

Art and co-research with Sámi reindeer herders - in the spirit of decolonisation unfolding cultural knowledge

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The world's population growth with its increasing need for resources, along with globalisation and climate change, are seriously affecting minority and Indigenous peoples' cultures in the North. Sámi reindeer herders have to adjust their livelihood because of other stakeholders that are desiring to use the lands where the reindeer graze. This research project encourages the reindeer herders to come forward and introduce their livelihood and profession as vivid, culturally sustainable and valuable, and as a source of knowledge that is needed as the world faces climate change and other challenges while seeking environmental sustainability. The study uses an art-based action research strategy, implementing the Photovoice-method as a means to collect data and bring forward the reindeer herders' daily life. Five Sámi reindeer herder families from the region around Lake Inari in northern Finland took snapshots of their everyday life around the year. With the photographs, they built an exhibition about their daily lives and also published an even more descriptive picture book. Art-based actions emphasise the decolonial potency of participative action research and co-research. The research was conducted by an art-educator-researcher, also involved herself in reindeer herding, which opened deeper possibilities to plan, operate and fulfil the research actions to benefit the Sámi reindeer herders and also to develop art-based action methods as a research strategy.

Introduction

Sápmi (the Sámi homeland) which is the regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Kola Peninsula located north of the Arctic Circle, is seeing increased exploitation due to globalisation and the impacts of global interest in resources. Also, climate change is already affecting natural resource-based livelihoods. In this light, the northern Indigenous people, their culture, and their present situation need to be acknowledged. The Sámi reindeer herders of northern Finland have long faced the demands of other inhabitants and stakeholders on the reindeer pastures. The regions of Sápmi have increased the world's interest as a source of forestry, mining, tourism, and energy. The reindeer pastures of untouched land diminish every year. Kuokkanen (2020) characterises this as the contemporary on-going northern colonialism in which the self-determination and rights of the

Indigenous Sámi are being diminished through general discourses, institutions, and government structures (Kuokkanen, 2020). The collaboration between and land use by all stakeholders in these northernmost areas are based upon common interest, and the results are meant to benefit all involved parties. However, in this situation, the reindeer herders, who strive to keep nature untouched, are usually the ones who lose out. The reindeer herders often find the government and other decision-makers to be ignorant of their needs and daily lives. They confront situations where local people, media and even authorities often reckon their profession to be a type of cultural hobby rather than proper work (Pohjola & Valkonen, 2012). Clearly, more information about contemporary reindeer herders' livelihood needs to be disseminated to enable fruitful collaborations.

As a member of a Sámi reindeer herder family and an art educator and artist, I started an art-based research project together with five reindeer herder families. We all live in Finland, in the northernmost areas of the province of Lapland, that we recognise as Sápmi, in the regions of Lake Inari. Our mission was to highlight the position of reindeer herders by disseminating knowledge about their contemporary daily lives through art-based actions. We collected photographs taken by the families over one year and used them to build an exhibition and to design a book, both of which were called *Boazoeallin* (which means 'reindeer life' in northern Sámi). The exhibition and book were aimed at increasing knowledge about the reindeer herders' contemporary lives. The photographs and narratives that the reindeer herder families disseminate, contain cultural knowledge that may be of use in other research fields. The project was realised by art-based action research (ABAR), which is a strategy that has been used to enhance a dialogical stage for communities, collaboration and to promote increased understanding in society. This study is aimed at developing and exploring the features of art-based actions combined with participatory methods that can be implemented with an art-based action research strategy supporting communities.

In ABAR, data are usually produced and collected through community art education methods (Hiltunen, 2009) in the spheres of applied art, which values place-specific art related to a community's culture (Jokela, 2019). Art-based research actions are participatory and have qualities of co-research (Jokela et al., 2015). In research with Indigenous people, participatory research has destabilised power positions linked to traditional research settings, which supports decolonisation (Lenette, 2022). Art-based actions might develop into useful tools for communities to enhance decolonisation and showcase their culture to the majority population.

In this article, I discuss the research methods I used in my project with reindeer herder families. Every community research project is unique and needs a special approach. In this project, the combination of art education, participatory art-based actions, and co-research is aimed at inviting the community to join the research on their own terms and to give them the opportunity to control the research data and its use. I confront the challenges of working together with a community that has been exposed to cultural colonialism for generations, which I suggest leads to a restrained manner of producing knowledge publicly. The art-based action method seeks decolonisation and an empowering strategy. My position as an insider helps greatly in building trust and acting in the project. In this project, I am deeply involved as an artist, art educator, facilitator, and researcher, and I arrange and guide the actions to serve the community to create the trust and confidence needed to reveal private knowledge publicly.

Decolonisation brings forward cultural knowing

This article adopts the theoretical concept of decolonisation arising from the postcolonial settler colonialism in Sápmi. I also present the concept of Cultural Knowledge, which grows as a visual result from the reindeer herders' art-based actions.

Existing studies in this area have been based almost exclusively upon Western paradigms and approaches. Indigenous research paradigms might be considered as research objects but have not been accepted and respected as equals in research. Indigenous scholars (e.g., Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Smith, 2012) have criticised Eurocentric dominance since the late 20th century. To decolonize research paradigms and methodologies is to include Indigenous ways of knowing in academia and to value these as equal to Western approaches to knowing. Combining these two methodologies also challenges Western methods of reporting results. The Indigenous methods of producing data as well as their knowledge features may differ greatly from those of Western traditional science (Held, 2019). Seppälä et al. (2021) summarise decolonisation research as an approach that challenges the Eurocentric view of science and aims to center the concerns and world-views of non-Western communities. Since the beginning of the 21st century, decolonising research actions have increasingly become an academic moral starting point for conducting research with marginalised communities and Indigenous peoples. Such research aims to create alternative theories, open less Eurocentric forms of knowing, and support the perspectives of the colonised society.

Some challenges are faced in understanding decolonising Indigenous research and conducting responsible collaborative research (Smith, 2012). Seppälä et al. (2021) noted that the innocent wish to support a decolonised community may result in decolonising research becoming only a trendy buzzword within Western academia by too often serving only as a metaphor without any concrete decolonising practises. This is still a relevant discussion that Smith (2012) initiated, and has raised questions about who are (or should be) the key agents of decolonisation in research and how the collaboration should be realised with the colonised people. Power plays an important role in the relationship between the researcher and the participating community. The researcher could extend knowledge or perpetuate ignorance. The decolonial label of the research may too easily only heal Western science's bad conscience over its racially and ethically abusive research from the past instead of genuinely supporting the community (Smith, 2012). Held (2019) describes decolonial research in collaboration with non-Indigenous scholars as at its best when it leads to mutual understanding, healing, and, ultimately, a postcolonial coexistence and collaboration.

To understand and be able to form decolonising art-based research actions with the Sámi reindeer herders, it is crucial to explore the backgrounds and contemporary situation of the on-going cultural colonisation of Sápmi. Until the middle of the 19th century, the Sámi people were usually nomads over a smaller or larger area of Sápmi, and they commonly moved two times a year between their summer and winter residences depending on seasonal fishing, hunting areas, and reindeer pastures. National borders divided Sápmi and the reindeer herders' nomadic routes between Norway and Finland in 1852 and Sweden and Finland in 1888, thus separating families and limiting their cultural interactions (Lehtola, 2015). For the Sámi people, the ideas of borders and landowning were strange. For them, their land covered their hunting and fishing grounds as well as their reindeer pastures. Other families and relatives that lived in the same culture and talked the same language as they did lived along the northern calotte.

The historian Enbuske (2006) implies that colonialism has never occurred in Sápmi as the area has been considered since the 17th century, also by the local people, as Crown land. Enbuske explained that people from the South made no effort to invade Lapland, and the contemporary habitation therein resulted from the Sámi people themselves changing their nomadic lifestyle and culture and settling the lands. Over time, they mixed with the Finnish population. According to Kuokkanen (2020), the Sámis in the area began farming because, by law, this was the only way they could continue their rights to their hunting and fishing lands while people from the South settled into the region. The colonialism in the North can be described as settler colonialism (Wolfe, 2006), which is realised by imposing the settlers' culture through the power structures that direct regional functions such as religion, education, and official language. This has been going on in the Sámi regions since the Middle Ages, when the church began to Christianize the North (Lehtola, 2015). It is a type of cultural colonialism, where the Indigenous people are being eliminated over the years, not through massacres or other brutal physical acts, but through assimilation. Ultimately, it is difficult to blame any person for being a colonial settler, as all local habitants are involved in some way (Wolfe, 2006). Today, the ancient Sámi families live in northernmost Sápmi. The majority of the habitants in the province of Lapland have mixed ethnic roots, and Sáminess today cannot be measured through ethnicity alone. A large population descending from the Sámi people has lost their culture and language, and today, they identify themselves as Finnish, Swedish, or Norwegian people in their way of living. For them, their Sámi identity is like an open and painful wound in that they are ashamed of not speaking Sámi, not knowing Sámi culture. These people are a result of settler colonialism.

Settler colonialism is ongoing. This is one reason why activism or extreme radical decolonial acts do not necessarily interest people who have raised their children in a democratic welfare society and are living peacefully in a mixed society where people are longtime friends or relatives. Kuokkanen (2007) describes the Sámis' silent approval of their situation as a long-term adaptation of the hegemonic power of the dominant society, which ensures that their interests are everyone's best and has resulted in colonising the Sámis' minds. Even if many of the Sámis might agree that they are still undergoing colonialism, the democratic society discourages them from protesting. People wish to mind their own business and live in peace. They often have an evasive attitude when it comes to expressing radical personal opinions or raising their voices.

Cultural Knowledge

It is important to define the term "knowledge" in the context of Indigenous research. Knowledge is a certain outcome in research with communities, and ethical questions are raised concerning the use of data, credentials, and the benefit of spreading it. Knowledge systems such as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), Indigenous Knowledge (IK), Sámi Traditional Knowledge, Lokal Knowledge, Northern Knowledge, and Community Knowledge have similarities and differences from each other (Berkes, 2018; Helander-Renvall & Markkula, 2017; Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2022; Lehtola, 2015; Riseth et al., 2010; Valkonen & Valkonen, 2019). In this research, I prefer to use Cultural Knowledge from the viewpoint of the specific knowledge that the reindeer herders share in the exhibition and design of the book. Cultural Knowledge is commonly understood as a competence to interpret different cultures, which is useful in order to understand, learn, and adapt other people's behaviours (Wang, 2011). Alternatively, and referred to in this article, Cultural Knowledge can be considered a feature, ability, quality, or attribute of a certain community. Wang

(2011) notes that it is often difficult for individuals to be fully aware of the features of their own cultural knowing because it lies deep within their consciousness. Culture is learned by communication with those around us from the day we are born. We learn our languages; develop our worldview, values, and beliefs; and restore the data to be used in the community we live in. This might include multiple things that we think “that we just know” (Wang, 2011). Tiili (2023) includes kinesthetic and bodily learning processes in Cultural knowledge, which are in close interaction with the environment and the community. The active receiving of impulses that a person gains from the day he/she is born, is building intuition and an awareness of our daily life that we can lean on. This kind of knowing is place- and community-specific, and is tied to hidden cultural norms, inherited wisdom, and behaviour (Tiili, 2023). The Boazoeallin exhibition and book can be seen as visual samples of the reindeer herders’ Cultural Knowledge. In this article, the concept of cultural *knowing* is also used. The philosopher Ryle (1946) first addressed the difference between knowing and knowledge in his essay on knowing how and knowing that. Knowledge is often considered stable and confirmed. Knowing is subjective and develops according to changing circumstances (e.g. place and time). Further, the complex explanations of knowledge and knowing have been addressed in multiple fields of science (Azzouni, 2020; Kuhn, 2001; Nagel, 2014).

Methods used in this ABAR strategy

ABAR has been developed at the University of Lapland since the 1990s to respond to the needs of revitalisation of communities, regional development, and sustainable development of the environment (Jokela, 2019; Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2020; Huhmarniemi, Jokela & Hiltunen, 2021). Jokela and Huhmarniemi (2020) described this method as a research strategy as it usually plays a key role in combination with other fields of science. This strategy shares common features with international arts-based research and artistic research (Barone & Eisner, 2012) as well as with participatory action research (Jokela, 2018; Leavy, 2017). ABAR aims to develop methods and working approaches of the artist and art educator that in contemporary pedagogy has entered the working fields outside educational institutions (Jokela et al., 2015). Today, at a global level, this strategy involves artists and art educators as researchers working together with communities in social science for developing education, regional sustainability, and healthcare (Huhmarniemi & Jokela, 2020; Miettinen et al., 2016, Strand et al., 2022). In Sápmi, the University of Lapland has led development projects in which the challenges of peripheral villages, such as population ageing, isolation of young people, and undeveloped creative industries and cultural services, have been in the background alongside cultural sustainability in tourism (Hiltunen, 2009; Jokela et al., 2015). The art-based actions in this strategy are process-oriented and dialogical. The democratic performance enables the researcher and the community to collaborate and enhance co-research, which often encourages the community to highlight their culture. The art that is produced in the research projects are dialogical place-specific art forms, such as environmental or community art, and are produced according to the basis of community-based art education (Hiltunen, 2009).

The reindeer herder families participated in the research project as co-researchers. Participants as co-researchers are situated as contributors as well as investigators to the findings of a research project. This approach privileges the experiences of the community and positions participants as experts of their own life and, therefore, as essential co-researchers and collaborators in the process of gathering data (Boylorn, 2008). Inviting the community to participate in research as co-researchers is a way to seek to implement the principles of democracy throughout the research

process and to destabilise the power positions linked to traditional research settings (Kulmala et al., 2023). The participatory aspect of co-research has been a natural starting point for decolonising research that has given deserved respect for Indigenous peoples' knowledge (Smith, 2012; Seppälä et al., 2021). The participating community is not necessarily invited to the process as co-authors as it is usually not familiar or comfortable with the concept of the research work; nonetheless, it can offer its observations and expertise (Boylorn, 2008).

We used photographing as a tool to collect information and data; in research, this is known as the Photovoice method (Wang & Burris, 1997). The Photovoice method was originally used in social and healthcare research but has since been successfully adapted to community-based participatory research and research with Indigenous people in their communities (Castleden et al., 2008). This method has also helped highlight the oppressive conditions of the participants' lives (Wang & Burris, 1997).

The visual Photovoice method is, by itself, not an art-based method. Visual data can include simple exploration or informative journalism. The action and data will turn into art when it is established in artistic spheres by designing, constructing, and valuing aesthetics or exhibiting. In this research project, the reindeer herders families collaborated with the researcher to build an exhibition in which their own photographs, taken by cellphones, were presented in combination with installations of 'taskscape' (Ingold, 1993) describing the reindeer herders' daily chores (Korsström-Magga, 2019; Korsström-Magga & Jokela, 2022). Taskscape is a term introduced by Tim Ingold to refer to an environment or situation in which human actions are performed. The environment is usually strongly connected to cultural heritage and involves all senses (Ingold, 1993; Korsström-Magga & Jokela, 2022). The families designed the installations for the exhibition themselves, determining the theme and using their own working tools and equipment that formed the taskscapes. They also designed a book of their photographs that is based upon their cultural view of their working year. In this project, the Photovoice method can be considered decolonial because the outcome of the action is primarily beneficial to the participants (Seppälä, 2021).

Positionality and background

My insider position in this research is related to my everyday life as a member of a reindeer herder family. This enables me to collect data as a participant observer. McKechnie (2008) defines participant observation as a qualitative research method that is especially appropriate for studying social phenomena or communities about which little is known or is visible to the public (McKechnie, 2008).

At the same time, I was born an outsider in the society as my roots are in the South of Finland. I am neither Sámi nor a reindeer herder myself. I moved to the county of Inari in Lapland as a young woman and married a Sámi reindeer herder. To learn to live in a new culture, understand the language, and adapt the visible and invisible understandings of cultural ways takes more than a lifetime, and I would be lying if I claimed to know all about it today. Nonetheless, over the years, I have learned to meet the outside world from a reindeer herder's perspective. I have noticed how much ignorance and false information there is about Sámi reindeer herders' contemporary lives. I have also noticed how the Sámi reindeer herders often need to convince the local people, regional government, and state about their needs and cultural rights with regard to their livelihood. My life has given me valuable knowledge about the community and as a person originally from the South who was a member of the dominant society, I can recognise the counterparts' ignorance. My insider

position as well as my pre-knowledge of the research community has helped me to understand and analyse the research data and the community’s cultural behaviour.

My outsider position arises from my position as a researcher. The Indigenous people have never thought highly of researchers. Western science has abused minorities through unethical research since the Middle Ages. Therefore, Indigenous people commonly view Western science and researchers with suspicion. The five reindeer herder families did not totally welcome my idea of the research project. However, the thought of promoting their livelihood and the fact that they were familiar with me, even if I was not born into their culture, convinced them to join the project.

The following summary as shown in Figure 1 visualises the strategy and background of the research actions.

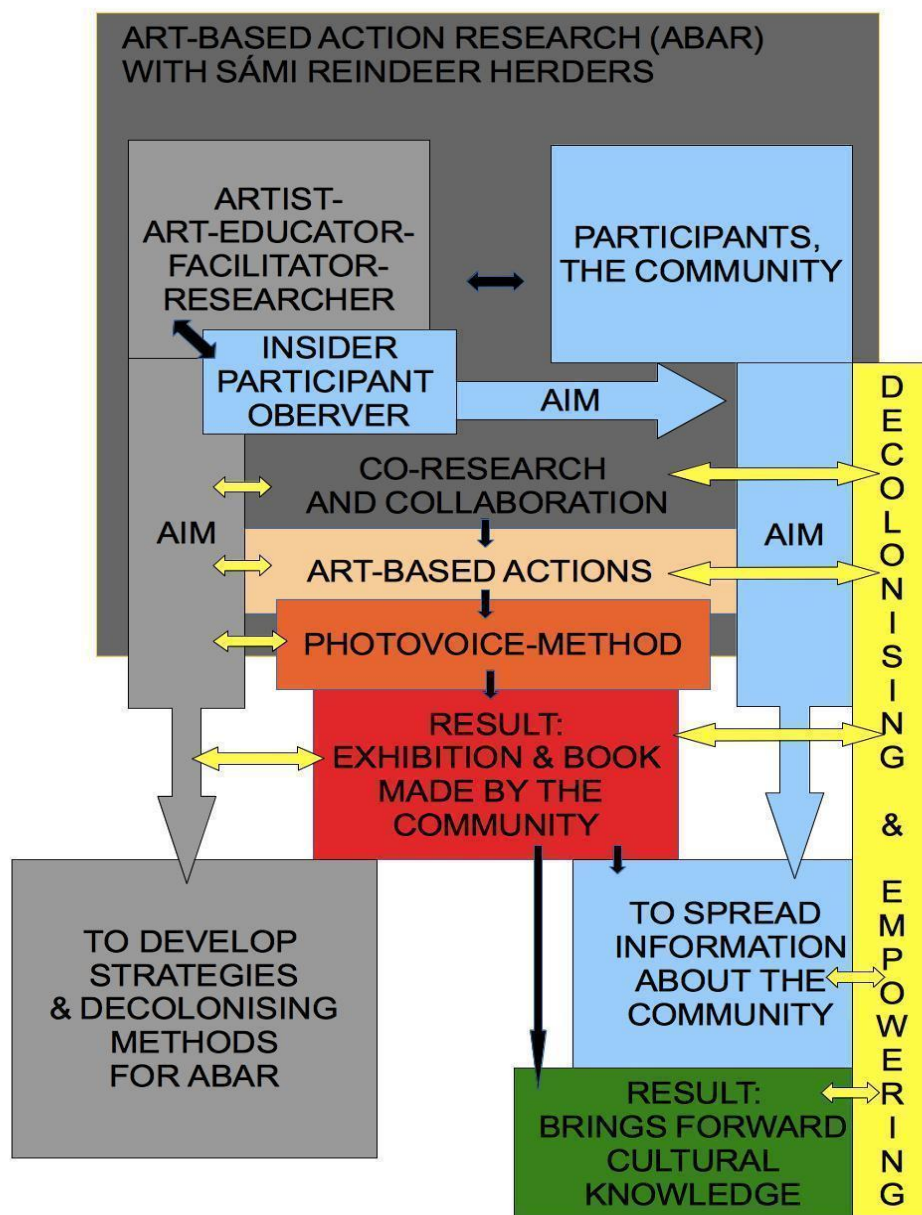


Figure 1. A summary of the strategy used in this ABAR research with Sámi reindeer herders. Note: this model is produced by the author (2023), summarising the strategy factors of the research.

In art-based action, the researcher performs the key tasks of planning and organising the action. The art-based action, guidance, practical knowledge, and analysis are clearly related to the art educator's profession as well as its performance and reporting to the academic society. In this research, the action was aimed at producing knowledge about Sámi reindeer herder families' everyday lives. The expectations of the art-based actions, combined with the participatory methods of co-research and Photovoice, sought decolonial empowering actions with the community and produced Cultural Knowledge.

Reindeer herder families producing Cultural Knowledge

Through this project, I was personally interested in raising reindeer herder families' voices and disseminating knowledge about their everyday lives. I started to plan the art-based action and visualised different scenes of how the art we were going to produce with the reindeer herders could be presented by visualising their everyday life in the most conspicuous way. As an outsider to the Sámi Indigenous community, I initially did not understand why the families were doubtful of my first suggestions and ideas of contemporary and slightly radical forms of disseminating the reindeer herders' daily life in the exhibition (Korsström-Magga, 2019). The participant observation during this long-term research helped me to gradually understand the contemporary complex situation of colonialism in Sápmi, which explains partly the families' hesitance in expressing themselves publicly and their desire to act politely and objectively in their art actions. They clearly want to avoid conflicts and they want to give a good impression of themselves. In both the exhibition and the design of the book, they wished to present themselves as correct and decorous people.

The reindeer herder families photographed their daily lives for one year to reveal moments that are seldom seen or understood by outsiders. We exhibited nearly 1000 photographs of the families' daily lives in the Boazoeallin exhibition in Sámi Siida Museum in Inari. At the exhibition, the photographs were built into taskscapes (Ingold, 1993) around themes of the reindeer herder's work, such as the separation fence, contemporary use of the lávvu (a Sámi teepee), impacts of predators on reindeer herders' livelihood, and tourism. The exhibition gained local attention, and the autumn tourist season brought foreigners who also enjoyed it. I publicised the exhibition further in several international conferences and journals, and it is central to my thesis (Korsström-Magga, 2019; Korsström-Magga & Jokela, 2022).

After our exhibition, we decided to continue our mission of disseminating information; toward this end, we started designing a book that would present the photographs along with short explanations. The book is called Boazoeallin, like the exhibition. The research group considered the book more informative than the exhibition as it would not disappear as the exhibition would, and the members of all families could sell it in the future to disseminate information by themselves. We started to plan the book in the autumn of 2019. This time I also joined the actual art-based action together with the families. We planned and designed the edition and I added photographs from situations where my own family was working with similar tasks as the other families. This deepened my understanding of the art-based action and it also set me in the same situation as the research group, presenting and revealing my personal and private life. This helped me a great deal to analyse the other person's feelings and their efforts made for the project.

Exploring reindeer herders' working year

We decided to structure the book according to the reindeer herders' year, which starts when the

calves are born in early summer. The year is divided into eight seasons according to an ancient Sámi view of the year. The seasons do not change at a certain date, and they are not equally long. Instead, they change according to climatic conditions in nature combined with chores of reindeer herder's livelihood. The year starts in spring-summer, when the first calves are born on the melting snowfields. The summer follows when the leaves are fully grown and the mosquitoes fly. The late summer is when the cloudberry are ripe and the reindeer fur is new and shiny. The autumn starts when the first frost nights occur, leaves become colourful, and reindeer eat mushrooms. The late autumn is when the reindeer mating season starts. Winter starts when the snow falls and reindeer are separated and slaughtered. In winter, the sun does not rise. Early spring sees the coldest days of the year, during which time snow falls increasingly, the snow cover gets thicker, and the first glimpses of the sun are seen. In spring, the days get longer quickly. The nights can be very cold; however, the days are pleasant and sunny. Some warm days cause a thick and hard snow crust, and the reindeer herd spreads and eats moss that falls from the trees. The whooper swans return. Then, the snow cover starts to melt and the new reindeer calves are born and the next year is considered to start. Every season is represented in the book by a large photograph of either a landscape or special task of the season. The season is described by a short text in Finnish translated with a few lines in English.

Autumn

The ground is freezing and soon snow will cover the world. We are spending our last freetime before the slaughter season by fishing, hunting elk, birds, and picking lingonberries. Then, the reindeer separation time begins. The slaughter time continues during the winter period. The male reindeer are now fighting with each other and gathering the female reindeer to larger herds, which helps us to collect the reindeer into the separation fence. At the fence we separate the slaughter animals. The reindeer that are not slaughtered are after the separation transported either by vans or by herding to the reindeer herders' village herding areas, where they can be supported during the harsh winter period.

A couple of texts in the book are written in Inari Sámi and Northern Sámi; however, as our main audience are not Sámi, we decided to describe our everyday chores in Finnish. The texts are based upon our discussions of the photographs that gave the inspiration to talk about and compare our working systems across all seasons. A photo collage describes every season visually. Every season also has a 'to do' list summarising the chores in a familiar and everyday tone what one should do during this season.

We reused some of the photographs from the exhibition along with new photographs in the design. For some of the seasonal chapters, we added short texts about a special task or event. The autumn season contains a text about hunting and fishing as these are of great importance to all Sámi reindeer herder families. The late autumn contains a chapter about slaughter, as the reindeer herders are skilled self-taught butchers. The handicraft of making shoes from reindeer skin as well as a couple of recipes for reindeer meat are also presented. All these skills are passed down from generation to generation in Sámi families. The book is planned to be sold beside the meat market for all, including tourists. Some books may be directly given to regional offices.

Results of dialogical art-based space

The research actions highlight the qualities of the ABAR strategy. As an art educator, I analyse my own actions, including the planning of the action, use of the Photovoice method, and collaboration with the participants as co-researchers. As an artist, art educator, as well as participant observer, I analyse the community's visual art, which is a research result. These include the photographs as well as the exhibition, book, and all related actions and decisions. This requires understanding and knowledge about the culture of the reindeer herders' community, which I have thanks to my position as an insider. My observations, notes, photographs, and unstructured interviews that I have produced as a participant observer confirm and complement the results of the visual analysis.

A strength of art-based research methods is that the action can engage communities to trust and highlight their cultural knowing, which is otherwise often non-verbal, silent, sensitive, and bodily (Jokela & Huhmarniemi, 2020; Tiili, 2023, Wang, 2011). This art-based action research presents a project in which the community participates as co-researchers and expresses itself visually through art-based actions to produce Cultural Knowledge that highlights their community in society and thereby decolonises and empowers itself.

My special position as an insider in this research project gave me enough knowledge about the community to plan the art-based research actions. My background and everyday life placed me in this research as a participant observer (McKechnie, 2008). During the research, I primarily made observations from my own daily chores with my family, and in the analysis, I compared my observations to those of other families. This helped me to fully understand the chores and situations they had photographed in their everyday lives.



Figure 2: The reindeer herders' Cultural Knowledge is visible in the pictures. A written explanation might increase the information for those who are not familiar with the culture. *Author's own photograph, 2023.*

For example, in Figure 2, a man driving a snowmobile with a lávvu (Sámi traditional teepee) in the background does not necessarily reveal to the viewer that the sled and lávvu are handmade based

on inherited knowledge. My insider knowledge helps me to understand the photographs in a wider sense. The photograph reveals that the family herd their reindeer in the forest area of the region. It is late spring and the family is keeping the female reindeer in a large fence while they are calving. The sledge is used for transporting and distributing the reindeer hay, lichen and fodder as the early spring plants have not yet started to grow. The *lávvu* is used as a resting place, where the family eat, keep their things and occasionally also spend their nights.

My position as an insider helped me to gain trust and convince the reindeer herder families to join the project. This was not self-evident, as the community is Sámi and is aware of the abusive research that has been done on their people (Smith, 2012). They suffer from generations of settler colonialism, which is today seen in society as cultural colonialism and colonisation of the mind (Kuokkanen, 2007). I noticed that the participating persons were cautious. It was important for them to present their livelihood and daily lives in a positive light and correctly. They wanted to convince the people, who do not know their culture well, that they are honest and hardworking people. It was equally important to them that no one in their own reindeer herders' society could blame them for bringing up false or abusive material. All insisted on acknowledging that the photographs do not represent all reindeer herders and that every family has often its own specific way of doing the chores. Settler colonialism has mixed the northern habitants together for a long time, with the result that people are socially related. In society, a subconscious knowing of proper behaviour exists which silences impulsive acts.

In this research, we used the Photovoice method (Wang & Burris, 1997) to gather information about the reindeer herders' daily life. This method suited the study purpose well by empowering the community and building self-esteem and trust in our research. Further, it produced visual data and revealed Sámi reindeer herders' cultural knowing (Wang, 2011). The photographs and texts in the *Boazoeallin* book tell a story about happy people living a good life.



Figure 3. *The Sámi reindeer herders are hardworking outdoor people.* From the left: Photographs 1-2, 2021 by S. Kustula, photograph 3, 2017 by K. Ukkonen and photograph 4, 2022 by E-M. Hetta.



Figure 4. *The Sámi reindeer herders' daily lives are also similar with the majority population.* From the left: Author's own photograph 1, 2023, photograph 2, 2012 by K. Ukkonen, photograph 3, 2021 by S. Kustula and photograph 4, 2016 by Sara family.

A sample of photographs from the book in Figure 3 show that the families wanted to bring forward positive features of themselves as skilled, professional, and hardworking outdoor people who are proud of their Sámi Indigenous heritage and especially proud of being reindeer herders. They also added photographs in the book that pointed out commonalities with the majority people. The photographs in Figure 4 disseminate their everyday lives also as familiar and approachable. The usual outcome of the Photovoice method, that has been used in Social Sciences and the realm of social work, has revealed misery or a minority population's struggles (Wang & Burris, 1997). The reindeer herders' photographs had on the contrary a positive daily character. Exploring the daily chores by photographing was clearly empowering. The photographs reveal and confirm the families' Cultural Knowledge so that the viewer may adapt, understand, and learn. The Boazoeallin exhibition and book describe the reindeer herders' daily life and noteworthy stories. The book contained explanations that widened the understanding of the photographs. These explanations are based on the stories and discussions of the research community. The exhibition and book are both considered as a visual-art-based result of the research.

The democratic way of producing data encouraged the community as participating co-researchers to trust the research and to be enthusiastic and inspired about presenting their livelihood. These actions are valued as decolonising in research (Smith, 2012).

Conclusion

In this article, I discuss the elements of an art-based action research project that produced Cultural Knowledge of Sámi reindeer herder families in Inari, northern Finland. The aim was to create visible information and inform regional decision-makers and the majority population about contemporary reindeer herding. The research aimed for democratising and decolonising actions. The participants acted as co-researchers and used art-based actions and the Photovoice method to collect research data about their own daily doings and their lives as reindeer herders. The reindeer herder families, with me facilitating, built an exhibition of the photographs and placed them in installations formed as taskscapes. The exhibition was called Boazoeallin ('Reindeer life' in English) and subsequently the families designed a book (of the same name) of these photographs. Through the photographs, the families showed themselves doing their chores and living their lives over the year, also revealing their specific cultural knowing about their profession, their environment, nature and Sámi heritage as reindeer herders. The exhibition and book should clarify and highlight

reindeer herders' livelihoods to people in common and multiple stakeholders who desire to use the reindeer pasturelands in the North for other purposes. This article highlights the features of art-based action research as a strategy that produces and transmits Cultural Knowledge produced with art-based actions. The use of the Photovoice method encouraged participants to explore their own lives through a lens, which helped them to present and reflect on their own features and skills; this was empowering and supported decolonisation. The Boazoeallin book, that will remain as a result of this project, is embracing a time frame of these reindeer herder families lives in Inari, where external challenges are changing their circumstances of livelihood.

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