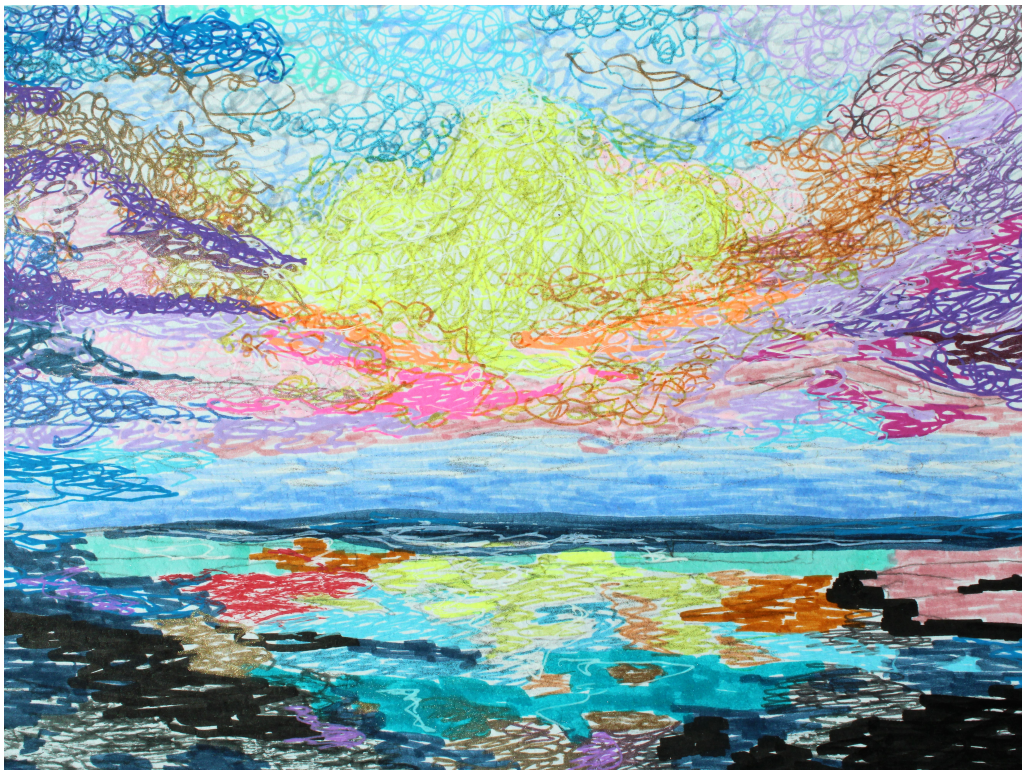
Head, Hands, Heart, and being Heard in an environmental art group

- A safe space for climate emotions

Vera Brandes



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Head, Hands, Heart, and being Heard in an environmental art group - A safe space for climate emotions

Vera Brandes

Supervisor: Hanna Bergeå, SLU, Department of Urban and Rural Development
Examiner: Sofie Joosse, SLU, Department of Urban and Rual Development

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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Urban and Rural Development
Division of Environmental Communication

Abstract

This thesis investigates artistic expression in a community as a way of processing climate emotions. Even though climate emotions are widespread, they are often not openly discussed. Having an accepting community can facilitate expressing emotions, which can be beneficial for overall wellbeing. The object of study is an environmental art group, whose practices are analysed with the educational framework of Head, Hands, and Heart. Head, Hands, and Heart is a normative approach to learning, where engaging cognitive abilities, emotions and psychomotor abilities together achieve a deeper form of learning. Semi-structured interviews and participant observations were used to study members' experiences in the art group. The findings uncover key elements of the art group, which are creating environmental art, expressing emotions, and having an accepting community. The Head is represented by reflections on environmental topics, the Hands by creating art and the Heart by sharing emotions. Additionally, the community of the group is essential, as well as its uniqueness as a societal safe space for emotions, which are perceived as rare. The discussion illustrates how Head, Hands, and Heart deepens members' experiences in the art group. Based on the finding of the importance of community, an expansion of the theoretical framework is proposed. A fourth dimension, being Heard, acknowledges how community benefits each domain of Head, Hands, and Heart. Overall, this study contributes to the wider discourse on climate emotions, with a focus on the benefits of artistic expression in combination with having a community.

Keywords: Climate emotions, Community, Environmental art, Head, Hands and Heart

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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem formulation

“Climate is culture” – this is how artist David Buckland describes the relation between climate change and society (Buckland 2012:1). While climate change is a result of modern cultures, culture can also positively shape the future of earth’s climate. Climate change can be seen as a cultural and societal phenomenon, which is reshaping humans’ relationship to nature and the environment (Galafassi et al. 2018a). One expression of the cultural dimension of climate change is the emergence of environmental art. Environmental art as a field of art grew out of the environmental movement of the 1960s and 70s and has steadily become more and more widespread since the 2000s (Thornes 2008). Environmental art can open up for reflexivity, inspiration and exploration and it provides an emotional access to climate change (Bentz & O’Brien 2019).

Many people around the world experience strong emotions related to the climate crisis (Ojala 2016; Tschakert et al. 2023; Zaremba et al. 2023). The most common climate emotions tend to be fear, sadness, anxiety, guilt, and hope (Pihkala 2022). Even though emotional reactions are a common and appropriate response to climate change, sometimes expressing these emotions is met with societal disapproval (Zaremba et al. 2023). These social norms can vary between countries and cultures, but studies in the Swedish context tend to confirm a hesitation to openly discuss climate emotions (Ojala 2012, 2016). However, talking about emotions in an understanding environment can have positive effects on mental wellbeing (Boldt & Paul 2010; Zaremba et al. 2023). Thus, creating or finding a community where one feels comfortable talking about climate emotions is important. Especially engaging in environmental art can be a way to express climate emotions when words fail, or function as a mediator to facilitate talking about difficult topics (Bentz & O’Brien 2019).

1.2 Case description

Sharing emotions through art can be beneficial to processing these emotions (Boldt & Paul 2010). However, as safe climate emotion spaces seem to be rare, it is important to study those that exist. I choose an environmental art group in Sweden, which connects people through discussions and sharing experiences and emotions. While a lot of participants are students and/or young adults, they are open for anybody to join. They connect over their mutual interest in environmental topics and doing art as a hobby. Everybody is free to practice whichever artform they please, and examples range from writing literature or music to painting and drawing or making collages (see Figure 1).

Sessions are held biweekly, and every month has one environmental topic as a focus. This theme is chosen by the organizers of the group, who facilitate sessions. A common structure of the about 2-hour sessions is an introduction of the topic with discussions, followed by time for everyone to dedicate to their individual art. In the end, the group comes back together and shares their created artworks. Conversations weave together reflections about presented artworks, emotions related to the focus topic and personal experiences. How many people attend varies from session to session, and since themes change every month, each session is different. Usually, sessions can have between two or three to up to ten participants. The art club was led by its founder and co-founder for over one year, who have given over to two new organizers. At the time of my research, they had been leading the group for a few months.

I chose this art group as an object of study primarily for two reasons, academic, as well as practical. Firstly, the art group represents a societal space for climate emotions, which can be difficult to come by. They combine many relevant aspects, such as using art as an imaginative and light-hearted way to mediate environmental topics and related thoughts and emotion. Additionally, they intentionally come together to exchange experiences and create new ones together. Thus, they create a community for climate emotions and their artistic expression. Secondly, the art group presented itself as a feasible research object, because it does not have restrictions to membership, and is located in the town I live in. Thereby I could join as a participant and observer and become a part of their community for a time.

The art group has a wide and inclusive way of understanding art and the environment. Art is understood loosely, it is not based on skill or quality, but rather seen as a form of active, creative engagement. Under environmental topics they group together sustainability, socio-environmental issues and climate change and the climate crisis, which are used interchangeably. I will use the terms art and environment in alignment with how the art group interprets them.

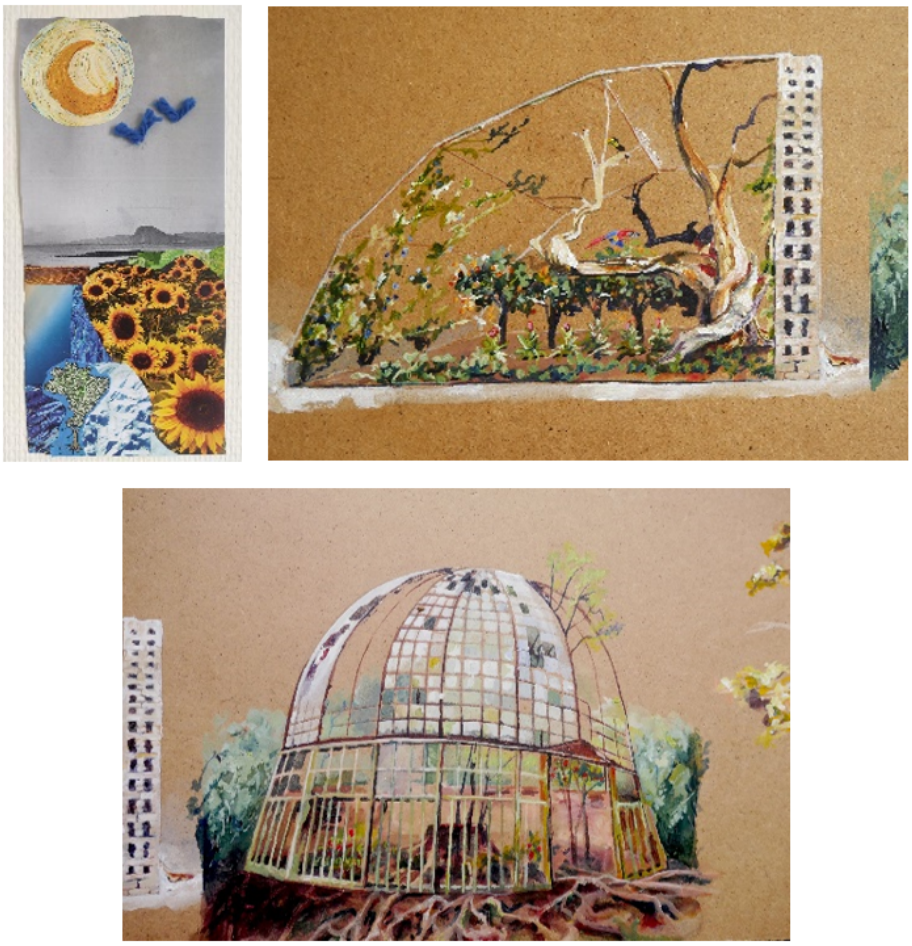

Figure 1: Examples of art pieces from members of the art club, depicted with their consent

1.3 Research aim

The aim of this research is to study a community that encourages artistic expression as a way to emotionally process environmental issues. The individual experiences of people who attend sessions of the art group, called members or participants, are the object of study. I approach the art group as an example of a humanistic climate response, drawing on Galafassi et al. (2018a), who frame people as a solution to climate change. In order to analyse their experiences more in detail, I will apply the theory of Head, Hands, and Heart. The theory describes how people learn more deeply when they not only engage their cognitive abilities, but also do something practical with their hands and attach emotions to what they are learning (Gazibara 2013). My research is led by the following research questions.

1. How do participants experience engaging in the environmental art group?

2. How can the framework of Head, Hands, and Heart expand the understanding of participants' experiences?

The first question functions as my main research question; it guides my data collection process and leads to the core of my findings. The second question introduces the angle of Head, Hands, and Heart to the findings and gains importance in the discussion.

The thesis is made up of the following sections: Firstly, a background section provides an overview of environmental art and how it connects to communication. Then, it describes the relevance of climate emotions and the benefits a group can bring by fostering a feeling of community. Secondly, the Head, Hands, and Heart framework is explained more in detail and how it is applied in art workshops and environmental and sustainability education. The third section describes my methodology (interviews and participant observation), data analysis, and reflections on my data collection process. Then, the results give an account of the experience in the art group, grouped after Head, Hands, and Heart, as well as other characteristics such as their community, and limitations of the art group. The findings are discussed with a focus on climate emotions and community. The role of Head, Hands, and Heart for the group, with a proposed expansion by being Heard, is discussed. Lastly, the conclusion answers the research questions.

2. Background

2.1 Environmental art

Environmental art refers to a multitude of art forms, which all broadly engage with topics around the environment, nature, and climate change (Thornes 2008). Environmental art encompasses, but is not limited to, literature, theatre, music, dance, painting, photography, installations, film, and sculpture. Galafassi et al. (2018a) describe how the academic understanding of environmental art has developed from a tool to raise awareness to a transformative space for imagination and community. Art can offer an entry point to talking about climate and related emotions, which otherwise can be difficult to talk about (Bentz & O'Brien 2019). Either by making environmental art oneself or by viewing and experiencing it, art can inspire to explore alternative ideas and change perspectives (Yusoff & Gabrys 2011; Vandaele & Stålhammar 2022). Art is often ambiguous and open for interpretation, which invites reflections on its meaning and the topics it portrays (Roosen et al. 2018). Perhaps conversations are sparked, in which hearing different meanings and opinions can expand own views. The strength of art lies in deepening questions and creating a space to explore these questions (Galafassi et al. 2018a). Art is free to challenge and be controversial, it can express what sometimes might not be possible to be said with words (Bentz & O'Brien 2019). Furthermore, art and emotions are strongly related, art stems from emotions and simultaneously evokes emotions (Nurmis 2016). Thereby, art can facilitate developing an emotional connection to environmental topics (Bentz & O'Brien 2019). Being emotionally invested gives a motivation to stay engaged with environmental topics (Roosen et al. 2018). Additionally, art sparks inspiration and engages human senses, which can develop an embodied knowing of climate change (Roosen et al. 2018; Kaufmann et al. 2023).

2.2 Art as environmental communication

Art as environmental communication is often contrasted to scientific climate communication or information campaigns (Roosen et al. 2018; Kaufmann et al.

2023). Rational, science-based communication campaigns are criticized for often not being inspiring and motivating, not engaging emotions, and not creating a personal connection to environmental topics (Roosen et al. 2018). Colombo et al. (2023) write about the knowledge-action gap, where knowledge about environmental issues does not automatically lead to individuals taking action. Kaufmann et al. (2023) criticize information campaigns for falling into this trap and not being successful in changing behaviour. Art is promoted as an alternative communication method, as it provides an emotional access rather than appealing to rationality (Kaufmann et al. 2023).

Art as environmental communication has instrumental and constitutive aspects. Some approaches to art focus more on one or the other. The instrumental side of communication is purpose-focused, it uses language and non-verbal cues to achieve a goal, like persuading, demanding, or alerting (Pezzullo & Cox 2018). Communication from a constitutive angle shapes and negotiates meanings and values. It might draw on certain perspectives and beliefs and can influence how environmental issues are approached, for example as threats or as chances. The instrumental side of environmental communication sees art as a tool for potentially motivating behaviour change. Burke et al.'s (2018) study on environmental art as a communication tool can be evaluated as an example of an instrumental approach. They describe viewing art as a strategy to evoke emotional reactions with the goal of potentially motivating people to rethink and change their behaviour. Roosen et al. (2018) take a psychological perspective on art as climate communication and show primarily instrumental aspects, but also constitute ones. On the instrumental side they describe art as a communication strategy which can be more effective in motivating action by evoking emotions than strictly scientific communication. They also discuss art and communication constitutively by saying that its combination inspires and invites reflection. This description goes more onto the level of beliefs and attitudes. An example of a constitutive approach to environmental art as communication is a study by Galafassi et al. (2018b). They apply art as a medium to rediscover and negotiate what climate change means. Through art practices they let participants reimagine the climate crisis and its future. In my research, I take a constitutive approach to communication and art, because I think it is more suitable for my topic. I study environmental art as a practice which fosters interactions and builds connections based on shared emotions and experiences.

2.3 Community and art

Art can bring people together and connect them over shared passions or interests. Finding such a community can be beneficial for people in different ways. One common research object are art therapy groups, which are relevant in this thesis to

the extent that they represent people coming together in a group to work out emotions through art. Boldt and Paul (2010) studied an art therapy group at a university. They saw that students feeling alone are more vulnerable to anxiety and depression, but in the group, they can find acceptance and support. The art practice functions as an exploration of self through the senses. The focus is not on the quality of the art, but rather on its function for self-expression and communication. Boldt and Paul (2010) concluded that engaging in the group helps students with their mental health, because they do not feel alone in their struggles.

Collective art practices can also be used as a tool for self-exploration while building a community (Van Katwyk & Seko 2019). Van Katwyk and Seko (2019) invited youth to explore what resilience and well-being meant for them and used art to spark discussions between them. The art puts participants' subjective experiences in focus. Through their exchanges, participants shaped a safe space for socializing and creating together in a welcoming and positive atmosphere. They emphasized that the group became a community they built, which was important for them, as it brought a sense of belonging, solidarity, and meaningful participation.

Bublitz et al. (2019) identify four characteristics of a community. The first one is membership, which entails a feeling of belonging and also clarifies who is part of the group and who is not. Secondly, having an influence and feeling like one can make a difference in the group is important. The third factor is integration, which means that members benefit from the group and the group benefits from their membership. Bublitz et al. (2019:316) describe this relation as a "reciprocal fulfillment of needs". Lastly, members build an emotional connection by sharing values, stories, and experiences. The art group I study exhibits these four characteristics and therefore qualifies as a community.

2.4 Climate emotions

It is common that people feel a wide range of emotions in regard to environmental issues, which are often contradictory and difficult to process (Pihkala 2022). Climate emotions describe affective reactions to topics related to climate change. Zaremba et al. (2023) emphasize that strong climate emotions are an appropriate and adaptive reaction to climate change. These emotions can be layered over each other and vary in their intensity (Pihkala 2022). For example, climate anxiety and depression are the stronger variations of fear and worry. In academic literature on climate change, the most discussed emotions seem to be fear, worry, anxiety, sadness and grief, guilt or shame, and hope and empowerment (Ojala 2012; Pihkala 2022). Pihkala (2022) offers a detailed account of the wide range of climate

emotions, a few are mentioned here: disappointment, powerlessness, regret, betrayal, disillusion, jealousy, determination, pride, belonging, and compassion.

Some emotions, which are inherent to the climate crisis are linguistically represented with creations of new words. Glenn Albrecht coined the term "solastalgia" as a core concept of climate emotions (Albrecht et al. 2007). It draws on the idea of nostalgia, which originally describes the yearning for their home by people who had been forced to leave it (Albrecht et al. 2007). The beginning of the word solastalgia refers to solace, the contentment or support one feels when being at home. In solastalgia however, this solace of home is lost, due to the place called home changing in the face of climate change. Thus, solastalgia describes the feeling of longing for a home that does not exist anymore, or that is currently changing, even though one is still in that home. Like the meaning of nostalgia broadening, the term solastalgia has also developed. It is still often used in its original definition as a place-based sadness but is has grown to sometimes also describe wider forms of ecological grief (Pihkala 2022). Tschakert et al. investigated solastalgia in Australia, where people shared "places of the heart" (2023:6) and their interwoven emotions of grief and hope. They found that many people experience an emotional tension between different feelings, where seemingly contradictory feelings are mixed together. These emotions can be sadness over the climate crisis, while still feeling hopeful for the future, or pride for a home that is layered with anger over it being harmed by climate change. Feeling these emotions can be taxing and isolating. Sharing loss and grief with others helped interviewees learn to accept these feelings and that facing emotions collectively can help share their burden (Tschakert et al. 2023).

The coping strategies for climate emotions can vary. Ojala (2012) worked with young Swedish people, who were in their late childhood to early adulthood. Whether it is in school or higher education, learning about climate change is an emotional process (Ojala 2012). Some of their interviewees met climate change and related feelings with avoidance, by denying problems and downplaying their seriousness. Some reported distracting themselves, not talking about it to distance themselves from uncomfortable emotions, or, for example, avoiding climate related news. Pihkala (2022) also lists numbness as a climate emotion, in the sense that emotions are repressed, and people meet climate change with a self-constructed apathy. Another coping mechanism is to seek out the support of others, as often young people feel alone with their thoughts (Ojala 2012). However, social norms might form barriers to reaching and sharing emotions. Ojala (2016) refers to an example in Norway where social norms around talking about the climate crisis often inhibited citizens to express strong climate emotions. They felt like they could not express hopelessness, powerlessness, or worry due to norms about appearing to be

in control. Similarly, Ojala (2016) saw restraint in their interviewees to openly address climate emotions, even though interviewees imagined a benefit for themselves in coping with their emotions if they had a safe space to share them. Those that did express their climate emotions reported often being met with silence or avoidance, which in turn made them feel unheard. Experiencing expressing climate emotions as a taboo made interviewees feel like their feelings were unvalued and unimportant.

Zaremba et al. (2023) came to similar conclusions in a study with Polish adults. Environmentally concerned interviewees felt a societal pressure to not talk about their climate emotions, as others disapproved of hearing about typically negative emotions. They often felt misunderstood and alone with their thoughts. Some participants reacted by hiding their emotions in order to maintain relationships with family or friends and avoiding conflict by staying silent. Some coped by limiting their social circle to friends who share their environmental views, or by self-censoring their opinions in other social settings. Interviewees drew positive emotions out of relationships where they were met with mutual environmental interest and understanding. Becoming part of a community helped them to stay engaged in times of doubt and made them feel empowered to continue. Sharing their concerns with others who understood improved their well-being. Collective action therefore might reduce distress and provide a sense of purpose (Zaremba et al. 2023).

To summarize, collective environmental art ties together climate emotions and community building. There is extensive literature on environmental art itself and on its connections to emotions. Additionally, there is a growing discussion focusing on climate emotions, their expressions and meaning for people's lives. Some literature combines art and communities, for example in art therapy groups or collective art performances. Still, based on my literature research, there seems to be a research gap on environmental art groups. Thus, some combinations of aspects of my research are well examined, but the combination of all three factors together, meaning environmental art groups, is underexplored. Here, my study contributes to investigating how environmental art and community come together to create a space for exchange on climate emotions.

3. Theoretical framework: Head, Hands, and Heart

3.1 Head, Hands, and Heart

The theoretical framework Head, Hands, and Heart stems from the field of education and goes back to Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), a Swiss pedagogue and educator (Horlacher 2018). It describes a normative learning approach which connects cognitive (Head), psychomotor (Hands) and affective (Heart) domains of learning. It is applied in a variety of learning environments, which predominantly include schools and higher education institutions, but also workshops for professionals or broader lifelong learning situations (Gazibara 2013; Ivanaj et al. 2014). Head, Hands, and Heart offers an alternative to a more traditional understanding of knowledge acquisition, which focuses mainly on humans' cognitive functions (Gazibara 2013). It acknowledges and emphasizes the importance of environment, bodily sensations, emotions, and spirituality for learning. Moreover, Head, Hands, and Heart is a student focused, holistic approach which contributes to creating a stimulating learning environment. Learners are recognized as individuals who learn differently and who have varying needs to achieve a successful learning experience. Learning is understood as a social practice and the role of the school as a community, as well as family, friends, and other support systems, are accredited in the learning process (Gazibara 2013). In Head, Hands, and Heart, learning is a co-created process in a social setting, which builds on previous knowledge. Thereby it challenges the view that learning happens solitarily.

The underlying worldview sees the learner as an active agent interacting with the world around them through their body (Gazibara 2013). Learning is not understood as one directional, with the learner only taking up knowledge from their surroundings. Rather, learning is an exchange between the learner and the world around them. Their body, emotions, and experiences are grounded in their world, which they learn from and interact with. This view goes away from viewing students as sponges, which soak up knowledge that is presented to them. It rather

attributes them an active role in their learning process (Gazibara 2013). Gazibara summarizes the quintessence of Head, Hands, and Heart: “Theoretical knowledge is not acquired only by the head, but simultaneously by the heart, hands and all senses, even the whole body.” (2013:75). The theory of Head, Hands, and Heart does not follow an order of priority, there is equal focus and importance on all three domains (Gazibara 2013).

The Head represents what traditionally is considered the sole domain of learning (Gazibara 2013). In this framework however, it is part of a trinity of learning domains, which all interact and in unity produce a learning experience. Perception, memory, imagination, thought, and language are attributed to the sphere of the Head. Academic studies and understanding of abstract, theoretical problems also fall into this category (Sipos et al. 2008). Most often the content of learning, for example about environmental issues, is represented by the Head.

The Hands describe any kind of physical activity or practical skills which accompany and support the learning process (Gazibara 2013). Typical examples are engaging in sports, music, or arts (Sipos et al. 2008). Olsen et al. (2024) describe very practical actions like painting, and also include more abstract activities, like taking action by attending a protest. Gazibara (2013) emphasizes that the body allows humans to experience the world through sensory experiences, which forms the basis of all learning. Thus, learning is mediated by the entire body and not just the brain. Moreover, creativity, intelligence, and thinking are not seen as purely cognitive processes, thus in the domain of the Head, but they are understood as bodily experiences. Therefore, the Hands are not only part of learning, but enable and enhance learning (Gazibara 2013).

The Heart relates to all types of emotions and postulates that learning is affected by feelings (Gazibara 2013). When strong emotions are involved in the learning process, the learner tends to give more value and importance to the content. Thus, one can remember facts better when they are connected to feelings. Gazibara (2013) recognizes that these emotions can be pleasant and unpleasant, and attributes value to both for the learning process. Sipos et al. (2008) connect a potential for behaviour change to affective learning, meaning that an emotional connection might spark more incentive for taking action. Values, attitudes, morals, faith, and a sense for right and wrong are also linked to the domain of the Heart (Gazibara 2013). According to Head, Hands, and Heart learning, good learning encourages and sparks emotions instead of avoiding them. Additionally, emotions are seen as an integral part of learning and not as a bonus option.

When these three domains come together, a holistic and sustainable learning experience is created (Figure 2). Examples range from classroom teaching to community projects. One example by Olsen et al. (2024) starts with Heart, in the form of eco anxiety, which can propel somebody to learn more about the climate crisis (Head) and culminates in them taking action by becoming more active as a climate activist (Hands). Another example is that of a community garden, where all three domains are strongly interlinked (Olsen et al. 2024). People come together to engage in the practical activity of gardening (Hands), discuss their planting (Head), and connect with the more-than-human world (Heart) through the physical engagement with the soil, animals, plants, and fellow humans. To summarize, Head, Hands, and Heart is an educational principle which highlights the unity of cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor learning in a social setting.

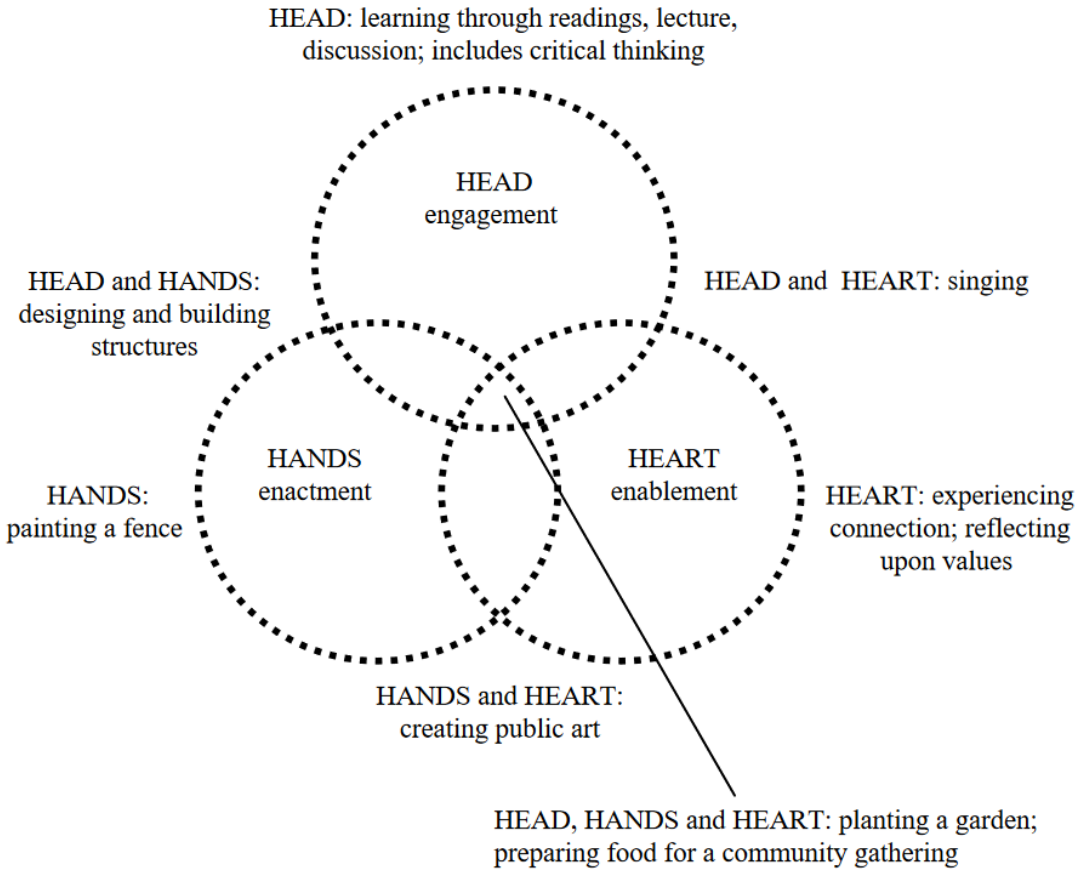

Figure 2: Venn diagram of examples of Head, Hands, and Heart in sustainability education, depicted with the consent of the authors Sipos et al. 2008:75

3.2 Head, Hands, and Heart in environmental education

While Head, Hands, and Heart is applied in a multitude of educational fields, its branch in sustainability and environmental education is most relevant for this thesis and will therefore be explored more in depth. One central pedagogy in environmental education seems to be transformative (sustainability) learning (Sipos et al. 2008; Olsen et al. 2024). Head, Hands, and Heart is the central principle of transformative learning, which is a transdisciplinary, social approach to learning (Olsen et al. 2024). Its objective is to make learning a personal experience, which supports growth in knowledge, skills, and attitudes around sustainability matters (Sipos et al. 2008:69). Transformative learning fosters deep understanding, and involves reflection on social, cultural, and institutional roles in environmental topics (Olsen et al. 2024). Thus, transformative learning emerges from existing structures while it also contributes to changing them in a long-term and effortful process.

The literature on Head, Hands, and Heart in environmental education often puts an emphasis on the role of emotions and thereby the learning domain of the Heart (Ivanaj et al. 2014; Olsen et al. 2024). Olsen et al. (2024:14) describe emotions as intra-actions, as they are experienced as well as acted out, and created in relation with the human and more-than-human world. Common emotions that young people feel regarding the climate crisis are anxiety, frustration overwhelm, grief, guilt, and hope (Olsen et al. 2024). All emotions are considered valuable for transformative learning and hopeful and joyful emotions can coexist with sad and anxious emotions, representing the range and complexity of feelings. This approach sees emotions as a crucial part of learning about the environment and related topics and says that educational institutions should be places for emotions (Olsen et al. 2024). Especially in environmental education, emotions should be openly addressed and actively given space to be expressed. In order to invite a spectrum of emotions, Olsen et al. (2024) propose creating a space for negative emotions, while also approaching them with a positive outlook.

3.3 Head, Hands, and Heart and environmental art

Ivanaj et al. (2014) and Renowden et al. (2022) both present an example similar to the case of this thesis, which is applying Head, Hands, and Heart in art-based sustainability workshops. Both studies organized environmental workshops following Head, Hands, and Heart, which encouraged participants to engage and approach the topics in an artistic way. Ivanaj et al. (2014) held several workshops for students and professionals in a variety of fields. Participants drew or painted in

relation to what they learned about different topics, such as the environmental crisis, cooperation, team spirit, and entrepreneurship (Ivanaj et al. 2014:32). Renowden et al. (2022) held biodiversity-themed workshops in a community park where participants were encouraged to connect and relate to nature through photography, drawing, painting, and making collages.

Art is presented as a fitting tool for Head, Hands, and Heart in environmental education, because it provides an alternative access to complex topics which inherently engages the Hands and the Heart (Renowden et al. 2022). In workshops, Renowden et al. (2022:528) observed that participants could relate emotionally to the nature around them through the joy and empathy of engaging in art inspired by nature. Thus, art can aid in achieving deep learning by integrating the Hands and the Heart into a learning experience which otherwise might be limited to the Head (Renowden et al. 2022).

Ivanaj et al. (2014) value art as a mediator for emotions and passion through creativity. They see art as holding emotional knowledge, represented in the learning domain of the Heart, with the possibility to imagine different pathways and futures. Furthermore, art can help to understand complex environmental topics via emotional pathways (Ivanaj et al. 2014). Thereby, art applied to learning with Head, Hands, and Heart facilitates not only knowing about, but also embodying sustainability.

The educational theory Head, Hands, and Heart is fitting for the case presented in this thesis for several reasons. Firstly, the art group emerged from an environmental art course at a university. In addition, the art group is situated in the context of an educational institution, and it reflects values of this institution, such as transdisciplinary study, student-centred learning and a topical focus around sustainability and environment. Therefore, even though the art group does not primarily follow educational purposes, it operates in and is related to a wider educational background. Secondly, Head, Hands, and Heart also applies to looser understandings of learning environments, its application is not limited to traditional learning processes such as teaching in schools (Gazibara 2013). Gazibara (2013) writes about lifelong learning, meaning learning in all situations, to which I count attending sessions of the art group. As the different examples presented show, Head, Hands, and Heart is a versatile framework, which can be applied to a multitude of settings. Especially the art-based, environmental workshops Ivanaj et al. (2014) and Renowden et al. (2022) conducted are relatively similar to the art group and illustrate that Head, Hands, and Heart is a viable approach to these types of learning experiences. Lastly, Head, Hands, and Heart describes key elements of the art group, as its members discuss environmental topics (Head), engage with

them artistically (Hands) and share and process emotions (Heart). Thereby, Head, Hands, and Heart is a fitting lens to holistically analyse how participants experience engaging in the art group.

4. Methods

4.1 Data collection

I used a combination of qualitative methods, with my primary source of data being semi-structured interviews, complemented by data from participant observations. I conducted participant observations at two consecutive meetings of the art group, and I held 6 interviews with different members of the group.

My research questions are concerned with people's experiences, beliefs, and feelings; thus, an appropriate method is interviews (Robson & McCartan 2016). They give a space for interviewees to reflect and share their thoughts. For observing their interactions and temporarily becoming part of the group, participant observations are fitting. The combination of both allowed me to generate complementary data. I kept a field diary, in which I took notes by hand during the participant observations and interviews. The purpose of the field diary was to take immediate and detailed account of my observations. I copied my notes into a digital format and added reflections on the interactions. Any other ideas, thoughts, or reflections I had during the research process were also documented in the field diary. Whenever I did not have my field diary at hand, I took voice notes or written notes on my phone and transferred them afterwards.

With my choice of methods, I took an ethnography-inspired approach to my data collection. Traditionally, an ethnographic study is about a culture and social organization of a group (Robson & McCartan 2016). The researcher aims to integrate into the group and participate in daily life and cultural activities, often for several months or years. In my research, the art group is the social group under study. By attending their sessions, I could observe them and describe their interactions, while also partaking in their activities. However, the scope of the thesis sets a time limit, which restricts the extent of ethnographic depth to my research. Therefore, I used ethnographic tools such as immersing into a group and keeping a field diary and adapted them to the frame of a master thesis.

My research follows a social constructivist worldview, which is common and fitting for qualitative methods (Creswell & Creswell 2018). A constructivist approach postulates that individuals have a subjective meaning of the world around them, which is gained through interactions and informed by historical and social norms (Creswell & Creswell 2018:46). This kind of research focuses on participants' views and experiences in order to study their personal understanding of the research object, in my case, being a member of an environmental art group.

4.2 Participant observations

I conducted two participant observations following the rhythm of sessions of the art club. The first participant observation served as an introduction to the group. I took a participant as observer role, which is characterized by declaring the intention as a researcher from the beginning and actively participating in the group's activities while also observing (Robson & McCartan 2016:325). For me, this role meant engaging in the discussions and artistic practices of the group while taking handwritten notes with the consent of all people present. My data from the participant observations consist of handwritten notes on observations of the group and informal conversations. I took descriptive notes following Robson & McCartan (2016:328) with differentiations for analytical notes. After each participant observation I filled in my notes with details I remembered within 24 hours, as Robson & McCartan (2016:330) recommend.

The second participant observation served to further my integration into the group and allowed me to gain insights into their practices. I observed the group dynamics, discussions, and interactions while simultaneously shaping them through participating myself. Observing the group was an appropriate and valuable method because I could watch their interactions, data which I could not have generated solely through interviews. Robson and McCartan (2016) describe in which settings participant observations work well, and their criteria fit my object of study. For example, the group is small enough to get to know members individually, the events are open to the public, and sessions are limited in time and therefore do not result in an overwhelming amount of data (Robson & McCartan 2016:324).

Especially situations after the participant observations lead to opportunities for informal interviews. After the official part of the art sessions, some participants lingered and engaged in small talk, which was a chance for me to get to know them better. Robson & McCartan (2016:293) describe informal interviews as spontaneous conversations with an informant in the research setting, which are generally not tape-recorded, but can supplement other data. Furthermore, the

participant observations offered an accessible setting to get to know members and approach them for interviews.

4.3 Semi-structured interviews

I conducted 6 interviews with members of the group who fulfil different roles. I talked to one of the two founders of the art group, the two current organizers, and three members that attend sessions, some since the beginning of the club, and one who joined more recently. All interviews were conducted face to face and ranged from 30 minutes to one hour in duration, with an average of close to 45 minutes. They were audio recorded with consent from all participants and transcripts for analysis were created based on these recordings. All members are anonymized in the thesis and are referred to with pseudonyms or their role in the group, such as founder, organizer, or member/participant. I will refer to all interviewees with the gender-neutral pronoun "them", even when talking about a singular person, to increase the level of anonymity.

I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews, as they provide a framework of topics and questions, while also allowing freedom to explore interesting topics which might come up unexpectedly (Robson & McCartan 2016:285). For this purpose, I created an interview guide, drawing on Robson & McCartan (2016). I designed three different interview guides, one for the organizers/leaders, one for the founder, and one for regular members (see Appendix). I decided to have these different versions, because they allow for matching questions with comparable answers, while also diving into details specific to the different roles of my interviewees. For example, I asked all interviewees general questions about their experience in the art club, like their favourite aspect(s) of being a member. I had some questions for both the founder and the organizers, such as how they prepare for sessions, and then some specific for their role, such as how did the idea for the art club start.

Table 1: Overview of interviewees

Robin	- One of two founders of the art club - Organized and lead group for over a year
Clara	- One of the two current organizers - Leader since a few months
Agnes	- One of the two current organizers - Leader since a few months
Emily	- Member and frequent participant since beginning of art club
Taylor	- Member and frequent participant since beginning of art club
Nelly	- Recently joined art club, has been to a few session

4.4 Data analysis

In my field diary, I consolidated all notes from participant observations, informal interviews, and recorded interviews. This data complements and gives context and depth to the interview transcripts. I used a thematic coding analysis on my data with the assistance of the qualitative data analysis software "Taguette". In an iterative process, I coded relevant parts of my data, going back and forth in the material to align newly emerging codes with already analysed documents. Robson and McCartan (2016:461) describe thematic coding as a process in which codes can emerge from the data or be related to a chosen theory or research questions. I followed this approach, letting codes appear from the data, as well as actively looking out for instances which relate to the framework of Head, Hands, and Heart. In the educational field, Head, Hands, and Heart is a normative learning model, but I use it as a theoretical framework for analysis. By coding I could extract what is relevant for my research questions from my data and detect patterns. After establishing final codes, I grouped them together into themes in order to give more structure to my analysis. These themes represent theory, as well as topics arising from the data. Theory-based themes follow four categories: Head, Hands, Heart, and examples of when two or all three come together. Other themes which the theory could not cover are their community, and limitations of the art group. A remnant category collected all codes which did not fit any of these themes. After grouping and regrouping, these final themes are the core of data analysis, and the output is presented in the results section.

4.5 Methodological reflections

There are three aspects of how I generated my data, which I would like to reflect upon. Firstly, the interviews were an uncommon situation for most of my interviewees. I noticed changes in their tone, body language and demeanour when we transitioned from friendly small talk to recording and officially commencing the interview. For example, one interviewee took more time thinking about questions and answering than in previous, more informal conversations. Others were slightly more serious and focused; one could tell that they adapted to the setting of the interview. As I am not an experienced researcher myself, the situations were also unusual for me. I followed Robson & McCartan's (2016:287) advice for conducting interviews, one of which is that the interviewer should not talk as much themselves. I reflected in my field diary that this role was challenging, as I often wanted to share my own opinion, but could not. In retrospective, I would have liked to prepare my interviewees better by explaining how the interview is different from a daily conversation and that the disproportional dialogue might feel odd.

Secondly, the interviews are an approximation to the experiences and emotions of the interviewees. They represent the thoughts they shared in that moment. Thus, the interviews provide an insight into interviewees' feelings and experiences, but do not claim to present the entirety of their views. Furthermore, I want to acknowledge the role of coincidence in my selection of interviewees. Who I interviewed was subject to some randomness, as I partly recruited interviewees based on who attended art group sessions. I intentionally interviewed people with key roles in the group, such as the organizers. However, for other interviewees, their selection was a result of coincide, as they happened to attend the sessions I used for participant observations. Thereby, the data I generated might have been different if other people would have attended the sessions. Nevertheless, by interviewing people with different roles and membership durations I tried to secure a level of diverse perspectives and relevant voices to represent the group.

Thirdly, my positionality influenced the data I could generate. I am similar to my interviewees in age, occupation, and social standing. These features were beneficial to me in my first participant observation and interactions with the group, as I blended in well. I could lean into my role as an observer and participant without majorly disturbing the group. Nevertheless, my presence as a researcher might have influenced some members of the group. In turn, the composition of the group influenced my behaviour in the participant observations. In the first session we were 8 people, and I could focus more on observing and taking notes. For the second participant observation, we were 4 people, which meant that I took a more active role as a participant. These interactions show that not only did my presence perhaps influence the group, but also the makeup of the group influenced my behaviour as a researcher.

Additionally, our similarities might have helped me to easily approach potential interviewees. I might have been able to make them feel more comfortable than somebody who does not share their perspectives and who does not understand their context. However, this familiarity with the topics also implies that I must not jump to conclusions but be mindful of potential bias and reflect on the data.

5. Results

In this chapter, I present the results, which are based on an analysis informed by, but not limited to, the Head, Hands, and Heart theory. They describe key characteristics of the experiences of members in the art club. The organizers do not intentionally apply Head, Hands, and Heart in sessions, as far as I know they are unaware of this educational framework. Nonetheless, members often directly or indirectly describe how they reflect on environmental topics (Head) through art (Hands), while relating to emotions (Heart). Following this classification, I divided the results into the three topics Head, Hands, and Heart with a fourth category describing the interconnections of when all three domains come together. Through the thematic coding analysis, another fundamental aspect of the art group experience appeared. This aspect is the community the group has built. The last paragraph shows that members recognize limitations of their work in the group. Direct quotes support my findings, and I made them more easily readable by for example deleting filling words such as “um”.

5.1 Head

In the art group, the category Head represents reflection, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and an academic setting. Firstly, members appreciate the art group as a place for individual reflection. After discussions on the respective session’s topic, and before the ending discussion, members have time in between to reflect on the environmental topic itself and its relation to their art. Emily describes this introspective practice as a “moment of tranquillity”. Attending sessions provides the time and space to focus inwards and reflect on own emotions and thoughts regarding certain socio-environmental topics.

Secondly, members mostly enjoy that each session has a theme, as they provide additional inspiration. They describe it as different to being creative on their own, where inspiration might come spontaneously and unexpectedly, whereas in the group an external source of inspiration is provided through the themes. In the group setting, one can also become inspired by what others are creating and their views on the topics. One member however mentioned that the themes can also feel limiting at times, as they might restrict inspiration to a certain topic.

Thirdly, Emily describes sessions as “intellectually stimulating”. Participating in the art group deepens many interviewees’ understanding of the discussed environmental topics. They say that they learn from each other, which connects to the ideas of collective learning in Head, Hands, and Heart. The organizers also expressed an interest in researching for sessions and described it as a pleasurable and intriguing activity. Many members enjoy the combination of learning about the environment and art from each other.

Lastly, some group members also mentioned the university setting, which can give a loose academic frame to the group. Some topics stem from a course at the university, which also provides the physical space for the group. Furthermore, many members are students, which generates a shared context. Still, the academic setting does not seem to define the art group. It provides a backdrop for its activities, but it does not seem to be an essential characteristic.

5.2 Hands

The primary expression of the learning domain of the Hands is through different art forms. The art club members practice art as a hobby, so there is an intrinsic motivation for enjoyment and doing art for pleasure. The art group defines what counts as art rather loosely, showing an inclusive and open approach. Agnes explains “maybe you want to combine […] a photo with a painting or with something, whatever you want to share. It means art”. Both organizers, Clara, and Agnes, understand art as a tool to visualize what might be difficult to express in words. They say it can connect people and reach across language, providing a wide range of possibilities for expression. This extensive approach is reflected in the artforms members practice, and the sessions the art group offers. Usually, members can come and make something in their preferred art style, which might be doing collages, drawing, painting, writing poems, short stories or even parts of novels, or composing music. Sometimes, certain sessions encourage a specific artform, for example one session offered making clay from the soil of a community garden, or another encouraged making art with natural materials in a forest.

Many members express the notion that art is an effective way to meet climate emotions. Nelly says that making their own art can feel empowering, which contrasts the usual helplessness one can feel with environmental issues. Agnes also sees making environmental art as being involved and states that “art means […] to take action”. Thus, many members draw motivation out of their creative engagement in the art group.

The group shares the belief that creativity and imagination can broaden their understanding of climate change and widen up spaces for ideas and solutions. Clara says that it can help to imagine the current state of the world and how it might develop. Furthermore, art can make complex topics such as climate change more accessible. In general, the art club members exhibit the idea that making environmental art is important and they speak out for culturally processing climate change in this way.

Many sessions actively involve different sensory experiences, which relate to learning with the entire body through human senses. For example, one session focused on a sound meditation outside, in other sessions music or natural sounds are played in the background. Another very hands-on experience is making clay, where one is directly in the material with the hands and one can feel it and smell it. As these examples illustrate, sensory experiences are occasionally deepened by being outside in nature. Commonly, art sessions are held indoors, but some sessions have been organized to take place partly or fully outside. The founder expressed that it is important for them to not only speak about the environment, but also to connect more directly with it in site-specific sessions. Here, the Hands are an integral part of the art club experience, not only through making art itself, but also by engaging different senses in the process and connecting to the environment around them when possible.

5.3 Heart

Emotions are at the heart of the art club. All interviewees expressed a wide range of emotions which come up during sessions. Some are related to environmental topics and climate change, others to making art and the group atmosphere, while some combine both. A collection of climate emotions in the group ranges from anxiety, grief, existential fear, guilt, sadness, frustration, feeling depressed and overwhelmed, over hope and hopelessness, to empathy and care. In relation to making art in the group, interviewees talked about joy, passion, empathy, love, happiness, beauty, and feeling empowered, excited, playful, and frustrated. Many interviewees said that talking about their climate feelings in the group made them feel understood and connected to others, in comparison to feeling alone in the face of the climate crisis. All emotions are welcome, and members describe the art club as a safe space to share their emotions.

Engaging in the art club helps them process their emotions, as describing them facilitates reflecting on own emotions and getting to know them better. Clara shares an example:

> I've always felt a lot of stress when the snow is melting […]. But then having this one session on ice and […] being able to connect again with the beauty […] and seeing it in so many different ways and so many different formats in like a snowflake or a crystal or ice on the lake. Suddenly it's sort of, it helps to honor maybe that pain that you also have in the way of like, oh, it is so beautiful and then also feeling that sadness and being much more aware of it for a moment and creating that space. Yeah, that of course helps in regulating and dealing with your emotions in general.

Her experience illustrates layers of climate emotions as it reflects eco anxiety and grief with the melting snow, and a sense of beauty and connection to nature. It shows how one situation can spark a wide range of emotions, which are catalysed by being shared in the group. Almost all interviewees say that they appreciate having a place and time to express their climate emotions, it enables embracing these emotions instead of pushing them away. Robin adds that

> anyone should be able to explore in that way [making art], and that it is an effective way to work through a lot of the things that we're feeling around the environmental crisis and then sort of related to that also that we should be having feelings about the environmental crisis.

There is a consensus in the group that people should engage with strong climate emotions and have conversations about them. Thus, members assign a high value to having and expressing climate emotions. Robin summarizes this point of view: “We're creating eulogies for species, for ways of living, for certain landscapes and I think these things shouldn't just be remembered in science. They should have been remembered in our hearts.”

The interviewees also connect a lot of emotions to making art. Some see the creative process starting from emotions, in a way that first the person has an emotion, which inspires the art they express that emotion in. Nelly describes it in this way: “I think the first action, the first sign of a willingness to want to do art, you need to have an emotion. You need to have a desire. […] [A]rt is about expressing feelings”. Robin shares another example in which they became emotional upon seeing the artwork another member created. In this case, art not only arises from emotion, but art can elicit emotions. The relation between art and emotions then is of art sparking emotions. In both cases, art and emotions are strongly intertwined and influence each other in a cycle of creativity and feelings.

5.4 Unity of Head, Hands, and Heart

The Head, Hands, and Heart come together to signify one key characteristic of the art club experience. This trinity means that members join art group to reflect on and talk about environmental topics (Head), make art inspired by it (Hands), and share emotions with each other (Heart). Members intentionally dedicate time to come and

be part of art group sessions. They seek out this experience of having meaningful conversations around climate change and expressing themselves artistically. There is a certain mindfulness involved as they take time to come and engage. All interviewees mentioned how they appreciate having a shared space to prioritize creativity and art.

There are several examples of where different aspects of Head, Hands, and Heart come together in art sessions. For example, there is a connection between Hands and Head, as the art group encourages to learn about environmental topics thanks to making art about them. Furthermore, there is a cognitive process involved in reflecting on what one wants to express in art. Robin exemplifies the connection between Head and Hands as follows: "And I ended up researching the entire history of this species. And I wrote an entire poem about, like, what happened and why it went extinct".

Furthermore, translating emotions into art links the Heart and Hands together. In turn, art can mediate difficult climate emotions. Robin describes how writing helps to deal with strong emotions:

> I often find a lot more hope and ability to engage with the questions, than when I'm just learning about it. Like if I think about when I go and read a news article, so often I quite quickly have this shut down. Put it away. Oh, God, this is really scary. But if I start writing a poem about something, I am willing to stay there. Not always, but I'm willing to stay there and I also find like the hope in between as well, like I've been writing quite a few pieces recently that are very much dealing with the grief head on.

In this example, engaging emotions through art adds value to the learning experience. Robin describes how the experience goes beyond "just learning", which shows how significant engaging art and emotions can be. Here, all three domains together create a more profound experience than the Head alone could.

Clara provides another example of how the combination of Head, Hands, and Heart defines experiences in the art club:

> When I work with my fingers, with my hands, there's some body-mind connection. […] It's so much easier to embody something and especially when it comes to emotions and difficult emotions like overwhelm and grief and fear, […] once you have something to touch and […] you're drawing something, […] it embodies the whole experience. It's this way of knowing in your body […] and then when your body is moving or putting some words into images, into colors, […] it creates, it facilitates a way, I think even a point that you kind of reach only with your hands, to go a bit further than only the thoughts.

They describe how engaging the Hands through art makes it easier to access and process emotions resulting from learning about environmental topics. In summary, applying the theory of Head, Hands, and Heart uncovers core characteristics of the art group, namely combining climate emotions with art and discussions about environmental themes to shape a valuable experience.

5.5 Community

The community of the art group is another basic building block of members' experiences. The group lives from its members' engagement. Both the founder and the two new organizers follow the idea of co-creation. They do not see themselves as owners of the art club, but they rather act in roles of facilitators. The organizers provide a frame for sessions, which is filled by everyone participating. Many members have a common understanding of the severity of the climate crisis, and they share similar concerns. They connect over their shared care for environmental topics and their interest in art. They appreciate that they are met with understanding and experience the group as very open and accepting. Taylor says: "It feels like in the group there is no wrong answer. That if you've come and you've thought and you've been like, being there is enough." Within members' shared worldview, they still enjoy different opinions and views that participants express. They especially value discussions as opportunities to learn from each other and get inspired. Nelly shares: "there was this girl next to me and she started to draw […] ice, and I thought it was really interesting how she did it. And I felt like, oh, wow, I didn't see the things like this". Thereby, art group sessions serve as a platform for exchange of ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

The art club is also a place for enjoyment and creating positive experiences. Members say that they draw purpose and positivity from the sessions. Robin describes how leading the art club gave back a lot of energy and satisfaction to them. All interviewees describe the atmosphere in the art club as comfortable and inviting. For example, Emily describes the physical space as being cozy, meetings are held in a pleasant room with sofas and tea and cake with different dietary options. This relaxing setting makes the group a comfortable space for sharing.
Members benefit from the art club by having this space to create and share with others. Emily says that they have become more scared since engaging in the group, because they have learned more about climate change. Nevertheless, being part of the community still helps them to process these emotions. Clara articulates a similar view:

> But in the way of engaging in it in a creative way and in a group like this helps also to, yeah, think about it in different ways and maybe, yeah, maybe understanding a bit better what you're feeling and making it touchable, whilst in beginning it can feel so big and a lot of overwhelm.

Through sharing and reflecting together, members understand their emotions better.

In the end of sessions, after time for individual artistic expression, the group comes back together to share what they have made. This sharing was mentioned by almost all interviewees as their favourite part of the sessions. Clara, an organizer, describes these moments as follows:

> The way they often present their work, the way they've been thinking, […] their engagement in the material. I think it's really beautiful. It's also the point that I feel that the connection in the group is the strongest, at the end when sharing some things.

Taylor points out that the purpose of sharing lies in the joy of sharing itself and not getting feedback or critique of one's own work. Clara and Robin acknowledge that sharing art also requires a level of allowing vulnerability. Clara says that they feel insecure about some of their art and for example feel more comfortable sharing their writing than drawings in the group. Even though the organizers emphasize that there is no requirement to share, Nelly thinks that some members might still feel unsure about an implicit expectation to share art that they do not feel confident in. Nevertheless, sharing their art with each other usually increases connections in the group and reinforces the sense of community.

Through these practices of honest discussions and heartfelt sharing, members build a community on shared values. They highly appreciate this community as a space to turn to for support. Building a community seems to be their answer to facing the climate crisis. Emily says:

> Things are going to get worse and difficult, but […] OK, what do we do in those circumstances? We try to still find something good in this and try to create something good. So, I guess this art club has been like in practice that kind of attempt at making something good in everything.

Emily describes their feeling in the group as a "sense of togetherness". Knowing that one has a group to talk about climate emotions is reassuring for them and they know they can receive support when they need it. Clara sees it this way:

> And then it's this feeling of you're not alone. This feeling of connectedness, […] we're together behind this one thing and I think […] it's a very important aspect of the whole climate crisis, […] getting people together in a much more accessible and playful way as well.

They describe a feeling of belonging, in light of the complex issue of climate change, which can make one feel less alone. Nelly echoes Clara's thoughts:

> It's a bit less scary […]. I feel like I love this group thing because I have a feeling of being a bit more in a cozy atmosphere or comfortable because you are together, and you just don't feel alone next to climate change and all these scary, abstract concepts. I think it gives a lot of joy and a lot of excitement because you feel like in this kind of space everything is possible.

These quotes illustrate the defining factor that the group setting provides for the experience of members. It gives members a safe space to express climate emotions, where they receive support and understanding.

The art club is also described as a unique community by members. Many say that having this safe space to express climate emotions helps processing them and they appreciate the group for creating a place to do so. Taylor says "we don't talk about this [climate change], like these issues in normal society very often. It's almost a taboo because it's too depressing". The art club goes against this potential taboo, by bringing people, sometimes strangers, together precisely to talk about climate emotions. Art sessions open up to having these conversations, they invite reflections and discussions. Members feel like in daily life or other societal spaces they often do not have this opportunity. All members only know of this art club, but they think there should be more initiatives like it. Emily says, "it's really the only initiative of this kind that I have heard about anywhere, which is crazy because it's such a good idea". Being part of the art group benefits members and they think its concept should be spread, as it could also help others.

5.6 Limitations of art group

Interviewees also occasionally mentioned downsides or limitations in what the art group can provide for its members. Firstly, Nelly points out that one has to be in a certain headspace to participate, one should be open to sharing and listening to others. They say it disturbs the energy of the group for them when other participants engage very little. This view shows how everyone can experience the group differently and that often only people that identify with the group become regular members. Nelly was not sure yet how frequently they would attend sessions in the future. Thus, the art group reproduces itself by attracting and keeping people that fit to them.

Some members also acknowledge the limits of art for relating to environmental topics. Robin says that art sometimes cannot portray the complexity of some environmental issues. At times simplification through art is preferable, but in other

cases art is not the appropriate medium. This opinion indicates that sometimes there might be a mismatch between Head and Hands. Sometimes one cannot grasp a specific environmental topic (Head) through engaging the Hands in art. Taylor adds that for them, art can sometimes stay on an abstract level and does not foster truly deep climate emotions. For them it can be difficult to access very negative climate emotions through art. Here, Hands, and Heart do not match, in the sense that art (Hands) does not reach the Heart in its entirety and falls short of enticing a strong emotional reaction. These examples show how members reflect on their own practices and see limitations in their methods.

To summarize my findings, the experience of members in the art group relies on two integral aspects. These are the combination of Head, Hands, and Heart and meeting in a group. Their practice reflects the individual components of Head, Hands, and Heart, which come together to build the fundament of their activities. The second defining aspect is their community, which deepens their experiences through meaningful interactions and a space for exchange. Their Head, Hands, and Heart practice and their community are complemented by other characteristics to make up a more holistic view. These are the unique societal and safe space for climate emotions and artistic expression, which is also subject to limitations. One can say that the essence of the art group experience is relating to emotions by making art inspired by environmental topics in a community (Heart + Hands +Head + group).

6. Discussion

6.1 The role of Head, Hands, and Heart

The art group is a successful example of Head, Hands, and Heart. The experiences of the members of the art group reflect the benefits for learning and engaging with environmental topics as described by several studies (Sipos et al. 2008; Ivanaj et al. 2014; Olsen et al. 2024). Ivanaj et al. (2014) describe how Head, Hands, and Heart can lead to deep learning and an embodied knowing of environmental topics. This embodied knowledge comes from learning with the Hands and the Heart in addition to the Head. Several members of the art group recount experiencing this sense of embodiment and deep learning in sessions. Hence, looking at the art group through the lens of Head, Hands, and Heart uncovers how sharing art and emotions enriches members' experiences. When emotions are encouraged, felt, and shared, a deeper understanding takes place (Ivanaj et al. 2014).

The art group engages all three learning domains and braids them together, which represents the key experience of the art group. The quintessence of the art group are the practices related to Head, Hands, and Heart and sharing them in their community. Members notice when they only engage the Head in other situations and how their engagement in the art group differs. For example, reading news about climate change, which only activates the Head, is a different way of learning than creating art around environmental topics, which combines Head, Hands, and Heart. Some members say that creating in the art club makes it easier to access and process emotions. The unity of expressing climate emotions through art and sharing them in the group is what makes the experience rewarding and valuable for members.

Head, Hands, and Heart also support the constitutive communication of the art group. Sharing viewpoints in discussions and through art negotiates and mediates the values and opinions participants hold. Head, Hands, and Heart encourages reflecting on attitudes and invites feelings. My interpretation is that the group focuses on talking about art and emotions for the value of the experience itself and not for a directed goal, such as specifically motiving members to take action. Sessions in the art group are not constructed to evoke specific emotions with a goal

in mind, they are open to whichever thoughts and feelings participants want to share. Each theme is open for exploration and connections to any associations members might have. This approach of the art group reflects the academic literature which sees the constitutive strength of art. Galafassi et al. (2018a) advocate for not approaching art instrumentally, but constitutively, because the potential of art lies in opening up for exploration without pursuing certain outcomes. Thereby, my research with the art group contrasts to literature which approaches art instrumentally as a tool for behaviour change. The instrumental side argues for positive or negative feelings being more effective in achieving behaviour change, while the constitutive side acknowledges that art can evoke many different emotions and values that. Again, Head, Hands, and Heart mirrors the constitutive approach, as all emotions, positive and negative, are seen as important for learning (Olsen et al. 2024). My research therefore does not add to the discussion of which kind of emotions are more effective for taking action. Instead, it argues for the importance of expressing all climate emotions.

6.2 Expansion of Head, Hands, and Heart by being Heard

The community of the art group is one of its most valued characteristics. This appreciation within my group of study echoes the importance of community as discussed in the literature. Boldt & Paul (2010) describe how a group gives acceptance and support to its members, two qualities which all of my interviewees also emphasize. The art group exemplifies how one can build a community over common interests and hobbies. Van Katwyk & Seko (2019) describe a similar process in their study, where a community is formed around collaborative art practices. Their participants highlight the importance of the group, which brought them a sense of belonging and a safe place in a positive atmosphere (Van Katwyk & Seko 2019). My interviewees also emphasize the warm and accepting feeling of the art group, which enables them to feel comfortable to share. My findings and other studies also coincide on other advantages of being in a group, such as reflecting through interactions (Singleton 2015), and drawing comfort from not feeling alone (Boldt & Paul 2010).

The theory of Head, Hands, and Heart also acknowledges the benefits of learning in groups, nevertheless, it is not a central characteristic. However, the theory provides the building blocks to expand on this aspect. Head, Hands, and Heart is described as a social learning theory, it takes into account how the social environment can affect the learning process (Gazibara 2013). Ivanaj et al. (2014) apply Head, Hands, and Heart in their arts-based workshops and find that engaging

in environmental topics together leads to a more holistic understanding of the topics. Based on academic literature and my findings, which emphasize the importance of community, I suggest an expansion of the Head, Hands, and Heart theory to include community more prominently. The results of my study hint that the practices of Head, Hands, and Heart are more fruitful when shared in a group than in an individual setting. The interactions between members makes their emotional connections stronger and deepens their learning about the environment, like Gazibara (2013) also says. Furthermore, not only engaging the Hands by creating art, but adding the group setting and sharing this art with others deepens the experience.

In my study, the community of the art group probably has the strongest positive influence on the Heart. Through the group, members have a safe space to share emotions, when outside of the group they are sometimes met with misunderstanding and rejection. They all emphasize the importance of this unique group for expressing and processing emotions. Furthermore, collective art practices show the benefit of community for Hands and discussions can spark reflections and opportunities to learn from each other in the domain of the Head. Thus, the group setting brings out another dimension in all three domains of Head, Hands, and Heart.

This community aspect deepens the learning in Head, Hands, and Heart and thereby is an added value to members' experience. Thus, I suggest expanding the theory by a fourth learning domain: being Heard. This domain describes the social aspects any learning process takes place in. It considers how learning deepens through interactions when one can share thoughts and reflections with fellow learners. Being Heard embeds the other three domains and functions as a base of resonance. Please see figure 3 for a suggested graphic representation of the expanded theory. Future research could fill in details of this proposed expanded theory and investigate the potential that groups can add to learning about environmental topics.

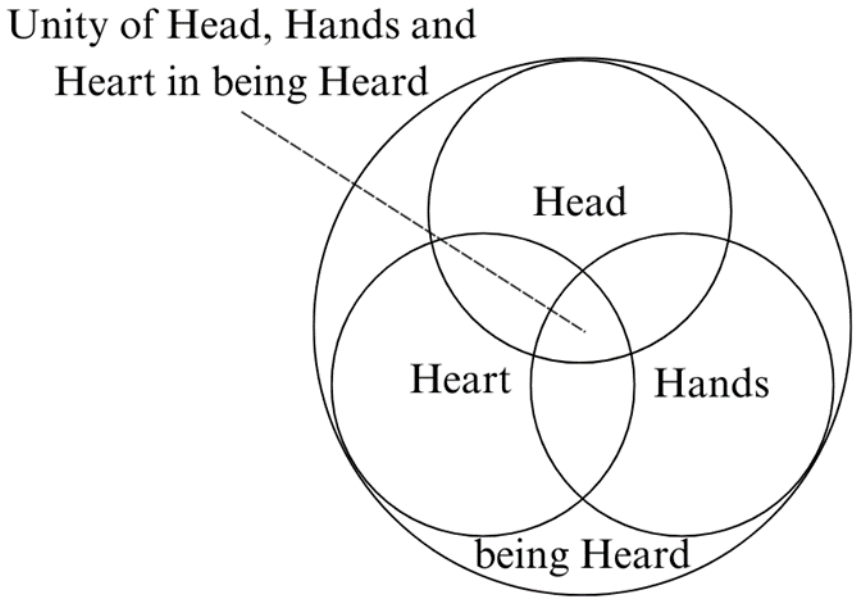

Figure 3: Adapted framework of Head, Hands, Heart, and being Heard, developed from framework by Sipos et al. 2008

6.3 Heart: Climate emotions

My study connects to the wider discourse on climate emotions. The experience of my interviewees is a universal one, as they talk about many emotions which are commonly described as climate emotions, such as worry, hope, and grief (Pihkala 2022). Ivanaj et al. (2014) say that a prerequisite for allowing and sharing emotions is a safe and supportive environment. The art group cultivates this safe space, in which members feel comfortable to share. Sharing all kinds of emotions, positive and negative, can be important (Zaremba et al. 2023). Talking about loss and grief with others can help to accept discomfort from troublesome emotions and share their burden (Tschakert et al. 2023). Communicating positive emotions such as pride and care, and sharing joyous moments, can strengthen the community (Zaremba et al. 2023).

Ojala (2012) describes different coping mechanisms for climate emotions of Swedish youth. One of them is avoiding the topic and pushing away thoughts or feelings related to it. My interviewees describe similar situations of feeling overwhelmed and withdrawing, for example, from news about the climate crisis. My findings show that art can act as a mediator for these emotions and help to accept and process them instead of pushing them away. Another coping mechanism

is seeking out social support (Ojala 2012). This support is precisely what the art group provides to its members. Their safe and accepting environment makes members feel comfortable allowing and sharing their emotions. Expressing thoughts and emotions can help to feel less alone, a common struggle of Swedish youth according to Ojala (2012). Thus, the art group establishes an option for emotional support for its members.

There can be barriers to seeking support from others. Ojala (2016) found that even though young people in Northern Europe are worried about the climate crisis, they do not commonly talk about their fears with others. Social norms might discourage people from opening up, as well as negative reactions when they have tried to address climate emotions (Ojala 2016; Zaremba et al. 2023). My findings also recount that participants have been met with avoidance, disapproval, or misunderstanding when they have had conversation about climate emotions in certain social settings. Their experiences reflect what Ojala (2012, 2016) and Zaremba et al. (2023) have investigated in their studies. When expressing climate emotions is met with silence, people can feel unheard, and get the impression that their emotions are not important (Ojala 2016). The art group however strongly values expressing emotions and actively encourages it. Hence, they create a space for participants to feel heard and understood. Perhaps, spaces like the art group can contribute to shifting these social norms. They model a different behaviour around climate emotions than is common in society. By creating spaces in society for having conversations centred around climate emotions, a transformation might be promoted. With climate emotions being more and more common nowadays, especially in younger generations, a more accepting and open culture of conversation could be beneficial for many.

Engaging in the art group sparks many positive emotions for members. They talk about how the community gives back to them and how they draw positive energy from meetings. Zaremba et al. (2023) also found that people reacted with positive emotions to interacting with others who shared their environmental concern. It gave them a sense of trust and belonging, and their community became a source of pride, joy, and empowerment (Zaremba et al. 2023). The art group is a local example of such a community. They approach climate change and potentially distressing emotions in a light-hearted way, with a focus on having a good time together. They weave together positive and negative emotions and create a space that makes them feel better. This joyful approach seems to be effective in building a community and keeping its members engaged. Their commitment sustains itself because attending sessions is rewarding and uplifting. The practice of art adds to this positive experience, because participants are attracted via a hobby, an activity they enjoy. My research suggests that combining leisure activities with environmental topics,

as the art group does, might motivate people to engage with and process environmental issues. Having a community to do this in can foster a sustainable and gratifying experience.

6.4 Heart and Hands: Solastalgia

The feeling of solastalgia combines the Heart and the Hands, as it is a place-bound climate emotion. To an extent, my interviewees also describe feelings of solastalgia. Through some art group sessions, which have taken place outside, in gardens or forests, they meet these feelings. Here, art can function as a way of processing and accepting the changes a place is enduring and possibly rediscovering it. With the hands-on practice of art, one can focus on one's senses as a means to recentre in the place. Therefore, art can be a way to connect with the land and the place and process solastalgia.

My findings suggest that making art in a specific place can additionally support learning with Head, Hands, and Heart. The art group has had several site-specific sessions, where they made art from local, natural materials. Thus, the place can be seen as an extension of the Hands, as the person connects to the place through art. The importance of place might apply to the art group's usual meeting space, but interviewees talked about stronger feelings connected to sessions outside in nature. Being outside in a certain landscape, like a forest, or even in a courtyard, but surrounded by snowflakes, sparks a stronger connection to the environment for members. This connection to a place can support learning with Head, Hands, and Heart (Singleton 2015). In the domain of the Heart, an emotional relation to a place can deepen environmental values. For the Head, being outside in a place can invite different types of reflections than a classroom setting might (Singleton 2015). The place provides a setting and a context for the Hands, which can ground a practice and deepen engagement with it. My interviewees also draw inspiration from outdoor sessions for their art. Thereby, making art in a space in nature can stimulate the creative process and promote learning with the Hands.

Singleton (2015) says that places are processed through interacting with others and experiencing them together. Building relations with nature and places can go hand in hand with building relationships with others. This point illustrates the relevance of expanding Head, Hands, and Heart by being Heard. Interactions and shared experiences belong to being Heard and in a meaningful place they can deepen the learning experience of Head, Hands, and Heart. This practice is exactly that of the art group, they experience places together, which inspires their art, strengthens their mutual relationships, and promotes their cognitive and emotional reflection.

To summarize the discussion, the art group combines two aspects which positively influence processing climate emotions. The first is making art, which gives a creative outlet for emotions. The second is having a supportive community that provides understanding and belonging. The community of the art group is important, because it provides a safe space to meet climate emotions instead of avoiding them. To reflect this influence of community, I propose expanding Head, Hands, and Heart by being Heard. Lastly, the influence of place on the experience in the art group is explored and how it relates to Head, Hands, Heart and being Heard.

7. Conclusion

This research examines how practicing art in a community enables processing and sharing climate emotions. It contributes to the underexplored topic of environmental art groups. To reiterate, my main research question was on the experiences of participants in the art group. They experience the art group as an enjoyable creative outlet and a place to reflect on environmental topics and connected emotions. Their experiences are multi-faceted and combine several aspects which are interlinked. Key aspects are creating art, sharing climate emotions and being in a supportive community. These findings have a wider relevance, as the combination of creating art and being part of a community positively influences processing climate emotions. Having an accepting community to share climate emotions in can be beneficial for mental wellbeing. However, since there can be social inhibitions around expressing climate emotions, safe spaces, like the art group, are important. The art group, and similar initiatives, might contribute to shifting these social norms and being part of a societal transformation.

My second research question addressed the role of Head, Hands, and Heart in understanding participants' experiences. Applying the theoretical framework of Head, Hands, and Heart uncovered the key elements of the art group, which are discussing environmental topics (Head), creating art inspired by them (Hands) and thereby accessing and expressing emotions (Heart). Not only does Head, Hands, and Heart describe the distinct features of the art group, it illustrates why the experience in the group is fulfilling and engaging. When all three learning domains are activated, as they are in art group sessions, deep learning takes place. This kind of learning translates to meaningful connections with humans and nature in the art group. However, Head, Hands, and Heart does not fully cover one essential aspect of the art group, which is their community. The group setting and community feeling enhance each domain individually and intensify the deep engagement of when Head, Hands, and Heart come together. Therefore, I propose an expansion of the theory by a fourth domain of being Heard. This development of the framework considers the importance of community for support, learning and exchange.

Drawing on my focus on climate emotions, the domain of the Heart holds potential for further exploration. Future research could study other groups, which also

provide a safe space to process climate emotions through art. It could be interesting to find similarities and analyse to which extent other groups also apply Head, Hands, and Heart and which variations might exist. One could develop and expand in the domain of the Heart and describe how Head, Hands, and Heart can facilitate processing climate emotions. In this understanding, Heart would not only describe an emotional reaction towards environmental issues but go further and discuss how these emotions can be processed. This branch of Head, Hands, and Heart could go beyond being a principle for learning and become a principle for emotional processing of sustainability and environmental issues.

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Popular science summary

Many people nowadays feel strong emotions in relation to climate change. These emotions can be complex and layered over each other. For example, one can feel loss and grief over climate change, while also having hope for the future. While silencing these climate emotions might be a common response, it is more beneficial to accept these feelings. Expressing worries around climate change can help share their burden. Finding a community to share these feelings with can improve mental wellbeing. In a community one feels less alone in the face of climate change and one can receive a lot of support.

In my research, I studied an environmental art group. Art offers an emotional access to environmental topics and lends itself to openly exploring them. I conducted interviews with the founder of the art group, the two current organizers and three members. Complementarily, I observed and actively participated in two sessions of the art group. I found that the art group provides a safe space for sharing emotions. Members describe a valuable experience, which combines artistic expression with their interest for the environment. They gain a sense of belonging and togetherness in the group. More initiatives like the art group might over time contribute to shifting social norms around expressing climate emotions.

I applied the framework of Head, Hands, and Heart to further understand their experiences. The framework describes how learning emotionally and with a practical, hands-on aspect, deepens the experience. In the art group, the learning aspects of the Head are represented by reflecting on environmental issues. The Hands are engaged through creating art. Emotions that come up during sessions connect to the Heart. These three aspects make up some of the key characteristics of the art group. However, the framework does not fully cover the importance of their community. The group is very special for members because they feel accepted and understood there. It offers a space for inspiration, discussions, and exchange. To account for the fundamental value of the community for the group, I propose expanding the framework Head, Hands, and Heart by being Heard. This fourth category incorporates the social aspect of processing emotions, getting inspired by others, and reflecting and learning together. This research shows how people can

effectively engage with environmental topics and process their climate emotions through art and supported by community.

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Appendix

This appendix includes my interview guides.

Introduction (for all)

- Thanks for doing this interview with me
- Explain my research: on how people experience engaging in environmental art groups, socially processing climate change
- Did you have time to read info sheet? If no, explain a bit more
- Everything will be anonymized, you might be identifiable, but I will do my best to make it as anonymous as possible
- If there is anything after the interview where you think you did not mean it like you said or you feel uncomfortable with sharing after all, you can tell me, and I will change it/take it out
- You can retract consent until I hand in thesis
- If you want I can share transcripts with you
- There are no right or wrong answers, it's about your experience
- You can ask/interrupt at any time, ask me to reformulate or explain if something is unclear
- Is it okay to record? The recording and transcript will not be published, only the results of it in the thesis

Interview guide participants

How did you find out about the art club?

How long have you been going/how often have you been? Do you come regularly? Do you remember your first impression?

What do you like about sessions? What do you like about the group itself? What is your favourite thing about being a part of this group?

Why do you come to sessions?

Do you remember a session which felt especially powerful to you/where you felt strongly? What made you feel that way? What was it about?

How does making art in the group feel in comparison to making art on your own? Elaborate

Does this practice help you cope with climate change emotions? Through which practices?

Do you feel comfortable sharing emotions in the group? Can making art as a mediator help with that in any way?

Does making art and talking about it help you to relate to climate change? In which ways?

(How) have you experienced storytelling through art in sessions? What does it make you feel?

What has shaped your experience in the group the most?

When you think about climate change, what are some emotions that you feel? Has this changed or been influenced by being in this group? If yes, what exactly do you think influences you?

What does this group mean to you? What do you think this group is about mostly?

If you think about the term gentle activism, does that fit with your idea of being active in this group?

Are you engaged with environmental topics in any other way? E.g. studies, volunteering? How is it different/complementary to being part of this group?

What does creativity and art mean to you? In relation to climate change?

Is there anything else you would like to add, something that maybe did not come up, or that you would like to emphasize?

Interview guide organizers

Have you been both an organizer and a participant? If yes, how is it different? As a participant, why do you go to sessions?

How do you decide on topics? How do you decide on which material to share about it and what to present about it?

What do you like about sessions? What do you like about the group overall? What is your favourite thing about being active in this group?

What do you find interesting about the group? What do you like about leading/organizing it/making it continue? What are you excited about for taking over the club?

Does making art and talking about it help you to relate to climate change? In which ways?

How does being in the group feel in comparison to making art on your own?

What does this group mean to you?

When you think about climate change, what are some emotions that you feel? Has this changed or been influenced by being in this group? If yes, by what do you think?

Are you engaged with environmental topics in any other way? E.g. studies, volunteering? How is it different/complementary to being part of this group?

What is important to you for participants to take away from meetings? What do you do to support this experience that you want to convey?

How do you create a safe space for participants to express emotions?

What does creativity and art mean to you? In relation to climate change?

Is there anything else you would like to add, something that maybe did not come up, or that you would like to emphasize?

Interview guide founder

How did the idea for the group form? How did you put it into practice? Why did you make this group?

How did you decide on themes and topics? How did you pick the material?

Did it happen that you actively choose or excluded material that sent a different message than you wanted to? Can you name an example?

Did you design sessions in a specific way to achieve a certain experience?

Talk me through how you normally held sessions?

What was your favourite part about them? What makes this group special?

Why do you go to sessions? What does this group mean to you?

What was important to you for participants to take away from meetings?

Does making art and talking about it help you to relate to climate change? In which ways?

Have you noticed any changes in how you think about climate change since organizing the group?

When you think about climate change what are some emotions that you feel? Has this changed or been influenced by being in this group? If yes, by what do you think?

How does making art in the group feel in comparison to making art on your own?

Are you engaged with environmental topics in any other way? E.g. studies, volunteering? How is it different/complementary to being part of this group?

What does creativity and art mean to you? In relation to climate change?

How has the art circle evolved? Did certain topics change the direction? Did the group perpetuate itself? In the sense that maybe through engagement of participants the group grew emotionally?

Is there anything else you would like to add, something that maybe did not come up, or that you would like to emphasize?

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