

EXPLORATIONS IN OCEAN SPACE IV

>>>>>>>>> Non-extractive seascapes < > Indigenous perspectives <<<<<<<<<<<<

Building on findings from previous courses, in autumn 2022, ***Explorations in Ocean Space IV*** investigates coastal seascapes in Northern Norway, aiming to learn from indigenous perspectives. The northern fjords Kåfjord (2 hrs from Tromsø) and Porsangerfjord (2 hrs from Alta) are rich historical seascapes at the intersection of Norskehavet, (literally translated as the “Norwegian Ocean”), and the Barents Sea, lie within the Arctic Circle and are part of the larger oceanographic system of the Arctic Ocean. They are important areas for the Sea Sámi (Søjsámi) and host centres of culture, research and contemporary art to support and further develop Sámi language and culture; the *Centre for Northern Peoples* (Mandalen) and *Mearrasiida* (Billefjord, Porsanger).

The urgent challenges of the Anthropocene and of practicing non-extractive architecture invite us to look into other ways of knowing. Traditional Sámi architecture is non-extractive by definition—traditionally using only readily available materials with zero waste. But Sámi spatial practices and understandings are also characterised by fluidity between “architecture” and landscape, land- and seascape, physical and metaphysical elements, and different temporal /environmental conditions – they embrace situated and radically relational ways of knowing:

“The land- and seascape are perceived as living entities, continuously transforming and unfolding and actively nurturing relations between humans, spirits and other living creatures, linked to specific places” (Helander-Renvall,2008).

The symbiotic relationship between indigenous cultures and the natural environment may provide solutions to environmental sustainability, as confirmed by the promotion of indigenous people’s rights relating to the environment at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit).

In Aotearoa/New Zealand a global precedent was established in 2017 after thirty years of attempts by local Māori Iwi (tribe/community), when the Whanganui river was awarded the same rights as a living being. The Act acknowledged the river –from the mountains to the sea– as *“an indivisible and living entity, which is simultaneously ‘physical’, understood as a living ecosystem and “spiritual”,* and awarded the Whanganui Iwi the responsibility of protecting the river for its benefit and for the benefit of future generations. (Argyrou and Hummels, 2019)

What does it mean to actively award land-and seascapes the same rights and respect as a living being?



Joar Nango, «Girjegumpi. Samisk arkitekturbibliotek», 2021 Foto: Nasjonalmuseet / Ina Wesenberg

Guardianship

Our previous studies have shown the extent of exploitation of marine resources and the persistence of the extractive industries in their post-oil race to extract and mine, for example, the deep sea floor of the Norskehavet– a unique ecosystem still only partially researched. Coastal Sámi have expert environmental knowledge, mostly transmitted verbally, but together with other small-scale local fishers, experience the threats of commercial fisheries, aquaculture and energy construction projects encroaching on their local natural resources. Although since 2012 Norway’s revised Marine Resources Act gives a specific right for small vessels to fish in particular areas (corresponding to Sámi administration areas), this does not represent the historical fishing rights requested by the Sámi for thirty years, and would be entitled to under international law such as the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Marine Resources Act has been contested in court by large fishing companies and conflicts continue.

Ecosystems are spatial- operating at both vast and minute scales. Inherited legal instruments, ownership structures, practices of categorisation, and division of land and sea pervade our spatial conceptions, intricately interwoven with capitalism and colonisation. Ecological degradation is the result. The ocean is not free of these constraints; trawled, drilled, claimed and licensed, the ocean is also being rigorously planned as if it were a static, two-dimensional plane. Even in seemingly ecologically intact seas such as the Norwegian and the Barents Sea, long-range pollution, microplastics, heavy metals and warming temperatures pose a critical threat to ecosystem stability. Currents are changing. We believe it is vital to develop new approaches to reading, interpreting and communicating contemporary sea space, in order to press for valid alternative modes of human interaction.

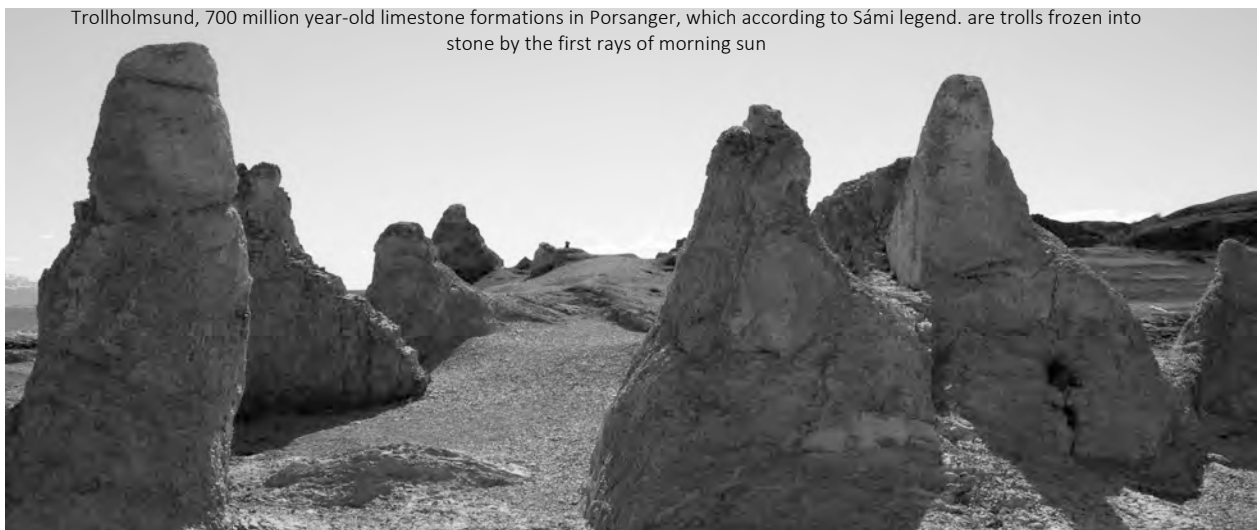
Ocean Literacy

If we were to think of the Ocean as a geographic place with spatial characteristics, protagonists, histories, and desires inscribed into its waters, how could we begin to represent it? How could we position ourselves to interact with it, to tell its stories and to intervene as architects and multi-scale designers?

Ocean Literacy is the individual and collective understanding of the importance of the ocean to humankind (IOC- UN’s Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission). The course offers different ways of approaching ocean space, encouraging dialogue between different types of knowledge and thereby enriching not only ocean literacy in BAS students, but also understandings within current large-scale debates. Becoming more literate in ocean space is one way of overcoming *Sea Blindness*, a way to develop a sense of public stewardship towards the sea, and is a form of creative empowerment for architects towards the other 72% of the earth’s surface.

At a time when the ecological crisis is a global preoccupation, different forms of narration are needed to recount today’s most critical story. Multiple voices have asserted that the current ecological crisis is accompanied by a crisis of the imagination. The fluid, intersecting “unfoldings” of time and place (Joks & Østmo, 2020) of Sámi ontology connect to the way we explore ocean space, offering an inspiring dialogue and challenging our creative potential. Alongside applying the artistic and technical tools we are more familiar with, this course will engage with stories, places and ways of making inspired by indigenous perspectives.

Trollholmsund, 700 million year-old limestone formations in Porsanger, which according to Sámi legend, are trolls frozen into stone by the first rays of morning sun



Course structure

1. Exploratory artistic workshop Nancy Couling APP / DAV / external inputs

The course begins with projecting. In order to structurally include plural forms of understanding, the programme explores intuitive, artistic, technological, scientific and indigenous directions, including the distinct methods particular to each. Intuitive “projective” works produced during the course’s opening workshop are important to explain personal relations to the sea and to forge or reexamine emotional ties.

This is followed by researching the work of contemporary indigenous artists and testing their methods. Through this process, new ways of communicating critical issues and engaging the senses are opened up – some of which have direct influence on the final project direction. The artistic research serves as inspiration- the focus lies in the making of the student’s own interpretation.

Parallel to this work, an introductory lecture on Oceans and Climate is given by Helge Drange, Oceanographer at UiB, and well-known Sámi artist Geir Tore Holm.



The Tidal Sense, Signe Lidén, sculpture and a sounding canvas, several weeks stretched through the intertidal zone in the village of Ramberg, Lofoten. Exhibited at Lofoten International Art Festival 2019

2. Reading seminar Nancy Couling APP/ + KTF

Developing and sharing a background to critical themes important for the course. We dive into and discuss texts around colonisation, the Anthropocene/Capitalocene, indigenous rights movements, the more-than-human, thinking with the sea, and Sámi history and belief systems, aiming to sketch out interwoven stories to be tested visually in the following workshop. Input from Bergen Sámi Association.

3. Narrative Cartography Nancy Couling APP/ DAV / external experts

Mapping is a creative design process. All maps are selective, speculative, and tell a subjective truth. Maps can use geographic indicators as well as non-cartesian forms of recording time and space. Maps tell stories and provide a rich legacy of documentation in many forms. In addition to the creative cartography from previous Ocean Space courses, we will look at examples of indigenous maps, historical and contemporary narrative cartography and develop our own interpretations.

4. Oceanographic Cartography Nancy Couling APP / External QGIS tutor

GIS data is useful to trace the geophysical characteristics of the northern Norwegian fjords and further out to the Arctic Ocean. In this part of the course we plunge into oceanic data, learn to use the open source software QGIS to research available sources and compile thematic layers of oceanic and socio-cultural information. We trace the life and movements of both the natural and human-induced marine protagonists– cod, haddock, King-crab, plankton, pollution, shipping, maritime borders, infrastructure, fishing, oil & gas, monitoring, mammals, birds, wind, currents, ice and water-masses.

This results in a shared cartographic resource. We are conscious of the political dimensions to scanning, mapping, dividing territory, gathering seabed data and selecting forms of representation.



Inuit Fisherman's Map of Crown Prince Islands, Disko Bay, Greenland, 1925. Carved painted driftwood on sealskin

5. Field-trip Troms/Finnmark Nancy Couling APP/ DAV / local experts

Planned for 7-10 days in September. In this course the trip is particularly important to enter first hand dialogue with local communities and to participate in different forms of documentation, mapping and story-telling which will inform the work up until mid-term. Two sites Kåfjord (2 hrs from Tromsø) and Porsangerfjord (2 hrs from Alta) are currently under discussion. There is a possibility of participating in existing research projects being carried out there. Travel costs should be restricted to around €350.

6. Synthesis - Mid-term presentations and reviews Nancy Couling APP/ DAV / invited critics

The synthesis of work so far – findings and inspirations on indigenous seascapes: conflicts, representations and ways forward, will be developed in thematic groups leading up to the mid-term review. At this presentation, smaller groups and individual students should be able to articulate an area of interest for their ongoing explorations in second half of the semester. Exhibition format.



If the Ocean Could Speak, Magnus Gjesdal, Nora Håskjold, Martin Janssen, Vilje Valland. Mid-term reviews, Silo basement Explorations in Ocean Space III, October 2021

7. Project development Nancy Couling APP/ DAV / marine biology /invited guests

After mid-term, time and space is dedicated to further or project development individually or in small groups with ongoing input and support from course teachers, a marine biologist, a curator, project presentations from previous course students, and an introductory video-making course. Regular reading/discussion sessions in relation to project work occur throughout. Students find their own project direction and medium resulting in a wide-range of topics and modes of communication, including video, installations, sound, creative writing, models and drawings. The relevant scale of projects will also vary greatly. We encourage projects ranging from geo-political concerns of the greater Arctic Ocean, to abstract, conceptual explorations, to detailed studies of the local socio-cultural site and marine life and to concrete material contributions such as boat-building or seaweed cladding.

8. Final presentation Nancy Couling APP/ DAV / marine biology /invited guests

The course maintains an open approach to formats for the final presentation, which aims to be presented as an exhibition. Formats discussed with the teachers throughout the semester according to the projects themselves, and students are encouraged to explore and to pursue their own methods of research, project development and narrative communication. Findings feed into the ongoing Index of Terms and Lexicon of Species and Things and further venues/platforms for presentation of the project results in a wider context or at the project site will be investigated.

DIALOGUE

Parallel events and programmes which offer the opportunity to explore synergies and be part of the discussion include:

-Sámi pavilion Venice Art BIENNALE 2022

Office for Contemporary Art Norway (OCA) have commissioned Sámi artists Pauliina Feodoroff, Máret Ánne Sara and Anders Sunna to represent Sápmi, their Sámi homeland, and transform the Nordic Pavilion into the Sámi Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022. This is an historic moment: the first time that Sámi artists are presented exclusively in a national pavilion at the Biennale Arte, and the first time the Sámi are recognised as a nation in a pavilion bearing their name.

- Ocean Fellowship 2022, Ocean Uni, Venice (TBA21 Academy)

Ocean Fellowship 2022 gathers participants to consider our kinship and duties of care toward the Ocean and its relations in multi-species communities and with diverse lifeforms. How can thinking from the Ocean build radically inclusive environments? Indigenous perspectives are brought to the center of our work to define resurgent values, forms, and stories and intertwine knowledges of the past, present, and futures of the Ocean we are all in relation with and dependent upon. Mentor: Harald Gaski, Professor of Sámi Culture and Literature (UiT & Sámi University Guovdageaidnu / Kautokeino) Possible participation in Ocean Fellowship webinars.

- Master studio, landscape academy UiT Tromsø

Exploring the littoral zone with Prof Magdalena Haggärde, 70°N architects, Tromsø. Some shared reviews & visit during field-trip

- Research days in Porsanger, September 2022 (tbc)

Mearrasiidá (Sea Sámi competence center) with invited speakers, including UiT (Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø) and Sámi University of Applied Sciences in Kautokeino.

CONTRIBUTING TEACHERS

Nancy Couling APP (Lead)

Eva Kun & David Rios DAV, with Tom Chamberlain as guest at reviews

Alberto Altes KTF

Mariana Anchini, Marine Biology

Geir Tore Holm, Sámi artist (final project developemtn from November 2022)