



Introduction: Co-creating a catalyst for sustainable development

Rikke Gürgens Gjørsum¹, Mette Bøe Lyngstad², Lise Hovik³

UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Western Norway University of applied sciences,
Queen Maud University College of Early Childhood Education, OsloMet

Abstract

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for action by all countries to ensure that no one is left behind. It requires partnerships between governments, the private sector, and civil societies across countries, continents, and sectors. This issue of Nordic Journal for Art & Research is an expression of SDG 17 - a collaboration towards achieving the goals. In this way, we wish to renew global partnerships for sustainable development by sharing new knowledge with peers and global readers alike. 23 different contributions about sustainability in arts education can bring new, interesting and hopeful discussions to our field. A wide range of different perspectives, understandings, theories and methods hopefully show the reader that arts educators can make a difference by inspiring sustainable thinking and action. We as editors believe that arts education can be a catalyst for a change in society towards more sustainable futures. Through this special issue we welcome each and every reader to take part in this aesthetic collaboration of knowledge

¹ rikke.g.gjarum@uit.no

² mbly@hvl.no

³ lise.hovik@dmmh.no

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Rikke Gürgens Gjærum, Mette Bøe Lyngstad, Lise Hovik.

Introduction: Co-creating a catalyst for sustainable development.

production formed and assembled by arts educators, with a rising hope for the future of our planet.

Keywords: sustainability, SDG, arts education, partnerships, co-creation

Introduction

This editorial introduction presents an act of ecological and ethical responsibility from the field of arts education. Working with children, students, artists, teachers and researchers, through the means of arts & crafts, music, drama, dance and literature, we find a growing interest and insight into sustainability as an ongoing development in our field of practice that needs to be highlighted. This introduction explains the overall perspectives and reasons for taking the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a starting point for the issue and why we find arts education to be a catalyst for sustainable development (United Nations, n.d. 2). Over several years we have worked to bring arts educators together to revitalize our global partnerships for sustainable development. By gathering a wide range of examples and different takes on the challenges of sustainable development through arts education, both in the Nordic countries and internationally, we present the backdrop and perspectives for this project. By arts education we, as editors, mean both educational research and practice through a wide range of aesthetic experiences. Arts education utilizes creativity, imagination and artistic exploration in formation and learning processes.

By publishing 23 contributions on different sustainable projects within arts education, we strengthen artistic means of implementation and bring new and hopeful discussions to our field. The authors have chosen to relate to the SDGs in different ways and this issue will not point in one single direction, but instead provide a wide range of different understandings, theories and research methods and a lot of good practical and inspirational examples. Together the authors contribute to the ongoing discourse on how the humanities and arts in all forms can be used to address massive global problems. By creating and providing new aesthetic experiences (Dewey, 1934) arts education can make a difference in human development towards sustainable development.

Sustainability goals

In this special issue on ethics and aesthetics we, the editors, have challenged the field of arts education and arts communities to analyze and reflect on their own

projects within the framework of the 17 SDGs. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015 (United Nations, 2015), provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. The UN recognizes that ending poverty and other deprivations must go together with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. Yet, halfway to the deadline for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, progress towards achieving the SDGs and addressing climate change is alarmingly insufficient. The SDG progress report highlights that only 12 per cent of the targets are on track, while over 30 per cent of the SDGs have either stalled or regressed, painting a bleak picture of the world's potential future (United Nations, 2023).

The SDGs are a strategic plan to eradicate poverty, stop climate change and prevent further loss of biodiversity and therefore concern everyone - including teachers and researchers in the arts. To attain the sustainability goals, the UN encourages new and strong partnerships across countries, continents and sectors (FN, 2023). This special issue is an answer to strengthening partnerships between arts educators across the globe and between several stakeholders, who can mobilize and share knowledge to help achieve the SDGs. By sharing educational and aesthetic experience and research results with the readers of this special issue, we seek to build new global partnerships and help sustainable development according to SDG 17: Revitalizing global partnerships (United Nations, n.d. 1).

The contributions in this special issue originate from different continents and authors from fifteen nations: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, India, Kurdistan, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, material contexts and natural challenges, which are clearly expressed by the authors. The variety of voices, methodologies, theories, traditions, ideologies and critiques shows that the potential of the arts and arts education to reshape the world is large, rich and multifaceted, but also fragile. The climate crises look different in a Nordic welfare state from in a place of drought in the Global South. Salmon farms look different from the perspectives of the food industry and animal welfare. Diverging and contradictory perspectives must be allowed to exist together.

In this introduction we would like to highlight the concepts of “de-growth” (Martinez-Alier, 2012) and “actual sustainability” (Haukenes, 2023). The term actual sustainability places the natural and environmental dimension squarely at the heart of any concept of sustainability. Although the 17 SDGs are based on three dimensions; economic, social and environmental, humankind must acknowledge that nature holds the trump card. Without nature, it is irrelevant if we have a hundred innovative ideas for art development projects, technology, economic growth or social equality. Without it, there is no future. The Holberg Prize 2023 winner Joan Martínez Alier (2012) promotes societal change by so-called “de-growth” and claims that: “The flows of energy in the world economy have never been as large as they are today (Holberg Prize, 2023). This increased metabolism causes more and more conflicts about resource extraction and waste disposal and is giving rise to a movement for environmental justice around the world” (Martinez-Alier, 2012, p. 51). As editors, we believe that society must turn towards a paradigm of “de-growth” to build a better tomorrow.

We define arts projects as sustainable, if they strengthen the urge to reorganize social life, interacting with biological and cultural diversity, where humans are not considered the rulers of the globe, but merely part of a cyclical process (Haukenes, 2023). Climate change and the natural crises that threaten life on earth burden us all with a shared responsibility to try to reverse the trend (Martinez-Alier, 2012). Therefore, it is critical to develop a holistic approach to development that can safeguard human settlement, culture and employment, but not at the expense of nature. This responsibility is political, but applies to academia (Bina & Pereira, 2020) as well as the arts and arts educators, with which the authors of this publication are associated. We, as editors, believe that researchers, educators and artists have a responsibility to ensure that social, economic, ecological and cultural values in society are balanced (Losleben, et.al., 2023, Van Poeck, et. al., 2019). The question of true sustainability must contain wider perspectives than purely human or purely economic. Nature's own sustainability must be the benchmark for human activities and industries, to prevent it from being devoured as raw materials in a human chain of consumption (Svensen, et. al., 2016). From a Norwegian point of view this means daring to question the foundation of our privileges in a welfare state built mainly on oil and gas production.

Artistic activities are often regarded as a haven for controversial ideas, new perspectives, unfamiliar angles and originality or as a scene for critical examination of habits and conventions. Arts can both challenge and function subversively, sometimes as political activism (Nicholson, 2005). We believe that the arts can offer humankind time and space to explore new ways of thinking, ideas, utopias and fantasies or visions of the future. Arts educational practices “have the potential to disrupt fixed polarities between art and instrumentalism, education and entertainment, populism and elitism, process and product, activity and passivity, participation and spectatorship” (Nicholson, 2009, p. 80). We, as editors, believe that arts activities, such as those described and discussed in this special issue, can contribute to social change in multiple and creative ways.

Ecocentric epistemology

An ecocentric and ecosophical perspective of the world (Næss, 1999) involves a holistic view of epistemology. This means that knowledge is not something that exists out there, but something that comes into being through the ongoing, constant, new development within the co-creative processes in which we all take part. Co-creation is not only going on between human beings, but with all our companion species (Haraway, 2016, p. 9), ranging from invisible bacteria to plants and animals. We seek to enrich ourselves as humans, but by expanding our sense of self we seek also to enrich other people and species (Næss, 1999, p. 278). Working with arts and sustainability, we need to remember that man *is* nature, in the same way that the creative, innovative, dancing and playing man *is* a body - we do not *have* a body (Merly-Ponty, 2012). Our bodies are entangled with the material world in such a profound way that they are not only situated in the world, but constituted along with the world, or rather as part of the world (Barad, 2007, p. 160). Following the ecocentric track of thought, nature is not something humankind can define merely as surroundings or resources to use for human consumption, but as life and culture itself in all its beauty and complexity. Understanding the profound entanglement between nature and culture, following Haraway’s concept of “natureculture” (2007) will be helpful in shaping new policies for more sustainable futures to come.

The cultural dimension in the concept of sustainability is often forgotten and is not specifically mentioned in the SDGs. Our cultural heritage worldwide has immense potential for exploring and achieving social sustainability, because all people share a

need for belonging and identity, not to mention quality of life (Gjørum, et. al., 2012). Social conditions thus illustrate how people thrive in a society, whether their human rights are fulfilled and whether they have agency to influence their own lives and the society they live in (FN, 2023).

Looking to indigenous people, with a more continuous relationship to their land and nature, and to their animals and plants, we might learn how to restore and establish a more sustainable natureculture (Haraway, 2008). With this special issue on the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of sustainability in arts education we wish to encompass both cultural, social and natural dimensions as a whole and make our contribution to the global collaborative work of protecting future life on our planet.

A joint effort

This special issue addresses body and movement, gender balance, inequality, poverty, health and welfare, although some of the SDGs are more thoroughly explored than others. We have articles that discuss quality and methodology in education, music, theatre, film, storytelling and embroidery. Together we address challenges relating to clean water and clean energy, provide insight into narrative analysis, the pedagogy of hope, democracy and innovation in health services. The reader gains insight into sustainable production processes, climate justice, citizenship and social inclusion, ecological approaches in performing arts for children or with young people, adults or the elderly and discussions about disability and power. The authors also express empathy for underwater life, using art as a tool for exploration, providing insight into the ocean's resources. This special issue is written as a joint effort - our contribution towards developing a truly sustainable world.

Summary

Below is a summary of the contributions included in this issue and their connection to the SDGs. We have focused on diversity in terms of expression and have chosen different publication formats, mainly within the categories of *scientific articles*, *scientific essays*, *artistic publications or statements* and *explorative text formats*. Every contribution relates to one or several SDGs in different ways. The special issue as a whole and the introductory text are an answer to SDG 17, which calls for revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development (United Nations, n.d.1).

In the following presentation the order of the contributions follows the numbering of the SDGs. This is mostly consistent with the order of articles on the issue web page.

SDG 1: No poverty

SDG 1, No poverty, is addressed in the keynote speech by Urvashi Sahni: *Trembling: The Winds and I*, held at the International Drama in Education Research Institute in 2022, based on ongoing work at the Study Hall Education Foundation (SHEF) in Lucknow, North India. The vision of the SHEF is to educate everyone for gender equality, social justice, personal flourishing and active democratic citizenship. Their goal is to break the poverty cycle of students' lives by raising their aspirations and empowering them with the skills and knowledge needed to realize these aspirations. They believe that education can be a powerful social and individual transformative force, particularly for gender equality and social justice. Raising awareness of the cruelty of caste and class inequalities, they believe that any quality education must include critical thinking on these issues.

SDG 2: Zero hunger

The possibility of critical thinking is crucial to questions of poverty and closely related to SDG 2: Zero Hunger. In an ecocentric world view we share the same resources with other living beings and will have to deal with the difficult questions of food supply and anthropocentrism. Maybe it is significant that we have no article related to SDG 2: Zero Hunger. It might be a sign of irrelevance in parts of the world where arts education is on the curriculum and hunger is not very visible in public life. Inequality and poverty have increased in later years, and we will find hunger for healthy food, healthy life and other kinds of hunger underneath the surfaces of welfare societies. We hereby hold the space open and welcome later contributions for SDG 2 elsewhere.

SDG 3: Good health and well-being

Mette Bøe Lyngstad and Bodil Hansen Blix's article *A Window of Opportunities: Composing a relational space for living and telling sustainable stories to live by*, relates to SDG 3: Good health and well-being. The Dreamcatchers project invited participants to compose and explore narratives through creative, collaborative processes. In this article the authors *think with* a narrative composed by one of the participants living with substance addiction. To learn from her experiences, inspired

by narrative inquiry as a way of thinking about experience, the playful and imaginative narrative processes within the Dreamcatchers project are understood as composing sustainable stories to live by. The Dreamcatchers project demonstrates the necessity of involving people living with substance addiction in naming their problems and in the search for possible and sustainable solutions or improvements.

Siri Skar and Wenche Torrissen take another approach to SDG 3 with their article *Psychodrama and eudaimonic well-being: potentials in playful and aesthetic experiences*. The researchers explore how psychodrama might contribute to promoting well-being, examining the individual case study of “Fiona”, who was a participant in a non-clinical psychodrama group. How might engagement in psychodramatic practice promote eudaimonic well-being? The results reveal that participating in the psychodrama group supported Fiona’s eudaimonic well-being mostly according to the following dimensions: autonomy, personal growth, positive relations with others and self-acceptance. When analysing *how* the dimensions of eudaimonic well-being were promoted, the authors found three main themes: playfulness, visual symbolism and psychodramatic role-playing techniques. The study thus shows that engagement in psychodrama is well suited to nurturing human growth and development as an element of promoting good health and well-being.

SDG 4: Quality education

Monica Klungland and Anne-Mette Liene investigate creative practices in time and space together with their kindergarten teacher students. Starting from SDG 4: Quality education, they explore aesthetic experiences in their article *Skape nye rom, ny tid og nye bevegelser – Tverrestetisk undervisning i kunstfag i barnehagelærerutdanningen. (Creating new spaces, new times and new movements: Cross-aesthetic art education in early childhood teacher education)*. The authors explore how students can be invited into aesthetic experiences through disrupting habits. Together with the students they explored how space and time are created through movements with skeins of textiles. Their investigation shows that in this space-time creation habitual thinking and teaching methods are disrupted and sometimes lead to perceiving the world in new ways. In such risky teaching aesthetic experiences can arise and good art education can be developed through the SDG.

SDG 4, Quality education, is addressed by Janne Robberstad and Randi Veiteberg in their article *Embodied eco-embroidery. Creative craftsmanship in sustainable*

STEAM-education. The article gives another interesting example of creative teaching in a teacher educational setting in Oslo, Norway, focusing on education for sustainable development through craftsmanship in embroidery. In a transdisciplinary collaboration that includes art, craftsmanship has its own innate value. Three groups of teacher-students help examine how crafts may contribute to building ecological awareness in themselves and an audience through conveying meaningful artistic narratives. The researchers found that their methods support the emphasis on embodied, co-creative embroidery processes, improving the students' craft experiences as well as increasing understanding and respect for the challenges in the new "eco-reality".

SDG 5: Gender equality

Lilli Mittner, Lise Karin Meling and Kate Maxwell discuss questions of power relations through SDG 5: Gender equality, in their article *Arts-based pathways for sustainable transformation towards a more equal world*. By taking actions within the Voices of Women ERASMUS+ project as a creative catalyst, this paper scrutinizes a set of items for further discussion of arts-based pathways for sustainable transformation towards a more (gender) equal world. The researchers discuss the ability of the arts to engage, educate and transform power relations through three pathways towards sustainable transformation: 1. Canon critique; 2. Decolonization; and 3. New materialism. They argue that all three pathways enable novel forms of knowledge creation and actions in arts-based research, arts education, the cultural sector and beyond.

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

Clean water and sanitation are the subject of a group working with Research-based Theatre in Canada. George Belliveau, together with his team, Christina Cook, Tetsuro Shigematsu, Madjid Mohseni and Jennica Nichols, explore innovative solutions in a play script. The dialogue-based script *Addressing water-health equity through biological engineering and theatre*, presents a collaborative community theatre work in the shape of an ongoing discussion in RESEAU – Centre for mobilizing innovation in Canada (RESEAU, n.d.). For the past decade RESEAU has been engaging with indigenous and rural communities across Canada in pursuit of water-health equity. *Treading Water* is a research-based theatre play that brings to life some of the rich stories discovered during these community collaborations. The

article shares the collaborative process of developing the play as well as the script, in an effort to open conversations addressing water quality and health issues facing rural communities.

SDG 7: Clean and affordable energy

The street artwork *Shadow talk* by NIMI (Naeem Searle) and Slapp gives rise to many reactions to windmills as sources of energy. According to NIMI energy, depending on how it is used, can lead to either peace or conflict. Energy can be both the cause and the instrument of modern war and advances in energy have historically arisen during the urgency of wartime. The street artwork, which shows an old man looking into his shadow of the future, sees energy as a multidimensional resource that reflects broader ties within the political-economic system of international relations. If Norway can stay self-reliant on its energy needs, we will, according to the artist, be able to stabilize our own energy economy, thus avoiding outside, overpriced energy solutions. This artistic statement will be presented as a contribution to SDG 7: Clean and affordable energy, in its own right as an artwork.

SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth

The article *Drama as a hopeful practice when navigating liminal times*, by Julia Fries and Tony Wall presents results from a study where applied drama interventions were deployed in four different groups in two different educational settings, where there was an interest in new ways to organize economies. Dramatic arts have historically facilitated the navigation of localized, political and economic tensions, but research and applied drama practice has not seemingly addressed the transitions to more holistic forms of development embedded within SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth. Conceptualizing this transition as liminal, the researchers argue for the use of dramatic arts to navigate this state. Findings echo the transformative potential of dramatic arts in prior environmental and sustainability educational research but extend it in the specific context of navigating and re-imagining economic growth.

SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

In the article *Kunstfaglig metodikk og sosial innovasjon Erfaringer fra kunstintervensjon i eldreomsorgen (Art methodologies and social innovation. Experiences from art intervention in care of the elderly)*, Rikke Gürgens Gjørum, Lilli Mittner, Elina Plucker and Ingrid Tranum Velásquez highlight how arts-based

practices can contribute to innovative practices in dementia care. The article is based on an eight-year art intervention situated in a residential care home in Northern Norway. They describe how the arts have the potential to involve people living with dementia as equal citizens in the activities of everyday life. The findings are presented according to four perspectives: the resident's perspective, the artist's perspective, the health worker's perspective and the manager's perspective. Issues that are specifically challenging when it comes to arts-based practices and co-creativity are highlighted.

SDG 10: Reduced inequalities

The urge to reduce inequalities and make space for participation is an ongoing discourse in drama and theatre work in general. The purpose of Kelly Freebody's essay *What is the problem of inequality, and can we solve it? Participatory theatre and SDG 10*, is to question critically and consider how, if at all, participatory theatre serves SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities. The researcher considers how participatory theatre may contribute to combating inequality through its attention to lived experiences, the potential for making changes to individual lives and its orientation towards hope. The article contributes new perspectives on drama and equity that present a nuanced and critical perspective on the relationship between public discourses, policy and theatre practice.

Torill Vist and Kari Mette Holdhus give us another take on SDG 10, discussing outsidership in the light of social inclusion and exclusion. Methodologically they break out from a normative research tradition, introducing a "walking dialogue" as a way of discovering their topic. The article *"We cannot afford outsidership" Inclusion, sustainable development and arts education*, addresses and discusses the topic of social sustainability on an individual and micro level and presents five threads of inquiry. These threads describe their path through the field of arts education and relate to 1) the position of the arts in the SDGs, 2) social inclusion in the SDGs, 3) research on arts and health, 4) social inclusion in the arts and 5) research on outsidership. The authors propose relational arts education to help avoid outsidership and to promote inclusion, care and social sustainability, giving space for diverging voices and counter-voices in arts education.

SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Viviane Juguero focuses on the crucial role that aesthetic democracy plays in generating and maintaining the 17 SDGs of the UN. The article *Aesthetic democracy as the roots of sustainable cities and communities* follows the structure of an imaginary mechanism based on three steps rooted in a radical perspective. The first step (imaginary accomplishment) unveils the idea of achieving the 17 SDGs. The second (roots of the situation) analyzes the current global situation and grounded concepts. The third step (action plan) reflects on how to reach the SDGs by advocating the necessity for Aesthetic Democracy. The conclusion states that emotional evolution through aesthetic revolution is essential to this process.

As an artistic contribution to SDG 11 Kristin Bergaust presents the video works *A Ship with a View* and *Kitchen Garden*, made during 2010 on M/S Innvik, run by Nordic Black Theatre (n.d.). 2010 turned out to be the last year of the ship's existence as an intercultural, creative environment in the Bjørvika urban development in Oslo, Norway. The video works are created as montages with music, art and performance contributions from people connected to M/S Innvik. It shows glimpses of activities on board and the changing surroundings. This work also suggests culture should be included in the discourse on sustainability.

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

Elena Perez's article *Turning it sustainable: implementing sustainability goals in theatre productions at NTNU*, proposes ways of implementing sustainability goals in student theatre productions that create interesting creative expressions. With a practice-based research approach the author, who is the leader of the 1st year "Theatre production" bachelor course at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), has worked from 2021-2023 to make the course sustainable and address SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. In this article the author describes the course's design, curatorial choices and tools that were used to identify and implement sustainable goals. The impact of integrating the principles of the 4 R's (Reuse, Reduce, Repurpose and Recycle) and the Climate Policy and Action Plans in the creative process is discussed with the argument that the qualities of the sustainable process – counting and measuring – impact artistic choices in unexpected and interesting ways.

SDG 13: Climate Action

The patient and pertinent climate calculation work on sustainable choices in theatre production is discussed in the introductory guide *Climate action and creative climate justice* (Eggen et.al., 2023). It points to the fact that by taking individual responsibility we are at the same time helping to relieve politicians and business leaders of their responsibility for climate justice. The guide highlights the urgent need for SDG 13: Climate Action, understood on the larger scale of political change, especially addressing the oil & gas industries in Norway.

This contribution is neither artistic, scientific nor essayistic, but rather actionist. As an actionist contribution it breaks into – or out of - the established academic genres and asks us *to do something*, to act politically in the face of global nature and climate crises. We include this actionist contribution, represented by Erlend Eggen and Lise Hovik, in order to present an active, cooperative, artistic network for sustainable development in the arts and culture sector.

SDG 14: Life Below Water

An interdisciplinary research group, including Tone Pernille Østern, Helena Bichao, Carol Preston, Murat V. Ardelan, Manola Gayatri Kumarswamy, Rose Martin, Ralph Buck and Maria Azucena Gutierrez Gonzalez, presents a literature review related to SDG 14: Life Below Water. Their article *Water education, ocean literacy and arts-integration. A literature review in an interdisciplinary team*, reports on existing action research on water education, ocean literacy and arts integration. The research group, which stretches across the fields of marine science, arts and science education, screened 368 research articles with the assistance of the Covidence streamlining program. Ending up with 14 relevant articles that were analyzed in-depth, the authors found that arts-integrated water education projects take place locally across higher education, formal education and informal education in collaborative teams. The action research projects developed open-ended, inquiry-based and creative pedagogies, seeking to foster the capacity to act for sustainable living in a more-than-human world. Their analyses also conclude that there is a lack of research on how the connection to ocean literacy, including life below water specifically, can be nurtured.

Heli Aaltonen's article *Re-storying SDG 14: life below water*, dives into the undersea realm of salmon with SDG 14: Life below water, by focusing on conserving oceans

and marine resources. The article explores the power of multispecies storytelling and asks how to tell such stories, which awake moral agency in humans to care what happens to life below water. The text emphasizes the need to view water bodies as homes for diverse marine creatures. It argues for recognizing these creatures not merely for their utilitarian value, but as living beings with whom empathic relationships can be formed. The empathic connection shares qualities with care ethics and the article argues that oral, multispecies storytelling, combined with psychophysical acting techniques, can contribute significantly to our sustainability toolbox.

SDG 15: Life on land

SDG 15: Life on land, covers three different artistic and educational contributions from arts & crafts, children's literature, drama and performing arts.

Anne Lise Nordbø and Biljana C. Fredriksen's article *Reducing inequalities among species through an arts-based inquiry in early childhood teacher education*, is based on a study in outdoor, arts-based education with Norwegian early years student teachers. The authors pose the following question: Which qualities of arts-based learning environments can challenge students to seek a reduction in inequalities between themselves and more-than-human others? The students connected to outdoor places and expressed changes in their attitudes toward the inhabitants and materials encountered at these places. The narratives and their analysis made visible how the students' arts-based engagements challenged their anthropocentric values. The discussion sums up four qualities of the arts-based environments that were present in the four narratives. These qualities were identified as imagination, self-initiated actions, empathic connections and time for aesthetic engagement.

Atle Krogstad and Lise Hovik explore children's views of the relationship between trees and humans in the article *Barns refleksjoner om forholdet mellom natur og mennesker i litterære samtaler om bildeboka De to gamle og livets tre.* (*Children's reflections on the relationship between nature and human beings in literary conversations*). The article describes a reading project, in which the picture book *The Two Old People and The Tree of Life* by Patrick Fischmann and Martine Bourre was read to a group of kindergarten children aged 4-5. The project explores how the relationship between nature and human beings is expressed in literary conversations. The children wondered about the biological and nutritional conditions for seed

germination, as presented in the book. They also came up with playful suggestions for new forms of interaction between people and trees, based on an empathetic approach to the needs of both trees and people.

In Lise Hovik's scientific essay *Økologiske perspektiver i scenekunst for barn*, (*Ecological approaches in performing arts for children*), the playful connection of children with nature is also highlighted. She explores the blurry borders between art and play, humans and animals and the relationship with our physical surroundings in the light of ideas about posthumanism, sympoiesis and artistic research processes. The artistic research project *Neither Fish nor Fowl* (Hovik, 2017-23), for kindergarten children by and with Teater Fot, of which the author is artistic director, provides examples of how such ideas can be expressed through performing arts. The essay prepares for some new ecological approaches to performing arts for children and sums up with a proposal for turning attention to affect and emotional engagement, the sympoiesis of a "new we" and community between species as well as staging utopian futures.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

The article *Addressing SDG 16.2: Eliminating violence towards children – An applied theatre approach*, offers a case study of a long-running Aotearoa New Zealand-based applied theatre programme, Everyday Theatre. A group of theatre makers / researchers, Moema Gregorzewski, Briar O'Connor and Peter O'Connor, explore how the programme addresses the aspirations of SDG 16, target 16.2, which centers on eliminating violence towards children. They investigate drama conventions such as teacher-in-role, pre-text, aesthetics and framing. These explorations throw light on how applied theatre practice can form small but significant contributions and opportunities for students and teachers to consider how they could change their own future narratives, creating more socially cohesive local communities.

SDG 17: Partnerships

SDG 17 is about revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda calls for action by all countries to ensure that no one is left behind. It requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil societies across countries, continents and sectors. This issue of *Nordic Journal for Arts & Research* is an expression of SDG 17 - a collaboration on achieving the goals. In this way we wish to renew global partnerships for sustainable development by sharing

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new knowledge with peers and global readers alike. 23 contributions on sustainability in arts education can bring new, interesting and hopeful discussions to our field. A wide range of different perspectives, understandings, theories and methods hopefully show the reader that arts educators can make a difference by inspire sustainable thinking and action. We, as editors, believe that arts education can be a catalyst for a change in society towards more sustainable futures. Through this special issue we welcome each and every reader to take part in this aesthetic collaboration on the production of knowledge, formed and assembled by arts educators, with a rising hope for the future of our planet.

About the authors

Mette Bøe Lyngstad is professor of drama and applied theatre at Western Norway University of applied sciences (HVL). She is the leader of the research group Neglected narratives at HVL. Her latest research project concerns narrative research with marginalized groups, the use of convention in the classroom, and bullying in school. She has a large international network, which the publication of this special issue has drawn upon.

Rikke Gørgens Gjørum is professor of applied theatre and vice rector at UiT The Arctic University of Norway. Gjørum 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 interdisciplinary Artful Dementia Research Lab at UiT.

Lise Hovik is professor of drama and theatre at Queen Maud University College of Early Childhood Education in Trondheim, and at OsloMet. Hovik's research interests are based on arts and theatre with the youngest children, dramaturgy and artistic research methodologies. She is the artistic director of Teater Fot and head of research for Lydhør LekeKunst.

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