

Informed Consent Form for participants in the Nordic Summer University study circle *The Praxis of Social Imaginaries. Cosmologies, Othering and Liminality* and the post-doctoral research project *Dancing between Worlds - Cosmologies, Othering and Liminality* financed by the Polin Institute at Åbo Akademi University.

This informed consent form is for the students, researchers, activists and artists who share their learning experiences during the Winter Symposia and Summer sessions of the *The Praxis of Social Imaginaries* study circle and/or choose to build transdisciplinary research units out of these meetings. The Principal Investigator of this project is Laura Hellsten, a doctor in Systematic Theology and one of the co-facilitators of the named study circle. The current research is funded by the Polin Institute of Theological research at the Åbo Akademi University Foundation. We have also been granted the following grants to be able to arrange the symposia; Nordplus Higher Education grant, Letterstedtska föreningen, Swedish Cultural Foundation grant for educational purposes, Jubileumsfonden at Åbo Akademi University Foundation for collaborations between Finland and Sweden and Otto A. Malm foundation supporting higher education, projects serving the common good and scientific research.

The aim of the research project *Dancing between Worlds - Cosmologies, Othering and Liminality* is twofold. Firstly, the principal investigator will focus on doing institutional ethnography in order to both investigate and facilitate transdisciplinary collaborations. Secondly, the principal investigator is studying the relationship between praxis and social imaginaries through the method of reading medieval travelling accounts and following the processes of othering in both the present and past.

Ethics

This informed consent is written primarily due to the recommendations and requirements of both Åbo Akademi University, the European legal regulations around data protection and The Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK.

I (the principal Investigator) am more critical towards the practice of informed consent as it is easily used as a tool to commodify knowledge claims and position the informants in inferior power positions in relation to the investigators. Along the lines of post-colonial critique and indigenous research practices, I wish instead to build a relationship around mutual trust. I see us as a community which part-takes in a process of community creating, practising and sharing knowledges. When such options are not fostered within the formalised practices of current University culture, I abide by the current standardisation with this disclaimer. I further commit to a more action-based and rigorous standard of research ethics than what the formal writings of informed consent usually imply. I genuinely see our upcoming engagements as a joint effort of wanting to understand and question the world we share and the actors participating in life with us. I will do my best to act in alignment with the principals of *Respect, Responsibility, Reciprocity* and *Concent* that are formulated in the **imagineNATIVE** document *ON-SCREEN PROTOCOLS & PATHWAYS: A Media Production Guide to Working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities, Cultures, Concepts and Stories* (2019) as well as the *OFELAS - The Pathfinder Guidelines for Responsible Filmmaking with Sámi Culture and People* (2021) by The Sámi Film & Culture Advisory Board. In the latter it is

specifically pointed out that culture, aesthetics, music, language, stories, histories and traditional cultural expressions are not things that can be the personal property of individual people nor given away as open resources. Rather, stories, languages, people, connection to space and place as well as specific crafts or arts are all interconnected and belonging to a community which includes also ancestors and non-human kin (both spirits and animals).

This document will contain three parts. Part one is information about the project. Part two and three is the written consent that participants are asked to sign. One copy, including part one and two, will stay with the participant. The last and final part three, will stay with the researcher. When electronic versions are signed, all parts stay with both partners.

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

I am Laura Hellsten, a Swedish-speaking Finn from the Åland Islands and working at Åbo Akademi University. My research centres on processes of transdisciplinary collaborations and the relationships between praxis and social imaginaries. It grew out of previous research where I investigated the science communication and ethics in a multi-disciplinary research setting. What I noticed was the creating truly functional transdisciplinary research environments need time and effort. Thus I am now aiming at creating a suitable environment for transdisciplinary collaborations and testing how it works. It is mainly through arranging symposia during which people from various fields of research, artistry and different societal positions are brought together that I collect materials to this study. The purpose of these symposia is to practice listening, reading together and encouraging people to tell stories. In the practice of listening, the focus is on both the text and the participants of the symposium. In the practice of reading, the focus is on a set of medieval travelling accounts and in the practice of story telling the focus is on whatever emerges from our interactions in the symposium. This is an invitation to you to take part in this study. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in the research. Before you choose, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the investigation.

This consent form may contain words or descriptions that you do not (fully) understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me also then.

Background to the research

Currently, the Western world is living in a situation where, on the one hand, scientific methods and science-based knowledge claims are highly regarded. Becoming a successful researcher demands much effort and time from those that want to pursue that path. On the other hand, many people are also critical about and demanding, that researchers and scientific inquiries should be more transparent with their goals, who benefits from the studies and for who's gain and/or wellbeing the research is done. Furthermore, more and more people are also becoming aware of how the Western cultural structures are both implicitly racist and extracting natural resources from lands and waters that belong to indigenous communities. People are searching for ways to do life and live sustainably in completely new ways. Critique is raised both against the tools and methods of science. However, rarely are researchers trained in understanding the depth and width of these

questions nor are they taught the skills needed for entering into dialogue with people coming from different viewpoints than their own. Research further shows that particularly when it comes to resolving wicked societal problems what is needed is transdisciplinary collaborations where all participants are treated as equal collaboration partners. In my previous studies I further found that particularly bringing researchers and artists together seems to facilitate new forms of learning and doing together. Thus the symposia created and investigated in this project are theo-artistic intervention that want to find out how listening practices, reading practices and story telling practices can support transdisciplinary collaboration.

Type of Research Intervention

This research will involve your participation in the symposia and possible follow up events, where I am doing institutional participatory ethnographic fieldwork. If you choose to participate I will ask you to either share your experiences in the format of a (written/ audio) learning diary or having individual discussions about the topics that arise during our time together. The latter can take the form of questionnaires, one-on-one conversations or group discussions.

Participant Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because you have either signed up for the Winter Symposium and Summer Session of our study circle or, are taking the course TE00CL12 Medieval Cosmologies and the Art of Sustainability for the Future, 5 sp at Åbo Akademi. I regard your experience and expertise to be of high value to contribute to finding answers to the questions this study wants to investigate. Your contributions and our mutual respect and engagement in this project are crucial to finding new ways to practice transdisciplinary research.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. The decision that you make will have no bearing on your studies, job or on any work-related evaluations or reports. However, once the study has started your participation is wanted until the project has finished or your work-situation has been transferred to some other project. At all and any time, you may tell me that whatever situation may come up or experiences that are shared during the project may not be used in this research study. Those parts will be excluded from the information gathered.

Procedures

- A. *Ethnography*: The main format of gaining knowledge in this project is through ethnographic participatory observation. Participatory observation means that I will be present in meetings, events and formal as well as informal gatherings of the study circle activities. In these meetings, I take part in the symposia as a member and initiator of this community. From this form of interaction, I write notes of what is discussed, how people interact, take pictures of shared spaces and make personal reflections about what I notice. These are all gathered in my field diary, which is stored in a protected area of my computer. The computer is further connected only to the ÅAU server for back-up and storage. The notes and images are not shared with anybody. What I write from my observations will always be discussed with whomever it may involve, before the publication of these findings.
- B. *Learning diaries*: These are freely formulated by you, where you reflect on what you are experiencing and learning while participating in the activities of the study circle

and possible collaborations that arise from the events. There are two types of learning diaries. The first one is gathered by the students participating in the course TE00CL12 Medieval Cosmologies and the Art of Sustainability for the Future. These learning diaries will need to include reflections on the additional materials provided on the Moodle platform for the course. These learning diaries will be collected directly from what the students submit to the Moodle platform. The second type of learning diaries relates to the participants in the transdisciplinary collaborations. These may follow a free format and are not compulsory for participation in the collaborations. The second type of diaries may also take the form of sharing work in progress or the development of collaborations in the artistic work process. All diaries can be shared in written form, as images of work-processes or through audio recordings that are shared with me. They may also include the e-mail correspondence between collaborators (more on this further ahead). These materials will only be stored in a password protected area of the university approved and protected domain.

- C. *Interviews and small-group gatherings*: At times, my research might also extend to conducting interviews and organising small group gatherings for the participants in the study circle. You will be called separately to these meetings and informed in beforehand of the content of the interview and small-group meeting. During the interviews and small-group meetings, I will sit down with you/the gathered group in a comfortable place or over zoom. If it is better for you, the interview can take place in your home or a friend's home. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so, and the conversation will move on to the next question. No one else but the interviewer will be present unless you would like someone else to be there. In the small-group meetings no one else then those who have been invited to the collaboration will be present in the meeting. The interviews and small-group meetings will (possibly) be video-recorded. The information recorded is confidential, and no one else except [person transcribing the materials] will have access to the information documented during your interviews and small-group meetings. The recording will be kept on a password-protected device. The videos will be destroyed after the transcription has been made. The transcribed materials will be maintained so that no person can be identified from the materials.
- D. *E-mail correspondence*: Once you have entered into a transdisciplinary collaboration with other partners in the project I will be collecting the data of the communication happening in e-mail correspondences around furthering, planning and making arrangements for the project. These texts are gathered in the ethnographic field diary.

Duration

The research takes place starting in March 2023 until the end of 2026. Your participation can range from one symposium (4-8 days) or the extension of the full cycle of the three-year-long study circle. You may participate in all six symposia or your chosen amount of events.

Risks

There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics that come up under our time together. These include racialisation of people in the medieval and current world and a sense of loss/sadness that arises from sensing the ongoing destruction of the environment we live in. However, my intent is not to put you into harmful situations on purpose. If any trauma arises, please inform me so that we might take appropriate action. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussions/interviews/survey

if you feel the question(s) and/or topics are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable. You may, at any time, tell me that something we discussed or something that happened may **not** be part of the research materials I gather.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you by participating in this study. If you take part in the symposia and ask for travelling and participation grants these will be awarded based on need and our possibilities to equalise unjust societal structures. For the transdisciplinary collaborations we also aim at funding the possibility of working together in short-term retreats and/or planning for residence periods in environments that enhance the community aspect of collaboration. This may include, but is not limited to, visits to each others laboratories/work spaces. All benefits of these kinds are only granted against filling in official forms and showing receipts of the expenses used.

Your participation is likely to help develop a research community that is better equipped to handle those things that this study will reveal.

Reimbursements

You will not be provided with an incentive to take part in the research. However, when you participate in this project as a student we aim to cover all your travelling expenses with our grant money. Also parts of your lodging and food needs will be covered. Furthermore, the funding of this project will, when granted the extra funds, provide the artists with an Honorarium for the artwork they produce. We cannot guarantee artistic funding but aim at seeking working grants and grants that cover materials needed to create and exhibit the artwork produced in the collaborations.

Confidentiality

The research done in the above-described projects does not aim at publicly giving any personal information about the participants in its research publications. All discussions and materials gathered are kept confidentially with the Investigator, in a password-protected area of her university account. Video recordings and sound materials will be sent to transcription by professional companies for editing through password protected link sharing. They will not be shared with any other parties without the approval of the participants.

However, the events that might arise from the collaborations started within this project will be public. It is thus not possible to keep all participants anonymous concerning their general involvement with the research projects. Materials produced in/for public media about the project may thus include the names and images of the participants. Such collaboration is completely voluntary and optional. Thus, co-operation and trust are of uttermost importance for maintaining the confidentiality of this study.

A separate form is created and needs to be approved by participants for the general personal data collection that inevitably happens in this project.

Sharing the Results

Nothing that you tell me during this research project will be shared with anybody outside the research team. The ethnographically gathered materials, interviews and small-group discussions will not be accessible for other researchers in the field. There will be no Open Access sharing of these materials. Nothing that you have done or said will be attributed to

you by name in research articles. When descriptions of processes in the collaborations are shared these are pseudonomized to not make participants recognisable. Full anonymity can, however, not be guaranteed. The knowledge that we get from this research will be shared with you and your community before it is made widely available to the public. There will also be small-group meetings in the community when results are ready to be discussed, and these will be announced well beforehand. Following the meetings, we will publish the results so that interested people may learn from the research.

An exception to this, is your own participation on the Scalar page, where joint and collaborative research will be done. However, that aspect of the study circle program is not the focus of this study.

Who to Contact

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. For any questions, please contact: Laura Hellsten at laura.hellsten@abo.fi

Part II: Certificate of Consent for participant

I have read the foregoing information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date _____
Day/month/year

Signature of Researcher _____

Date _____
Day/month/year

Part III: Certificate of Consent for researcher

I have read the foregoing information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date _____
Day/month/year

Signature of Researcher _____

Date _____
Day/month/year