatre, etc.) which are then included in the analysis as a separate dataset. Every time we handle one of these artworks, a form of relational aesthetic emerges (Bourriaud, 2007), which can provide insight into the complex mechanism of co-creativity. The writing and rewriting of a specific moment may be the most time-consuming part of the analysis process and results in of new forms of conceptual thinking.

Four premises of situated art intervention research

We will now present four premises of situated art intervention research based on our work within Artful Dementia Research Lab and discuss what it can add to practice-led research.

Premise no 1: Situated art intervention research implies a high risk of failing. Co-creativity can be initiated by the artists-cum-researchers (Shorelines) but may be just as likely come from an art festival (ChurchLab) or from a residential care home (StopMotion). Even though the artists-cum-researchers might come with specific

theoretical perspective all the gatherings were organised and conducted collectively and based on the premisses of the group. Since situated art intervention is always practice-led it is ideal for tackling complex and risky challenges such as dementia during the pandemic. The artists-cum-researchers engaged in everyday life of the residents, the care staff, the festival staff or journalists and scrutinized positions of power. Reconfiguration of power is risky and the effects are unfamiliar to all who took part in a session. Some participants got confused about that we did not propose a 'ready-made research setup' or did not make 'proper art'. However, our results also point at the fact that de-centring traditional roles of both artist and researcher (Strom et al., 2018) made it possible to develop a mutual understanding about why we got together and what co-creativity could mean with people living with dementia. However, the process was risky and could easily have failed if those who became involved had been less brave and open-minded.

Premise no 2: Situated art intervention research is holistic. As our examples presented above show, data collection and data analysis are very closely related. The artists-cum-researchers are part of the micro moments that are analysed. This makes it almost impossible to distinguish data generation, data analysis and research dissemination as separate phases. Rather they are reciprocal parts of a spiral that continually spins on to new levels of knowledge development in an abductive process.

Premise no 3: Situated art intervention research responds to a demand for innovation. Through the projects we have learned that arts-based research requires innovative research designs that has not previously been methodically described. Consequently, the researcher also creates new methods of analysis to respond to complex social challenges; this is how we developed what we have chosen to call for 'aesthetic analysis' of micro-moments from the field. Aesthetic analysis is a highly creative process which is improvised, sensory, and collective. Innovative research methods can make the research more relevant to society (Willumsen & Ødegård, 2020).

Premise no 4: Situated art intervention research challenges traditional research ethics. Giving people who are living with dementia the opportunity to express themselves aesthetically and participate in arts-based projects may change common understandings of what it means to live with dementia (Lotherington, 2019). However, traditional research designs exclude many people from knowledge production that

concerns them (Bartlett, 2014). This dilemma becomes even more apparent within the emerging open research movement. The research process must be as transparent as possible, while people who are supposed to be unable to give their consent may not be filmed. Arts-based intra-action challenges these procedures because creative practices make it possible to develop situated forms of relational consent, in which the aesthetic process gives the artists-cum-researchers a sense of trust that a specific moment can continue, be filmed, or even shared via media, and thereby archived indefinitely. Karoline Dalby has described such a moment as follows:

“I walk into the living room and sit down in front of a person named Anne. I come close to her and ask: ‘Do you want to do an exercise?’ She replies by saying she does not feel well. I ask again if she can make a simple movement. I move my hand towards her as a form of greeting. She starts milking cows with both of her hands. I mirror her movements and suddenly we find ourselves in the barn where we milk cows together. Then she comes up with a story about her brother Gunnar, who hypnotized all the chickens on the farm. This shared experience with Anne becomes a moment where the experience of time, place, and space ceases for a few seconds. Anne says: ‘I don’t know what more to say’. The story has ended, and I thanked her for wanting to share the story with me” (Dalby, 2020).

Several scholars discuss the relation between art and ethics, such as Siri Meyer (2015) when she argues that art has a unique opportunity to be an ethical resource for society. Research into co-creativity and dementia undeniably generates a wealth of ethical resources. The key questions that have emerged from our research highlight the role of art as what we call an ethical resource centre for society’s view of fellow citizenship. ‘To a higher degree than rational people suspect – artists are a people’s essential sensory organs’ (Bjerke, 1951).

The way forward

In this article we have discussed how to develop methodological tools to guide social innovation in the arts and health movement. Arts-based research can provide answers in a way that established research methods cannot. As Fleetwood-Smith et al. (2021) have pointed out, (co-) creative, (multi-) sensory, and (mutual) embodied research methods bring imagination, spontaneity, and flexibility into the research

process. In addition, we have seen that situated art intervention research reframe barriers and hierarchies that are made of conventional research practices and concepts. As arts-based research is increasingly recognized within international research repositories such as [Research Catalogue](#) or the [SAGE Methods Map](#) we think the time is ripe to take the next step and bring arts-based research methodology from research design and data collection into the analytical process itself. Thus, we suggest to place aesthetic analysis in current conceptualizations of research methods as outlined below (fig. 7).

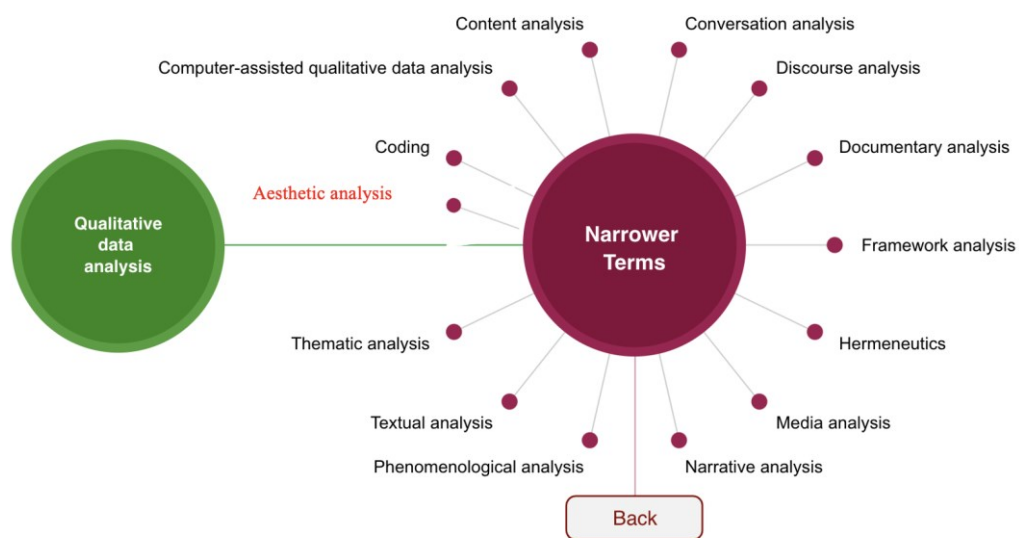


Figure 7. Situating aesthetic analysis within the qualitative paradigm (indicated by the red text). The figure is a derivative from [SAGE Method Map](#).

With this article we invite to further discuss co-creative, multisensory, and mutually embodied practices within arts-based research to make those research methods more visible and bringing them to the table of established international research standards.

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Rikke Gürgens Gjørø is professor and vice rector at UiT - The Arctic University of Norway. Gjørø brings an aesthetic understanding of disability and long experience from applied theatre into dementia research in the Circumpolar North. Her research topics the last 25 years are Disability art, Youth theatre, Gender and Health in higher education, Sustainability, Forum theatre, Reminiscence theatre and Art & dementia. She is a member of the research group Artful dementia Research Lab at UiT: https://uit.no/research/adlab#region_668610. She has been a professor at Oslo Metropolitan University from 2011- 2022 and has published 70 research articles.

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