



Culture, Arts and Environment: A Review of Interdisciplinary Research Linking Creativity, Culture and Ecological Sustainability

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Abstract

The rise in environmental crisis in recent years, including climate change, loss of biodiversity, increased pollution and stress on urban ecological conditions necessitates a proper response that goes beyond scientific and technological solutions. Now many researchers believe and also take help of the art and convey their message and share the important information. Allowing people to understand the issue regarding environment awareness and sustainable behavior by incorporating it with art. This review summarizes approximately thirty research papers based on environmental humanities, eco-art, art-based research, media studies and cultural institutions. The review mainly focuses on how art and culture can work together as a combined tool for environmental co-variation, social engagement, knowledge production, and sustainability transformation. The motive of this article is to demonstrate how researchers can collect data from various sources and present it in an artistic form, enabling them to effectively communicate their ideas and solve problems related to the environment. It highlights a crucial role that art plays in addressing constant environmental change.

Keywords: Culture; Arts; Environmental; Eco-art; Environmental Humanities; Sustainability; Arts-based Research

Introduction

The change in environmental on global level is more recognized in cultural and social issues, regarding to human values, behaviors (Rose et al., 2012; Soini & Birkeland, 2014). Where the research provides some important evidence saying that environment action requires support of cultural engagement as well as emotional connection. Art and culture provide and unique method or way to interpret, communicate and take stand against ecological crises (Curtis et al., 2012). The research survey says that the artistic expression can create and increase the awareness of environment protection, foster ethical reflection and inspire the conservation as well as sustainable development action (Galafassi et al., 2018). The review focus on the research based on the relationship between art, culture and environment. How art and culture support or create a change in the sustainable development as well as environment protection.

Environmental Humanities as a Conceptual Framework

This theme provides a foundational framework which helps to understand how the cultural will go hand in hand with environment by addressing their problems (Rose et al., 2012). This helps to study the history, philosophy, cultural studies and the art to visualize to examine how it is represented, valued and contested.

Several studies show how art and literature go hand in hand when it comes to environment by changing and shaping the societal responses to ecological crises (Trexler & Johns-Putra, 2011; Iovino & Oppermann, 2014; Nurmis, 2016). The visualization of art shows the climatic and environmental condition. It is also seen that this affects the theme and creativity over time (Kaufmann et al., 2023). These perspectives reinforce the idea that environmental degradation is inseparable from cultural narratives.

Eco-Art and Artistic Engagement with Nature

Eco-art is a major area of research in the field of arts-environment nexus. The artist related to environment with natural material, ecological processes and environmental activates to address the problem and the issues regarding sustainable development (Tengö et al., 2017). Studies says that eco art play's role in both aesthetic practice and

environmental intervention (Sterling, 2011). Also, the research done from different part of the world like India, China, Europe and etc. Which shows that the art has evolved from symbolic representation to participatory and also to address the global level threat affecting environment by pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity (O'Neill & Smith, 2014; Curtis et al., 2012). This approach the sustainable transformation the artistic activism is been identified to influence the public discourse and policy engagement (Galafassi et al., 2018).

Art-Based Research and Knowledge Production

Arts based research has emerged has been evolved in recent time which is an innovative way in the ecological and also to study the sustainable development (Bielski, 2010; Sandell, R., & Nightingale, 2012). The arts-based research also includes visual storytelling, performance and participating in the art research design (Mac Mahon et al., 2025). In recent time the study says that the art-based research is able to enhance the understanding the complex social ecological systems by interacting and connecting with people emotionally, experiential and local knowledge (Heras & Tabara, 2014). In urban areas the arts-based research is really useful to explore the green infrastructure, climate adaptation and community resilience (Bulkeley et al., 2019). Participatory approaches promote inclusivity and empower marginalized communities in environmental decision-making (Bentz, 2020).

Culture, Heritage, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge

The culture heritage and traditional knowledge have a very important role to pay in the sustainable environmental management (Tengö et al., 2017; Whyte, 2017) The native and local communities maintain their knowledge embedded in rituals, crafts and artistic traditions (Gómez-Baggethun et al., 2013). Which is been passed to the next generation.

The research also shows that by involving the local culture and heritage into the conservation plan or strategies which will enhances the environmental preservation and social resilience. The representation of the local culture and heritage by the local artist through painting, storytelling and their performance which preserve ecological memory and strengthen place based environmental ethics (Singh et al., 2010).

Arts, Media, and Environmental Communication

Art and media are the two powerful tools in this developing world. Which can be used to convey the issues regarding to environment. The complex scientific information can be express in simple form by the visual art, film, photography and digital media allowing to connect with people emotionally and explaining them the narrative behind the research (O'Neill & Smith, 2014; Hansen & Machin, 2013).

Also, the research state that the art on the social media has represented significantly and influence the public perspective not only on the climate change but also the risk increased by climate change on the ecosystem (Doyle, 2011; Nerlich et al., 2010). The cinematic and photographic studies reveal how urban environments and ecological challenges are culturally framed and interpreted (Frantzeskaki et al., 2018; Adger et al., 2013).

Environmental Education through Arts

Art based environmental education is a nice initiative allowing to enhance the ecological literacy and ethical awareness towards the environment (Bentz & O'Brien, 2019). The studies also indicate that environmental themes into art education regarding to forest conservation, climate change and pollution. The art based environmental education allowing the people to think and solve the issue by different approach and creating the responsibility towards environment (Inwood, 2013). Art based environmental education is a nice initiative allowing to enhance the ecological literacy and ethical awareness towards the environment (Bentz & O'Brien, 2019). The studies also indicate that environmental themes into art education regarding to forest conservation, climate change and pollution. The art based environmental education allowing the people to think and solve the issue by different approach and creating the responsibility towards environment (Inwood, 2013).

Sustainability in Arts and Cultural Institutions

Increase in the museums, galleries and theaters will help in the environmental performance. The study says that efforts towards carbon reduction, sustainable exhibition and environmental reporting (Leavy, 2018). However, research highlight the limitation towards the symbolic sustainable practices and lack of long-term structural change (Tengö et al., 2017).

Art–Science Collaboration and Transdisciplinary Approaches

The collaboration between artists and science has gained recognition of wonderful approach to make change in sustainable development. The researchers also says that art science collaboration foster innovation, making public awareness and engaging the people and covering the gaps between public and researchers (Mauser et al., 2013). The collaboration helps to understand the issues present in environmental by combining the data and presenting it in the creative interpretation (Somerville, 2010; Kagan et al., 2018).

Challenges and Research Gaps

On positive though more people in recent time are taking more interest in research which are link to the environmental problems which exist. But there is no such method or technique to measure that how much the artist and their art have the active role in improving and creating an awareness towards the environmental condition. As this art-based research are not recognize by government and supported by government authorities which lack then in funding programs. In future researchers should focus on creating clear and major impact on environmental by combing it with art and focusing on developing countries and try to include art in environment conservation as well as sustainable development planning and also marketing it through art.

Conclusion

This review is based on the study of 30 research papers showing how the culture and art play a vital role for understanding the problem related to environment and sustainability. Artistic activities, cultural traditions and creative research help people to create awareness towards environmental issues and inspire the society.

When the art and culture are included in environmental planning and policies, they encourage broader participation, ethical decision making and stronger, more adaptable responses to global ecological challenges.

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