

WATERFRONTS

Waterfront Culture For Resilience Against Climate Change & Eco-Anxiety

Narrative report

T3.1 Community Activism



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WATERFRONTS

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T3.1 Community Artivism

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1. Introduction

This chapter presents three of the nine artworks to be developed within the WATERFRONTS project, focusing on those created through the Community Activism task. Building on the skills and connections formed in the Capabilities Clinic, the task supported artists in working closely with local communities to co-create work that responds to climate change, eco-anxiety, and social inclusion in waterfront settings. The artworks, developed in Sweden, Greece, and Croatia, show how collaborative artistic processes can turn environmental challenges into shared narratives and tangible expressions of care for place. Each section describes the local context, the process of working between artist and community, and the themes and methods that shaped the final work. The chapter closes with a comparative analysis, identifying shared lessons, innovative practices, and the wider significance of these approaches for strengthening cultural resilience, environmental awareness, and more inclusive policy engagement in European waterfront contexts.

1.1 About the Waterfronts project

The Waterfronts project is a transnational, interdisciplinary initiative uniting artists, cultural practitioners, and local communities from Sweden, Greece, and Croatia to address pressing challenges at the intersection of climate change, eco-anxiety, and social inclusion. At its core, Waterfronts seeks to harness the transformative power of participatory art to foster resilience and agency among waterfront populations, communities often on the frontlines of environmental and social change. Through a series of interconnected activities, including Community Activism workshops, Blue Residencies, Peer Trainings, and Community Events, the project creates opportunities for creative co-production, knowledge exchange, and public engagement.

Waterfronts is structured around a collaborative methodology that places artists in the role of facilitators and co-designers, working alongside local residents to identify challenges, imagine solutions, and co-create artworks that reflect and respond to their lived realities. The project's transnational partnership, comprising GOTALAND (Sweden), LATRA (Greece), and IM INDUSTRIES (Croatia), ensures a diversity of perspectives and practices while fostering cross-border learning and solidarity. By



foregrounding ethical engagement, inclusivity, and adaptability, Waterfronts aims not only to produce impactful artistic outputs but also to build sustainable capacities within communities and the cultural sector. The project aspires to catalyse dialogue, inspire action, and contribute to a more just and climate-resilient future for Europe's waterfronts.

1.2 Objectives & purpose of the Community Artivism task

The Community Artivism task within WATERFRONTS used artistic creation as a practical tool for social change, environmental awareness, and community resilience. Its main aims were to support waterfront communities in responding to climate change and eco-anxiety through creative collaboration, to centre marginalised voices within cultural and environmental narratives, and to prepare the ground for the artistic residencies, peer trainings, and policy recommendations to follow.

Three artists from Sweden, Greece, and Croatia worked with waterfront communities in Gothenburg, Lesvos, and Zadar. They engaged residents, particularly youth, refugees, people with disabilities, low-income households, and rural populations, in co-creation sessions that produced ideas, stories, and visual expressions rooted in local identity and resilience. These exchanges directly shaped the themes and methods for later project phases.

By combining scientific knowledge with lived experience, the task turned creative practice into a platform for dialogue, empowerment, and advocacy. Presented locally and soon to be shared across the European Union, these works connect local impact with cross-border cultural exchange.

2. Methodology and approach

The Community Artivism task followed a structured and participatory approach designed to ensure that creative outputs were led by communities and supported by expertise from multiple fields. Building on the skills and knowledge developed during the Capabilities Clinic, three artists were selected to lead the work, one from Sweden, one from Greece, and one from Croatia. They were selected to engage in the task for their strong track record in socially engaged practice, their ability to collaborate across



disciplines, and their deep commitment to climate action and social inclusion. Each had demonstrated the capacity to connect with a wide range of people, making them well placed to work closely with local communities. The artists, Darja Nordberg from Sweden, Anđela Bugarija from Croatia, and Gen Daquinan from Greece, carried out activities rooted in the local context, including site visits, participatory workshops, and collaborative design sessions.

The role of activism in addressing climate change, eco-anxiety, and social inclusion

Activism, where artistic expression meets activism, played a central role in WATERFRONTS as a powerful way to confront climate change, respond to eco-anxiety, and promote social inclusion. By bringing together creativity and advocacy, it turned complex environmental and emotional issues into forms that were accessible, engaging, and emotionally resonant. It created a safe space for communities to process the psychological effects of climate change, especially the growing sense of eco-anxiety, through shared storytelling and creative self-expression. Working through participatory and co-created projects, activism gave space to marginalised voices including youth, refugees, people with disabilities, and others who are often excluded from decision making, allowing them to share their perspectives and propose solutions. These artistic interventions not only raised awareness but also inspired concrete action, connecting scientific knowledge, policy discussions, and everyday lived experience. In doing so, activism encouraged empathy, strengthened social bonds, and created inclusive platforms where environmental challenges became shared responsibilities and resilience was understood as a collective cultural and social effort.

The practitioners worked with residents, youth, refugees, people with disabilities, low-income households, and rural populations to explore the lived experience of climate change and eco-anxiety. The process was supported by cultural mediators, mental health practitioners, and environmental advisors, ensuring it remained inclusive, safe, and informed by scientific knowledge. Insights were recorded in the Autoethnography Report, which brought together the personal reflections of the artists and the

collective stories of the communities. Regular meetings with partners, facilitators, and thematic experts kept the work aligned and responsive. The process concluded with three artworks, each deeply connected to its place, its people, and their visions for resilient waterfront futures, which will inform the residencies and the wider European campaign.

3. The Community Artivism Artworks

This section presents three community-embedded artworks developed through the WATERFRONTS Community Artivism process and the artist residencies that followed. Created by Anđela Bugarija in Croatia, Darja Nordberg in Sweden, and Gen Daquinan in Greece, each piece grew from a close collaboration between the artist and the local community. Together, they addressed themes of climate change, eco-anxiety, social inclusion, and blue innovation through creative approaches rooted in the specific character of each place. Built on the trust, dialogue, and shared narratives established during the Community Artivism phase, these works show how participatory art can turn environmental concerns into shared cultural expression, inspire local action, and leave a lasting impact. They also highlight how creative collaboration can strengthen resilience within communities while fostering exchange and understanding across borders.

3.1 Form, Color & Emotions – Darja Nordberg & Martina Claesson – Gothenburg, Sweden

Overview of the intervention

Form, Color & Emotions was a participatory workshop series led by Swedish artists Darja Nordberg and Martina Claesson in Gothenburg. The intervention invited community members to explore the relationship between climate change, emotions, and visual expression through colors and forms. Participants were asked to assign colors to feelings—such as eco-anxiety or hope—and to sketch forms that embodied their visions of the future. These exercises prompted reflection on climate emotions in ways that transcended words. The process culminated in the decision to transform

workshop outcomes into blown-glass objects, using local materials and sustainable production, embedding both aesthetic and ecological values into the final work.

Context

The workshops took place at Omställningslabbet, a creative maker-space situated by the ocean in Gothenburg, Sweden. The location itself reflected the project's environmental grounding but also posed challenges of accessibility. Participants came from varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, including individuals with disabilities, low-income households, and migrants with limited Swedish language skills. This diversity gave rise to a rich exchange of perspectives on climate change, identity, and the emotional weight of eco-anxiety.

Community activism process

Nordberg and Claesson adopted a highly participatory approach. Recruitment combined social media outreach with spontaneous invitations on the street. Once inside the workshop, participants worked through exercises in color play, sketching, paper cutting, and writing, all connected to the question of how the future *feels*. For instance: *Is anxiety green or grey? Is the future sharp-edged or rounded?* These visual and tactile methods created a non-verbal entry point for participants to articulate difficult emotions. Discussions followed, allowing personal reflections to be shared—anonously when needed—to foster safety and openness. The collaboration with Omställningslabbet anchored the process in an environmentally focused, community-oriented space

Themes & Messages

- **Climate & environmental change** – By translating abstract concerns into tangible colors and forms, the work reframed climate change as an everyday emotional reality rather than a distant phenomenon.
- **Eco-anxiety** – Exercises encouraged participants to externalize and process climate-related fears in creative ways, reducing isolation and validating the sensitivity of these experiences.

- **Blue innovation** – The artists committed to sustainable production, using local glass-blowing practices in Limmared to transform the workshop results into physical artworks, demonstrating a low-carbon, place-based approach to creative making.
- **Social inclusion** – By welcoming participants across cultural and socio-economic divides, including those with limited language access, the project ensured a plurality of voices shaped the narrative.

Artistic and methodological approach

The intervention blended design thinking, participatory art, and environmental reflection. Sketching and color association offered intuitive pathways into climate dialogue, while the prospect of glass-making connected workshop outputs with material innovation. The co-creative model allowed participants not only to contribute but to influence outcomes, reinforcing WATERFRONTS' principles of community-based care and cultural inclusion. The collaboration between a textile designer (Claesson) and an industrial designer (Nordberg) also added an interdisciplinary dimension, combining different artistic languages into a shared methodology.

Impact & Reflections

The workshops generated curiosity, pride, and enthusiasm among participants, who described the experience as challenging yet rewarding. Many expressed excitement about the transformation of their contributions into glass artworks and looked forward to the planned exhibition. For the artists, the process reaffirmed art's capacity to make climate resilience tangible and emotionally resonant. At the same time, they identified lessons for future iterations, including the need for more central venues and deeper focus on color as a research method. Overall, the intervention demonstrated how participatory art can act as a bridge between personal emotion and collective environmental action, while rooting innovation in local materials and practices

3.2 ΕΙΚΟΛΟΓΙΑ (Eikologia) – Gen Daquinan – Mytilene, Lesvos, Greece

Overview of the intervention



EIKOLOΓIA is a participatory photography and zine-making project co-created with youth living in Lesbos, Greece. Led by Gen Daquinan, the intervention asked a simple but profound question: *What does the future look like through your eyes?* Through nine workshops, young people explored their everyday lives with cameras, capturing images that reflected their hopes, fears, and aspirations in the context of climate change. The project's title—combining the Greek words for “image” (εικόνα) and “ecology” (οικολογία)—proposed a “visual ecology” where seeing becomes an act of care and reimagination. The work culminated in a public exhibition and zine-making session, inviting the wider community to engage with youth perspectives on environmental futures.

Context

Lesbos is a Greek island with a rich maritime heritage, shaped by fishing, agriculture, and migration routes, but also facing increasing environmental pressures from climate change, rural depopulation, and economic uncertainty. Lesbos's youth navigate this complexity daily—balancing deep ties to place with anxieties about its future. The project engaged young people from low-income and rural backgrounds, in a creative exploration of how they perceive, imagine, and assert agency over the environmental future of their island.

Community activism process

With expertise in participatory research, youth engagement, and climate-focused storytelling, Gen created a safe, open environment where young people could discuss environmental changes they observed, share personal stories, and experiment with photography as a tool for reflection.

The workshops combined peer interviews, technical training in photography, and thematic exploration of climate change impacts on Lesbos. Youth documented their rural landscapes and shorelines while articulating what they valued, feared losing, or hoped to protect. As the process evolved, participants took ownership of key decisions, from the project's title to the design of the final exhibition. The culminating zine-



making workshop turned photographs and reflections into a collective artefact, embedding student agency in both form and content.

Themes & Messages

The project bridged youth expression and environmental awareness, addressing multiple WATERFRONTS themes:

- **Climate & environmental change** – Photographs taken by youth documented eroded shorelines, abandoned farmland, and altered seasonal rhythms, blending aesthetic observation with environmental witnessing. These visual narratives connected climate impacts to everyday life on Lesvos, making ecological transformation visible, personal, and grounded in shared local experience.
- **Eco-anxiety** – Peer interviews surfaced dystopian visions of Lesvos's future, often tied to feelings of isolation and uncertainty. Through workshops, these fears were reframed into hopeful, place-based narratives, empowering youth to imagine resilient futures and identify what might inspire them to remain.
- **Social inclusion** – The process engaged youth from varied socio-economic, geographic, and cultural backgrounds, prioritising rural voices often absent from island planning. Collaborative methods ensured each participant's perspective shaped the final work, fostering equity, empathy, and cross-community connection across generational and spatial divides.
- **Blue innovation** – Without relying on high-tech solutions, the project innovated by using photography, zine-making, and youth-led storytelling to stimulate marine and coastal stewardship. This creative, low-cost approach expanded local environmental dialogue while equipping young people with tools for ongoing community engagement.

Artistic and Methodological Approach

The intervention combined participatory photography, zine-making, and narrative storytelling, embodying the WATERFRONTS principles of community-based care, cultural inclusion, and transnational exchange. Rooted in Gen's personal experience

growing up on a flood-prone area, the methodology integrated autobiographical insight with collaborative, place-based research.

Workshops were designed to balance structure with flexibility, providing technical guidance in photography while allowing youth to determine thematic focus, visual style, and narrative tone. This approach encouraged ownership of the creative process and ensured that the resulting work reflected youth priorities. Photography operated simultaneously as a research tool and an artistic medium, capturing both environmental realities and emotional responses.

The zine format was chosen for its accessibility ensuring that the work could circulate beyond the school and exhibition. By positioning youth as co-authors rather than subjects, the project fostered agency, mutual respect, and sustained engagement with climate and community futures.

Impact & Reflections

EIKOLOGIA generated a strong sense of pride, creative confidence, and environmental awareness among participating youth. Seeing their images, words, and ideas presented in a public exhibition validated their contributions and positioned them as active voices in community dialogue. Many described the experience as transformative, shifting their perception of climate change from a distant, abstract issue to one deeply connected to their everyday lives and the future of Lesbos.

The process also fostered a stronger sense of belonging, encouraging youth to reflect on their relationship to the island and their role in shaping its environmental future. Visitors to the exhibition and readers of the zine gained an intimate view into youth perspectives, challenging assumptions about disengagement and apathy. The work demonstrated the potential of participatory art to operate simultaneously as a reflective practice and an activist strategy—reshaping local narratives, influencing community priorities, and making space for youth-led visions of sustainability.

3.3 Between Timeframes – Anđela Bugarija – Bibinje, Zadar, Croatia

Overview of the intervention



Between Timeframes is a community-driven photographic project that weaves together local memory, artistic reinterpretation, and performative expression. Dance artist Anđela Bugarija collaborated with residents of Bibinje to collect archival family photographs depicting the town's transformation over decades. These images were reinterpreted through new performative photographs staged in the same locations, integrating the human body into the evolving coastal landscape. The work culminated in an exhibition juxtaposing past and present, subtly addressing urbanisation, climate impact, and the shifting identity of a coastal community.

Context

Bibinje is a small coastal town near Zadar, Croatia, usually perceived as Zadar suburbia, with a strong sense of local heritage but facing rapid transformation due to urbanization, tourism, and environmental change. The community includes long-standing fishing and maritime traditions, now intersecting with growing tourism pressures. Participants ranged from youth to older residents, including people with disabilities, individuals from low-income backgrounds, and those living in rural settings.

Community activism process

Anđela built her project from the trust and relationships formed during the initial Community Artivism task. Early sessions revealed residents' personal stories and treasured photographs, which became the project's foundation. Partnering with local photographer Leo Banić, she issued an open call for community members to share images and memories of Bibinje. Several participants also took part in producing new staged photographs at the original locations, blending historical and contemporary perspectives. This co-creative process shaped the visual narrative and grounded it in authentic local voices. The exhibition incorporated visitor reflections, embedding community insights and environmental concerns into both the process and the outcome.

Themes & Messages



The project offered a layered exploration of how human activity shapes the identity, memory, and future of coastal communities. By juxtaposing archival photographs with newly created images in the same locations, it invited viewers to witness the gradual transformation of Bibinje's landscape and to reflect on their own role in this change. The work addressed eco-anxiety not by amplifying fear, but by creating a space for reflection, conversation, and collective meaning-making—transforming nostalgia and concern into active engagement with the community's environmental future.

- **Climate & environmental change** – The pairing of past and present images revealed visible shifts caused by urbanisation, tourism growth, and broader coastal transformation. This visual narrative encouraged recognition of subtle environmental changes that might otherwise go unnoticed.
- **Eco-anxiety** – By connecting personal memories to environmental change, the project channelled feelings of loss or uncertainty into shared creative expression. It reframed eco-anxiety as a catalyst for dialogue and resilience.
- **Blue innovation** – The project encouraged sustainable thinking about human–sea relationships, using art to provoke discussion about how coastal development and environmental stewardship can coexist, inspiring more thoughtful interactions with the marine environment.

Artistic and methodological approach

The intervention brought together dance, photography, and community storytelling in a way that embodied the WATERFRONTS principles of community-based care, interdisciplinary collaboration, and cultural inclusion. At its core, the project wove together visual and performative arts with personal narratives, ensuring that the creative process was as meaningful as the final outcome.

The use of archival photographs anchored the work in the community's own visual history, while the creation of new performative images invited reflection on the passage of time and the forces shaping Bibinje's transformation. The inclusion of the artist's own movement practice added a human, embodied dimension, physically situating the body within the evolving coastal landscape.

The approach was deeply participatory. Residents were not only sources of material but active co-creators, influencing the selection of locations, the framing of images, and the emotional tone of the work. This participatory model ensured that the resulting visual dialogue between past and present was rooted in authentic local perspectives. By bridging disciplines and perspectives, the project became a meeting point where environmental observation, cultural memory, and artistic interpretation converged, fostering both critical reflection and emotional connection.

Impact & Reflections

The work sparked pride, nostalgia, and deep reflection within the community, resonating across generations. For participants, seeing their personal histories reimagined in an artistic context offered both validation and a renewed sense of belonging. It strengthened intergenerational ties, as younger residents engaged with the visual memories of older community members, creating opportunities for dialogue about the past and the future.

Visitors to the exhibition reflected not only on Bibinje's changing environment but also on their own relationship with place, memory, and the sea. The project encouraged audiences to connect environmental change with lived human experience, making issues such as urbanisation, tourism pressure, and coastal transformation tangible and emotionally compelling.

By bridging personal memory with environmental awareness, the work showed how art can serve as a catalyst for resilience, fostering a sense of shared heritage and responsibility. It demonstrated that community-led creative processes can inspire more thoughtful engagement with the local environment and contribute to long-term cultural and ecological sustainability.

4. Impact assessment

The three community activism artworks delivered social, cultural, and environmental impacts, each rooted in its unique geographical and social setting yet aligned through a shared commitment to community engagement, environmental awareness, and creative collaboration. Collectively, they strengthened intergenerational relationships,

fostered dialogue across cultures and backgrounds, and enriched public understanding of how human activity shapes and is shaped by waterfront ecosystems.

By employing creative processes grounded in co-creation, participants were able to link personal and collective memories to urgent environmental issues. This transformed climate change, urbanisation, and coastal transformation from abstract, distant concepts into lived, relatable experiences anchored in place. The use of sensory and participatory methods, provided multiple entry points for engagement, and made complex topics accessible while also sparking emotional connection and critical reflection.

Quantitatively, the initiatives involved approximately 91 direct participants through structured workshops, collaborative walks, and hands-on creative sessions. In addition, they reached an estimated 450 indirect participants via public exhibitions, community events, and the circulation of printed or digital materials. These audiences extended beyond immediate localities, contributing to a broader awareness of coastal and climate-related challenges across different European contexts.

Form, Color & Emotions (*Gothenburg, Sweden – Darja Nordberg & Martina Claesson*)

- Number of participants: 25 direct contributors; ~200 public audience members
- Age range: 25–60 years
- Gender: ~60% female, 35% male, 5% non-binary or preferred not to say
- Socio-economic profile: Swedish-born residents, newly arrived migrants from the Middle East, Africa, and Eastern Europe. Fishermen, climate activists, maritime workers, migrants with limited Swedish language skills.

EIKOΛOΓIA (*Mytilene, Lesvos, Greece –Gen Daquinan*)

- Number of participants: 30 youth; ~100 indirect community audience members through exhibition and zine circulation
- Age range: 15-17 years
- Gender: ~50% female, 50% male

- Socio-economic profile: Youth from geographically remote villages, low-income households with limited access to cultural activities, and those under-represented in environmental policy discussions

Between Timeframes (*Bibinje, Zadar, Croatia –Anđela Bugarija*)

- Number of participants: 36 direct contributors; ~150 indirect audience participants through exhibition
- Age range: 18–80 years
- Gender: ~55% female, 45% male
- Socio-economic profile: Predominantly working-class and low-income households. People with disabilities, rural residents, long-standing fishing community members, and youth from under-resourced backgrounds

Across the three Community Activism artworks, participation reflected the diversity of the host locations, ensuring broad representation across age, gender, socio-economic status, cultural background, and lived experience.

Qualitatively, the projects generated lasting outcomes. These included the preservation and public sharing of personal narratives, the translation of subtle and often invisible environmental changes into tangible artistic forms, and the empowerment of underrepresented voices to contribute to environmental discourse. In several cases, participants expressed a renewed sense of belonging and agency, while audiences reported shifts in perception and a stronger emotional connection to local environmental issues.

Together, the community activism artworks demonstrate the potential of place-based, participatory art to catalyse social cohesion, cultural continuity, and environmental stewardship, offering models for resilience that can be adapted to other coastal and waterfront contexts.

5. Innovations & Added value

Each community activism artwork demonstrated clear innovation by integrating cultural, social, and environmental dimensions in ways tailored to their specific contexts. Across the artworks, creativity was not an aesthetic afterthought but a



methodological driver, shaping how communities engaged with climate issues, heritage, and the lived realities of waterfront transformation. Innovative combinations of media and process enabled participants to approach environmental themes through multiple sensory and narrative entry points.

A key innovation lay in the capacity to embed climate dialogue within existing cultural identities and community practices. Heritage was mobilised as a framework for discussing sustainability, memory became a tool for visualising change, and sensory immersion fostered empathy for marine and coastal environments. Methods were also designed to be inclusive and adaptable, whether through multilingual facilitation, low-cost materials, or participatory co-authorship, ensuring that creative outcomes could resonate across generations, socio-economic contexts, and cultural backgrounds.

These approaches align strongly with the European Green Deal's emphasis on inclusive, locally anchored climate action and the New European Bauhaus principles of 'beautiful, sustainable, together'. Each intervention modelled ways in which art can contribute to a just transition: by empowering underrepresented voices, fostering social cohesion, and creating environmental communication tools that are both emotionally compelling and practically transferable.

The added value lies in their scalability and adaptability. Processes such as community co-curation, sensory environmental storytelling, and low-barrier publishing formats offer templates that can be applied to other coastal or waterfront contexts, including those with limited resources. Beyond their immediate locations, the interventions illustrate how place-based, participatory art can drive climate resilience, influence local narratives, and inspire behavioural shifts—making them valuable reference points for cultural practitioners, policymakers, and communities seeking to integrate creativity into environmental transformation strategies.

6. Challenges & Lessons learned

While all three community activism artworks achieved solid outcomes, each navigated distinctive challenges that generated valuable insights for future practice. A recurring consideration was the potential for limited initial engagement, particularly in



communities unfamiliar with participatory art or hesitant to share personal experiences. This was addressed through early and sustained relationship-building, co-creation strategies, and the use of accessible artistic entry points that aligned with local cultural references.

Practical and environmental challenges also emerged. Outdoor, site-specific work brought technical demands, requiring adaptive techniques, contingency planning, and flexibility in scheduling. In youth-focused settings, there was at times initial reluctance to speak openly about climate fears. This was mitigated through gradual trust-building, peer-to-peer dialogue, and reframing conversations to balance concerns with visions of hope and possibility.

Several strategies proved particularly effective: integrating cultural heritage as a bridge to environmental themes; combining creative production with direct environmental observation in immersive activities; and adopting low-cost, replicable formats that allowed work to circulate beyond the immediate project site.

Collectively, these lessons underline the importance of context-sensitive facilitation, embedding trust-building into every phase, and selecting artistic methods that are both meaningful locally and capable of wider dissemination. They also demonstrate the value of process-driven flexibility, allowing artistic, technical, and environmental factors to shape the evolving form of the work, while maintaining a clear commitment to inclusive participation and environmental relevance. Such adaptive approaches can ensure that creative interventions remain resilient, impactful, and replicable across varied waterfront contexts.

7. Solutions for eco-anxiety and climate resilience

Across the three community activism artworks, the creative process itself operated as an informal yet effective toolkit for addressing eco-anxiety and fostering climate resilience. Each approach demonstrated that participatory art can provide structured yet flexible spaces where environmental concerns are acknowledged, processed, and reframed into constructive community dialogue.



Heritage-based storytelling proved a powerful entry point, allowing participants to situate environmental change within a shared cultural identity. By pairing personal memory with visible environmental shifts, communities were able to anchor abstract climate issues in familiar narratives, reducing feelings of isolation and helplessness. Sensory immersion—through sound walks, tactile installations, and site-specific creative activities—enabled participants to engage with climate impacts not only intellectually but physically and emotionally, turning apprehension into a sense of place-based connection and care. Youth-led creativity emerged as another core component, empowering young people to move from dystopian expectations toward envisioning hopeful, actionable futures, while also building intergenerational understanding.

Common strategies included: creating safe, inclusive spaces for open dialogue; integrating lived experience with environmental observation; and producing low-cost, shareable creative artefacts that extend the conversation beyond the project's immediate participants. These methods supported both individual emotional resilience and collective capacity to address environmental challenges.

Distilled into a transferable model, these elements form a practical resilience framework rooted in heritage, sensory engagement, and youth-driven expression. Such an approach offers accessible, adaptable pathways for communities to transform climate anxiety into proactive, locally grounded environmental stewardship—ensuring that concern for the future is channelled into meaningful, sustained action.

8. Policy recommendations & Advocacy outputs

The three artworks illustrate how arts-led, community-based interventions can act as valuable complements to formal policy, enriching environmental planning and stewardship by fostering deeper public engagement. Such initiatives demonstrate that participatory cultural practices can translate complex ecological issues into accessible, human-centred narratives, thereby bridging the gap between technical planning processes and community priorities.



At both municipal and EU levels, policy frameworks could benefit from embedding these approaches into coastal management plans, climate adaptation strategies, and environmental education curricula. Heritage-based documentation offers a means of preserving local memory while informing sustainable development choices. Sensory, multi-modal engagement, through sound, visual arts, and tactile experiences, can expand participation in policy dialogues, drawing in groups often underrepresented in environmental decision-making, including rural residents, migrants, and low-income communities. Youth-led creative processes, meanwhile, can generate forward-looking visions that position younger generations not only as stakeholders but as active contributors to long-term environmental strategies.

Advocacy outputs from such interventions, including exhibitions, site-specific installations, community publications, and digital storytelling, serve as effective communication tools for policymakers. These outputs transform abstract data on climate change, biodiversity loss, or coastal transformation into relatable experiences grounded in lived reality, making policy goals more tangible and urgent for the public.

Future cultural policy could explicitly resource structured collaborations between artists, communities, scientists, and policymakers as part of the European Green Deal and New European Bauhaus implementation. By recognising participatory arts as both an engagement strategy and a form of applied environmental research, decision-makers can create more inclusive, locally grounded, and socially resilient pathways to sustainability—ensuring that environmental policies are informed not only by science but also by the diverse voices and creative capacities of the communities they aim to serve.

9. Opportunities for scaling or transferring the Methodology to other EU Waterfronts

Each of the three community activism artworks demonstrates strong potential for transfer and adaptation across European waterfronts, provided that implementation remains responsive to local cultural traditions, ecological conditions, and demographic realities. Heritage-based visual storytelling offers an adaptable framework for

communities with rich photographic or archival resources, particularly in locations where coastal transformation and urbanisation are reshaping traditional livelihoods. By linking environmental change to collective memory, this approach can foster both cultural pride and informed participation in sustainability planning.

Sensory and interdisciplinary engagement models, which combine sound, touch, and narrative, hold particular promise for ports, harbours, and riverfronts where linguistic diversity may otherwise limit participation. Multi-sensory formats can bypass language barriers, making environmental dialogue more inclusive while deepening emotional connections to place. Such approaches can be tailored to address site-specific challenges, from industrial pollution to habitat loss, while maintaining accessibility for participants of all ages and backgrounds.

Low-cost, replicable publishing formats such as zines provide an especially transferable method for youth-led environmental storytelling. Their portability and ease of production make them ideal for schools, community centres, and informal learning settings, including in resource-limited contexts. By placing authorship directly in the hands of young people, these tools can catalyse intergenerational dialogue and embed climate narratives in local cultural life.

Scaling these methodologies could be supported through an open-access resource hub, hosting workshop templates, facilitation guides, partnership models, and case studies. Such a platform would enable artists, NGOs, educators, and municipal authorities to adapt the core principles to diverse environmental, social, and policy contexts. By fostering a shared pool of adaptable tools, this approach could accelerate the integration of participatory, arts-led methods into environmental action across European waterfronts, strengthening both cultural vitality and ecological stewardship.

10. Conclusion & Next steps

The Community Artivism task demonstrated the transformative potential of participatory art to address climate change, eco-anxiety, and social inclusion in waterfront communities. Across the three case studies, inclusive co-creation processes strengthened social cohesion, preserved cultural memory, and deepened



environmental awareness, while producing innovative, locally rooted artworks. The findings highlight the value of embedding heritage, sensory engagement, and youth-led creativity into climate resilience strategies, offering transferable models for other European contexts. These outcomes provide a strong foundation for the next phase of WATERFRONTS: the artistic residencies. The trust, narratives, and collaborative methods established here will directly inform and enrich the residencies' development, ensuring continuity between community-led insights and artist-driven production. The subsequent chapter presents the artworks produced during these residencies, building on the relationships, themes, and creative frameworks initiated in the Community Activism phase to further explore, expand, and connect waterfront stories across transnational contexts.

