

# Forest Disputes: Socially Engaged Art and Forest Science for Understanding Sustainability Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores activist art's potential in promoting environmental awareness and community engagement, drawing from the International Socially Engaged Art Symposium (ISEAS). Focused on a Western Lapland ISEAS event, the study highlights art workshops addressing forest use conflicts facilitated by artist-scientist teams. These workshops offer a secure space for participants to express environmental concerns, fostering creative expression and dialogue. The study suggests that art-based interventions powerfully promote environmental awareness and community engagement by creating safe spaces for collaborative dialogue. Through ISEAS experiences, the paper demonstrates how activist art facilitates meaningful community engagement, fostering a deeper understanding of environmental challenges.

## Introduction

Since 2017, I have been organizing the International Socially Engaged Art Symposium (ISEAS). This project has required a tremendous personal effort but was only possible with the cooperation of many people. In January 2019, I began my doctoral studies at the University of Lapland's Faculty of Arts and Design, with my research topic being ISEAS. I consider the ISEAS my work of art, as I have previously stated (Juhola, 2018; Juhola & Moldovan, 2020).

When I started my research, I decided to bring the ISEAS into a northern context. Previously, I had consistently implemented the ISEAS in my neighbourhood in southern Finland, in Mustio, Raasepori (Juhola, 2018, 2020a, 2020b; Juhola et al., 2020; Juhola, 2021; Juhola et al., 2022). For the ISEAS in Äkäslompolo, we focused on locally topical issues related to the use of natural resources and the theme of mediation. We implemented three art-science interventions at the ISEAS: *The Northern Forest Disputes* and *The Hannukainen Mining Conflict*, which both addressed conflict situations and *The Power of Nature* (Juhola et al., 2022), which was an artistic workshop focused on shamanism and tree connections, to restore participants' relationship with nature. Seventy-four people participated in all three interventions held at the ISEAS in 2020 and 2021. The experience was both challenging and rewarding. I am grateful for the opportunity to have brought the ISEAS to a new context and engaged with many people. The ISEAS symposia are a mix of conversations, yoga, nature walks, sauna evenings, dancing, art-making and discussion. The event catalyzes creative acts and personal empowerment, but it can also bring conflict as any gathering with many people. Collaboration is key, and ethical guidelines must be followed. Conversational art, a form that uses dialogue and communication as a tool, is promoted at the ISEAS. Conversational art takes many forms, such as meditative practices, performance, painting, photography, and walking (Bourriaud, 2002; Gablik, 1995; Kester, 2004; Manresa, 2021).

At ISEAS, the synergy between art and science takes shape as artists and naturalists collaboratively develop a socially engaged art concept centred around a specific predetermined theme. In this instance, the theme was the northern forest disputes. Each participant contributes their unique expertise to the collective effort. For forest scientists, this expertise stems from decades of research

on utilizing Finnish forests. At the same time, artists bring their distinct areas of specialization to the table, from performance art to painting. Lectures by a philosopher and other scholars were given to initiate joint discussions about community, collaboration, and the interplay between art and science. These discussions took place before and while working with community members. With a mentor's help, strangers could collaboratively build an artistic-scientific concept implemented in groups with local participants (Juhola, 2018; Juhola & Moldovan, 2020). In this paper, I examine the collaboration between art and science and its potential as a tool to achieve a deeper and broader understanding of environmental conflicts of forestry. My research question pertains to how arts-based methods can facilitate a trustworthy atmosphere for alleviating eco-anxiety.

## Forestry in Finland

Finland's economy has long relied on forestry, with industrial exploitation beginning in the late 19th century. Today, the felling of Finland's forests serves not only the wood products and paper industries but also produces fabrics, medicines, chemicals, healthy foods, feed, plastics, cosmetics, smart packaging, and biofuel transport (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland, n.d.). To meet its climate goals, Finland must reduce its felling by about one-fifth to around 62 million m<sup>3</sup> by 2035, assuming forest growth remains constant (Lehtonen, 2023). However, disputes often arise over prioritizing forest uses, such as timber production, outdoor recreation, tourism, biodiversity retention, and reindeer herding (Muttillainen et al., 2022; Saastamoinen, 1982). Multiple-use forestry aims to balance these competing demands as different ecosystem services conflict. In effect, human demands for forest resources have exceeded planetary boundaries.

## Theory

My primary goal in the ISEAS interventions was to facilitate the creation of art in collaboration with artists, scientists, and people who participated in workshops on forest disputes, guided by the theories of dialogical aesthetics, socially engaged art, and conversational art. According to Grant Kester (1998, 2004; see also Bourriaud, 2002), art activism is a powerful tool for making social change and creating social justice. Similarly, Gregory Sholette

(2022) points out that the beginning of the 21st century has been an exceptional era for art activism worldwide. Art activism is as vital in protest culture as it was in the 1960s and 70s. Art and science collaborations in organizations hold potential for personal and organisational development, but outcomes are hard to measure. Customized to organizational culture and participant motivation, they can benefit all parties (Schnugg & Song, 2020). The art and science cooperation movement (Art & Science Collaborations, n.d.) has also contributed to activism art. Cooperation between art and science has here played an important role in the ISEAS, as art activism is focused on environmental issues (Juhola et al., 2020; Juhola 2019, 2021; Juhola et al., 2022; Raatikainen et al., 2020). The approaches of the ISEAS workshop were guided by thinking about eco-social equality as part of a broader paradigm of equality, where all life is seen as equal to human life. The Anthropocene perspective (Demos, 2017) thinks that humans have influenced climate change and the mass extinction of species so catastrophically that one can speak of a geological epoch. Eco-justice pedagogy (Martusewicz et al., 2011; Foster et al., 2019) discusses a new approach to how art education can break established notions of human supremacy in relation to the rest of life. After all, we are all dependent on each other. Only humans can change their actions to take other lives into account, and this is precisely where art education and art activism have the opportunity to influence.

Since 2017, curator and researcher Taru Elfving has been organizing small-scale incubators on the island of Seili, where she has invited artists and researchers to think together about planetary and local intertwined challenges and the sustainability of work practices. The starting point for the discussions has been an encounter in the field, i.e., located near the research object and the subject of the dialogue, allowing this encounter to guide and challenge thinking actively. The place thus defines the shared and divergent perspectives that emerge in the group. It creates a material-meaning basis on which those who work with different concepts and methods in the field can have a dialogue. The questions of observation and localized knowledge, which connect art and science in many ways, are cross-examined in relation to what is identified and recognized as communities relevant to work. (Elfving, 2021). Art historian Miwon Kwon (2002) argues that socially engaged art has the potential to affect societal and environmental issues, and to demonstrate its power in the pursuit of a more intense engagement with the outside world. She

sees socially engaged art as more inclusive of non-art spaces, non-art institutions, and non-art issues.

Similarly, Professor Claire Bishop (2012) argues that socially engaged art arises from the artist's desire to influence society and its structures, involving people and communities in a debate, collaboration, or social interaction. For Bishop, the artist is less an individual producer of discrete objects than a collaborator and producer of situations, and the work of art is reconceived as an ongoing or long-term project with an unclear beginning and end. At the same time, the audience is repositioned as a co-producer or participant.

Socially engaged art (SEA) is an intervention brought by an artist through artistic means to change, bring out, and even influence people's way of thinking. It can have activist meanings and political targets. According to Pablo Helguera (2011), "SEA is a hybrid, multi-disciplinary activity that exists somewhere between art and non-art, and its state may be permanently unresolved. SEA depends on actual – not imagined or hypothetical – social action" (p. 8). Community artist and writer François Matarasso (2019) explains how participatory art can help us live through difficult times by enabling us to express pain, anger, and hope, make friends and find allies, imagine alternatives, share feelings, and be accepted. Collaboration with scientists and other artists has opened a new and exciting way of creating my art. The ISEAS has developed to be an activist art event with an impact that has been meaningful for people who have participated (Juhola et al., 2020; Juhola 2019, 2021; Juhola et al., 2022; Raatikainen et al., 2020).

## Methodology

Art is often created by hand and requires physical effort, which aligns with a pragmatic philosophical orientation. Pragmatism, a philosophical perspective that shapes my research, is knowledge based on practice and experience—information that can be understood through one's own experience (Dewey, 2005). The pragmatic approach is not founded on theories but on the individual's active participation and interaction with the world. Vid Simoniti states, "socially engaged art 'embraces' the pragmatic view. To put this point more clearly, I now argue that the existence of good socially engaged artworks favors the pragmatic view, since only this view can explain their artistic value" (Simoniti, 2018, p. 76). In the ISEAS, the art of conversation

plays the greatest role. It is typical for art-based research (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2015, 2018; McNiff, 1998) to use different art forms. Because the ISEAS is based on the fields of expertise of artists and scientists, I have invited and curated varied arts-based methods each year. Typical of art-based research (Jónsdóttir, 2017; Leavy, 2017) is that art has boosted nonverbal knowing and knowing with nature. The ISEAS has always used photography and video to document the experiences of the ten days of the ISEAS. This study follows ethical principles where written research permits have been requested from all participants.

### Case Study Forest Disputes

The Forest Dispute team included four members: forest scientist Ville Hallikainen from the Natural Resources Centre (LUKE), and three artists, including me—the founder of ISEAS, Katja Juhola, and two other artists—Finnish painter Satu Kalliokuusi, as well as Spanish painter and performance artist Misha del Val. The team organized socially engaged art events with the participation

of two local forest owners, researchers from the state-owned forestry company (Metsähallitus) and LUKE, as well as 25 Muonio Wilderness Guide School students divided into two groups. The participants engaged in activities that involved forest science and art. The group explored the forest and its sensory experiences, where each small group created artworks that depicted their understanding of the forest conflict. Every day started and ended with conversations facilitated by me.

On the first day of our program, the participants consisted of twelve students and a teacher, for whom we had carefully organized an immersive six-hour workshop that seamlessly blended the disciplines of art and science. After introducing everyone in the morning, Misha del Val asked the whole group to follow him into the forest (Figure 1). He asked them to listen to the sounds and focus on the sounds that could be heard. When footsteps touched the ground, the wind blew through the treetops. He asked them to focus on the sense of touch, how the wind felt on their faces, and how the ground felt under their feet. How did the ground floor of the forest feel when stepping with the toes



*Figure 1: Muonio Wilderness School students embark on a sensory journey with Misha del Val's expertly guided open meditation, setting the tone for the day's activities. Photo: Touko Hujanen, 2020.*



Figure 2. Part of the installation related to the question:  
*What does forest conflict mean to you?*  
Photo: Touko Hujanen, 2020.



Figure 3. Artistic presentation of how money is stronger  
than biodiversity. Photo: Touko Hujanen, 2020.



Figure 4. Triangle with two sides: scary and joyful.  
Photo: Touko Hujanen, 2020.

and the heel? The exercise ended with Misha asking all the participants to sit or lie quietly in the forest, and to smell the forest with their noses—to put their noses deep against the ground, smell the forest and be fully present with all their senses. I think I even tasted the ground of the forest.

After the sensory opening task, we went to the forest with art materials, and divided participants into four groups. I gave them only 20 minutes to create an artwork depicting, in one way or another, the small group's experience of what the forest conflict meant to them.

One group made a moving mobile strung between two trees with string, with a red-painted mushroom, beard moss, toilet paper, and a red-black painted stone hanging together. The group explained that the conflict meant fear to them, which was represented by the stone; the power of money, which was represented by the toilet paper; the loss of the purity of nature, which was represented by the beard moss; and the narrowing of diversity, which was represented by the red mushroom (Figure 2).

Another group made a scale representing the loss of biodiversity (Figure 3). The third group made a warning triangle, and a tree with loose roots (Figure 4). The fourth group made a small performance in which the narrative followed the forest company's desire to cut down forests, and the feeling of berry and mushroom pickers that their forests are being destroyed. After completing the work, the group discussed together, and the feeling of success was palpable, even though the time was minimal.

After this task, we continued with the same small groups to the forest sites chosen by Hallikainen. He also asked the group members to photograph typical things from each forest site with cameras (Figure 5). During our excursion, we visited three forests with different management approaches, each providing unique insights into the complexities of sustainable forest use. Our first stop was a national park forest that had been protected for a long time, where we marvelled at the sight of hundreds of year-old trees in various stages of growth, along with rotting wood and fallen logs. Hallikainen pointed out a tiny 15-cm-tall pine tree (Figure 6), and asked us to guess its age. We were surprised to learn that it was already 20 years old, and at this growth rate, it would not be able to sequester much carbon from the atmosphere. Hallikainen explained that while carbon is stored in forests that are in their natural state (Figure 7), they no longer function as

carbon sinks. When trees fall, they release carbon, and he emphasized the importance of decaying trees for maintaining biodiversity (WWF, n.d.).

Our next destination was a commercial dry canopy forest where pine trees and reindeer lichen grew. Here, the trees were about three meters tall and the exact age of 20 years. Hallikainen used this example to highlight the importance of light for rapid pine forest growth and carbon sequestration, indicating that forest clearcutting is the best method for achieving this goal. The third forest site was a mixed forest near the river. Hallikainen suggested that thinning cutting is particularly profitable in a forest like this.

Our discussions eventually led us to consider the complex use of forests. Hallikainen invited us to think about forest succession and management schedules from the perspectives of timber production, carbon economy, biodiversity, and outdoor recreation (nature tourism or local users). In environmental matters, plastic and concrete are being replaced due to the serious environmental problems that arise from their use. However, what can replace plastic? Often, the answer is paper. And what about concrete construction? The answer is wood construction which inevitably means harvesting wood from forests. According to Hallikainen, multiple forest use can only achieve some of these goals because our forests are not large enough for all of them, and the only way forward is to reduce consumption. In the last forest destination, del Val asked all of us to choose a tree and hug it with our eyes closed, imagining that this tree represented all the Earth's trees; that we were in contact with every tree in the world through this one tree (Figure 8–11). We gathered into a circle to share our experiences. The participants felt that the exercises had enabled them to express their feelings creatively, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

On the second day, when we were with the next group, we repeated the same activities, except for the small art workshops I had planned. This was due to time constraints. Following the forest visits, Satu Kalliokuusi conducted a collaborative painting workshop at the tepee in the local cafeteria, Karilan Navetta. The participants were encouraged to express their emotions from the day using paint. Once the painting workshop concluded, we returned to the forest to engage in a tree-hugging session led by Misha del Val. I took the lead in facilitating a discussion about the day. The feedback we received from both groups was similar:



*Figure 5. Students photographing typical objects from the forest. They were also guided to imagine how this forest would look after 100 years. Photo: Touko Hujanen, 2020.*



*Figure 6. 20-year-old pine tree in a nature conservation forest. Photo: Touko Hujanen, 2020.*



*Figure 7. Ville Hallikainen lecturing the students about the multiple uses of forests. Photo: Touko Hujanen, 2020.*



*Figure 8–11: Misha del Val guides tree-hugging meditation after visiting the different forest types.  
Photo: Touko Hujanen, 2020.*



A big thank you to everyone for today. It has been, to say the least, versatile and varied from the theory-based studies that we have had so far in other studies. This day of more conscious presence just hit the spot. A day of mixed feelings. And quite a lot has already been said, what I have been thinking myself. The pain of the world is strongly present in me, but today I realised that no matter how much I carry this pain, it does not contribute to anything, but I must be more conscious to find out about things myself and make the actions and changes that I want to see in the world on a micro level myself, but also at the same time to accept that some things are not in my hands, but I can still be the example that shows the direction. (Anonymous participant, 2020, n.p.)

The third workshop took place in the same location as the previous days, but this time it had a more researcher-oriented focus as the state-owned forestry company (Metsähallitus) and LUKE's experts were invited at the suggestion of ISEAS forest researcher Ville Hallikainen, featuring a discussion between local forest activists Lea Kaulanen, and Juha Antikainen. Art's presence was a new concept for the invited experts and researchers. It was important for the experts that they could initially present their own expertise by visiting different forest types and their role as initiators. The Metsähallitus team, consisting of Kirsi-Marja Korhonen, Kristiina Vuopala, and Kari Koivumaa, presented the forests and their management activities, while Rainer Peltola from LUKE talked about ecosystem service research related to berries and mushrooms (Peltola, 2017). The workshop was designed with the same themes as those used for the students. It began with an introductory tour, followed by a sensory exercise led by del Val (Figure 12). The group then drove by car to explore the different types of forests that Metsähallitus had chosen. After spending the day in the forest and discussing governmental forestry use in Lapland, the group returned to the tepee to participate in a painting workshop (Figure 13-17). The workshop involved pairing up researchers and artists to paint a large canvas while reflecting on the day's discussions. This painting was the basis for the artwork for the Rovaniemi art exhibition. It was co-produced by the Forest Dispute team as a large Stella Polaris game imitating an Afrikan Tähti (Figure 18). It also incorporated research knowledge from each of the ISEAS groups. After the painting workshop, I facilitated a conversation in which everyone,

including the forest team members, reflected on the day's activities and feelings.

I feel good. I always thought of being a person who likes to be with people, but being with people and doing something together, creating something together, is in my opinion the highest level of being together, like when you create something new, as a piece of art or a common understanding, that we have made. I am a communicator and I have been doing this work with conflicts for 30 years now; every day I learn something new. And although I am quite good, there is a lot of room for improvement. And this kind of work actually gives you a new kind of perspective that is enjoyable. (Anonymous participant, 2020, n.p.)

## Result and Discussion

In 2020, I received a grant from the Kone Foundation for ISEAS, and now in 2023, the Kone Foundation has introduced a grant program focused on various forest projects. This intervention addresses a crucial issue in our society. It underscores the participants' eagerness to engage in discussions about forests, related threats, and the dissemination of forestry research information. It promotes transparency regarding contemporary forest management practices, our societal objectives, and the decision-makers involved. Artist and researcher Laura Beloff (2020) argues that the natural environment has increasingly been the focus of contemporary artists during the last decade. For example, there has been a visible boost in artistic practices that address the natural environment, biology, biotechnology, and the arts and sciences in general. Art is often intuitive and reflects the reality of its creator. Science is based on facts and, as in this case, on Hallikainen's many decades of career as a forest researcher. In my view, we succeeded in creating an atmosphere where the discussion was easy and created a deeper and broader understanding of the multiple uses of forestry.

In ISEAS, art and science played equal roles, and conversational art was versatile. Science provided knowledge about modern forestry practices, while art offered a creative space for contemplation and exploration of this information. Accordingly, it was possible to create a comfortable environment for dealing with difficult and emotional topics, and



*Figure 12. Members from Metsähallitus (a state-owned forestry company), and Luke (the Natural Resources Institute Finland) engage in a tree-hugging meditation led by Misha del Val. Photo: Touko Hujanen, 2020.*



*Figure 13. Reflective painting done in artist–science pairs. Photo: Touko Hujanen, 2020*



*Figure 14. Reflective painting done in artist–science pairs. Photo: Touko Hujanen, 2020*



Figure 15. Reflective painting done in artist–science pairs. Photo: Touko Hujanen, 2020



Figure 16. Reflective painting done in artist science–pairs. Photo: Touko Hujanen, 2020



Figure 17. Reflective painting done in artist science–pairs. Photo: Touko Hujanen, 2020



Figure 18. The ISEAS exhibition of *Conversation* in Rovaniemi Art Museum 2021. The Forest Dispute team coproduced the work as a large Stella Polaris game imitating an *Afrikan Tähti*. Artists: Katja Juhola and Satu Kalliokuusi. Photo: Katja Juhola, 2021.

provide the participants with the opportunity to share their own points of view. Consequently, my methods are driven by the aspiration of creative individuals and natural scientists from diverse disciplines working together to innovate within communities. Professor Juha Varto aptly notes that artistic activity is recognizable through its creators (Varto, 2017).

Ville Hallikainen's perspective underscores that while approaches such as participatory planning (Boukherroub et al., 2018), and the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) (Kurttila et al., 2000) have led to more structured discussions regarding the diverse needs and perspectives surrounding various forest management methods, they have yet to offer a definitive solution for achieving 'forest peace.' Consequently, he stresses the importance of delving deeper into the viewpoints held by different stakeholders and individuals concerning forest values. Hallikainen posits that community art-based methods may serve as a supplementary 'soft' tool for comprehending multifaceted aspects. At the ISEAS symposium held in Äkäslompolo in August 2020, the fusion of the community art approach with scientific expertise in forestry and forest ecology was tested. This was done as a means to enhance mutual understanding among individuals and groups concerning forestry, and the myriad approaches to forest management (Hallikainen, forthcoming). The key conclusion is that when everyone, including forest researchers and experts, participated in creating art, it established a space where open discussions about challenging issues became possible.

Environmental anxiety is a natural reaction to the severity of the eco-crisis (Pihkala, 2019). With art-based methods, we were able to deal with the emotions caused by the climate crisis and thus, hopefully, ease the anxiety and give people hope to act towards a better future. The students at the Muonio Wilderness Guide School stated that the sensitive art-based approach to the forest that del Val guided them through was something that they could use in the future when guiding tourists on forest trips in the north. The members of Metsähallitus and LUKE saw that art has the potential to approach science-based reality in a different way than the typical. According to them, environmental conflicts are difficult to explain because they are emotional, and scientific proof cannot change reality based on emotions.

Finally, I will say that forest conflicts have often been local, like the Muonio Forest conflict in

Western Lapland, and emotions are strongly involved in it, and it should be. Scientific facts should not be used to suppress emotions. Scientific facts can structure thinking. For example, in Inari, even though we worked there for five years, we didn't solve it with scientific facts; we were only given a few tools at most to structure the matter. In the end, conflicts are resolved by people's conversation, understanding, consideration of feelings, and development of different expressions. (Hallikainen, August 2020, n.p.)

Art brings people who have different opinions closer together, which makes it possible to open a dialogue that can, in the best case, increase the understanding of a person with a contrasting opinion.

The Centre for Artistic Activism shares much knowledge about art and activism (Center for Artistic Activism, n.d.). One of their researchers, Stephen Duncombe, states that

Our current "post-truth" environment also provides fertile ground for artistic activism. Even for those committed to telling the truth, it has become clear that the simple presentation of facts falls upon deaf ears, and if facts are to be heard and heeded, they need to be made into engaging stories and compelling images that capture attention and resonate with ways people make sense of their world. (Duncombe, 2018, p. 2)

The ISEAS event highlighted the participants' concerns and lack of trust in the decision-makers. The locals participating in the events were grateful but, at the same time, said that they felt that the representatives from Metsähallitus were lying and suppressing information. They also experienced frustration for their limited influence:

This kind of interaction is really important to me, because, of course, my fears are partly ignorance and incomprehension. But yes, I am also aware that my concern is well-founded. Nice to hear that Metsähallitus' interest is not just in attacking old forests and turning them into pulp and toilet paper for the Chinese.

For me, this day has concretized the reasons why I left social sciences and came here to study and to see things from the grassroots level and not from an academic ivory tower. I have the same feeling that if we can't even in Finland,

which is one of the best societies in the world, take care of our natural diversity, how can we get such a big ship to turn as quickly as it should turn in relation to the boundary conditions of climate change and the time spans in which those changes should take place. (Anonymous participant, 2020, n.p)

Still, as an artist, researcher, and activist, I cannot help but think about how much my own work matters. It seems that there is so much information and disinformation that so many things are drowned and lost in this flood.

Grant Kester (2018) pondered the same thing:

In most of the projects that I have researched, moments of agonism, dissensus or confrontation co-exist with moments of provisional consensus or empathy. These are better understood as phases within an unfolding process, than as singular experiences. (Hagoort & Kester, 2018, p.4)

When discussing social art practices, the outcomes can encompass personal experiences but also extend to a broader influence on social discourse. This influence is often expressed through various mediums, including published research papers, documentary recordings such as the ISEAS video documentary published on the ISEAS webpage ([www.iseasfinland.com](http://www.iseasfinland.com)), as well as photographs and art exhibitions, as seen in the Rovaniemi Art Museum Korundi. The feedback that I received from the museum was very positive. According to the museum, the ISEAS exhibition 'Conversations' was well-received, with many visitors spending a lot of time there.

Anyhow, the most important result of this event was to acknowledge that there is no way to satisfy all demands and desires for forests. You always must make choices and prioritize needs. Only by reducing consumption can we achieve a more sustainable future.

At the ISEAS, socially engaged art is based on working together. It is guided by conversations, where the artist also acts as a mediator of the conversations. Discussions can occur in the middle of working together or as reflections, where the subject raised by the artist is discussed in a safe atmosphere. The workshop spanned approximately 6 hours for each of the three groups. Through a collaborative effort between art and science, participants gained a deeper understanding of the theme,

specifically forest disputes. Art provided a means to tap into personal emotions, as it evoked concerns about potential losses, such as one's cherished berry and mushroom patches, or the decline of biodiversity. In parallel, research findings added practical insights, exemplified by the discovery of a tiny, 10-centimeter pine tree already twenty years old. The post-workshop reflection discussions, which had become customary, held significant value. This is because, at its finest, art liberates individuals to comprehend the situation at hand from a holistic perspective.

According to Matarosso (2019), humanity involves awareness; we do not suffer silently but ask why we suffer. We invest in the meaning of our internal and external experiences. We consciously and unconsciously express important beliefs, values, morals, and experiences as we do. We are empowered when others see things as we do and feel threatened when they do not. Because our beliefs, values, and thoughts are invisible and intangible, we create, for example, art to give them an external, mediated existence (Matarosso, 2019). This is precisely how the meaning of activist art is summarized; I have allowed the community members to express and illustrate their feelings about important things.

## Conclusion

This article is inspired by the potential of artists assuming the role of activists. I scrutinized a workshop at the intersection of art and science, focusing on the Forest Disputes project. Three artists and a forest scientist were integral to the initiatives.

At the ISEAS, the fusion of art and science results from intensive communal living. In support of the success of artistic endeavors, I extended invitations to mentors to reside with us, and experts from diverse fields were welcomed to deliver lectures to participants. The concept of conversational art in the ISEAS has been delineated as both a research method and a socially engaged working approach. Additionally, I elucidated how art-based methods can foster dialogue, and the nonverbal expression of sentiments and values linked to environmental conflicts. Emphasis was placed on the significance of cultivating group dynamics for the triumph of an art event. This exploration illustrates this by facilitating ISEAS workshops, establishing a conducive environment for addressing challenging and emotional subjects becomes feasible. These workshops serve as a platform, allowing participants to share

their distinctive perspectives. Consequently, my methodological approach is molded by the collective aspiration of creative individuals and natural scientists across various disciplines to innovate collaboratively within community settings.

I recounted the experiences realized in these art workshops, detailing expressions of fears and threats associated with utilizing natural resources. Further research is imperative to comprehend how to perpetuate the process initiated by the artist in situations where the artist is no longer available.

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