

WATERFRONTS

Waterfront Culture For Resilience Against Climate Change & Eco-Anxiety

**D3.1 Artworks: Report on the 9 artworks produced during
the Community Artivism and the Blue Residency tasks**



Prepared by: IM Industries & LATRA

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WATERFRONTS Consortium



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1. Introduction

This report brings together the creative outcomes (artworks) developed through two key artistic activities within the WATERFRONTS project: Community Artivism and the Blue Residency. These two work streams form the artistic backbone of the project, engaging with climate change, eco-anxiety, and the lived realities of coastal communities through participatory, site-specific, and socially engaged artistic practices.

Presented here as two distinct chapters, this report features a total of nine artworks. Three developed through Community Artivism activities (Task 3.1) and reported on by task lead LATRA, and six produced as part of the Blue Residency activities (Task 3.2) and reported on by task lead IM Industries. These works were conceived and created in close dialogue with local communities, researchers, activists, and policymakers, and span a range of artistic disciplines including dance, visual arts, ceramics, video, photography, and design.

The report outlines each artwork's thematic focus, creation process, and intended impact - showcasing the richness and diversity of artistic responses across Croatia, Greece, and Sweden. It also highlights the shared values underlying the project: collaboration, inclusion, and creative action in the face of climate-related challenges.

By assembling all nine artistic contributions in one document, this report offers a comprehensive overview of how the WATERFRONTS project uses art to connect people, place, and purpose: paving the way for sustainable and resilient futures through culture.

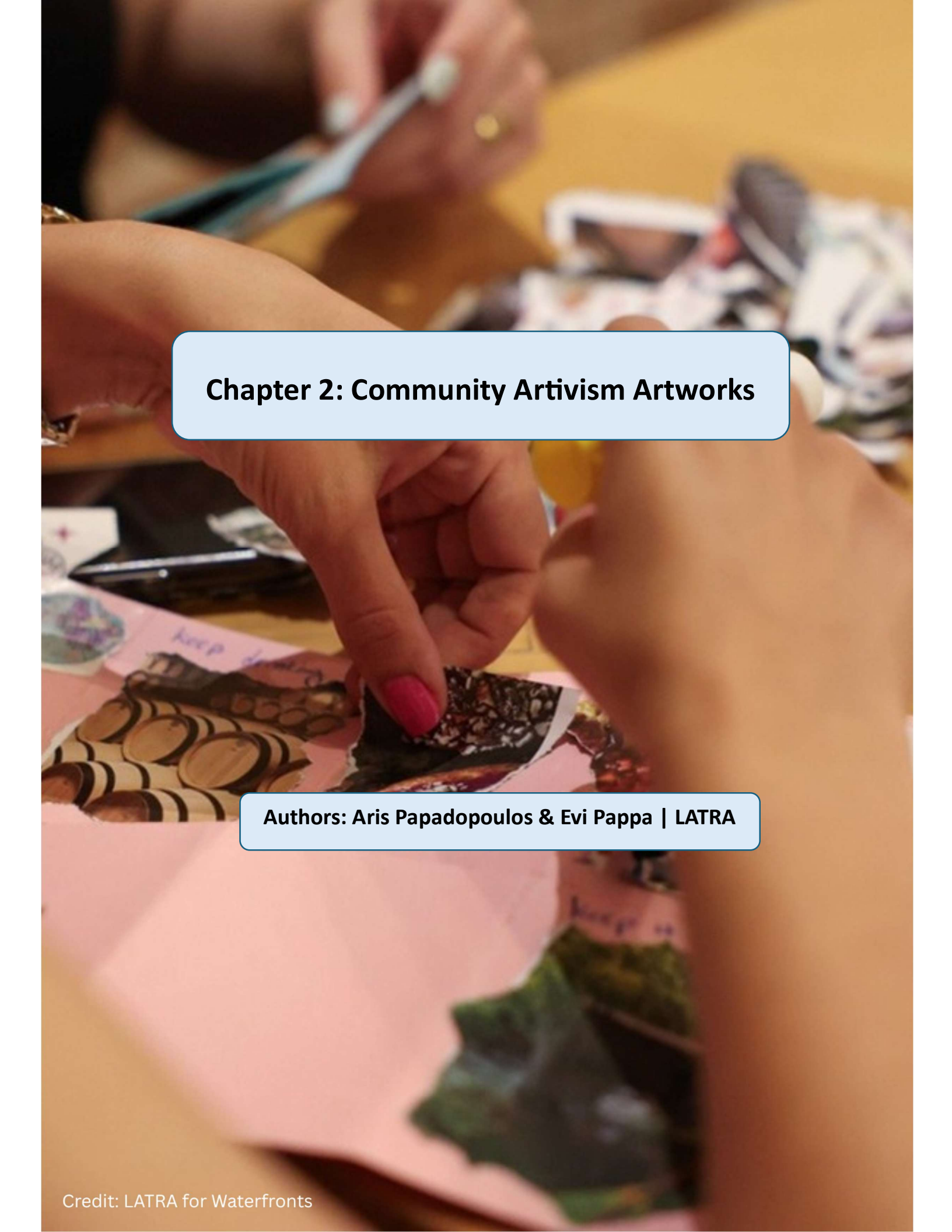


1.1 About the Waterfronts project

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.





Chapter 2: Community Activism Artworks

Authors: Aris Papadopoulos & Evi Pappa | LATRA

2. Introduction to the Community Artivism task

This chapter presents three of the nine artworks to be developed within the WATERFRONTS project, focusing on those created through the Community Artivism 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.

2.1 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.

2.2 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 artivism in addressing climate change, eco-anxiety, and social inclusion

Artivism, 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, artivism 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, artivism 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.

2.3. 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.

2.3.1 *FORM, COLOR & EMOTIONS* – Darja Nordberg & Martina Claesson – 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.



Figure 1: Images from the community activism workshop *FORM, COLOR & EMOTIONS*
Artists: Darja Nordberg and Martina Claesson

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— anonymously when needed—to foster safety and openness. The collaboration with Omställningslabbet anchored the process in an environmentally focused, community-oriented space

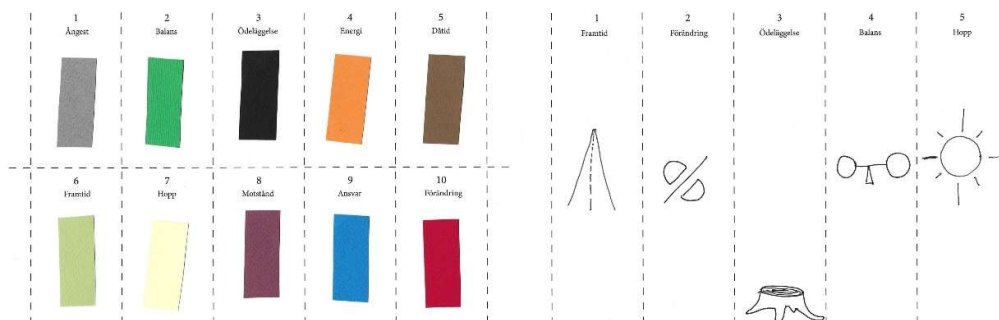


Figure 2 Figure 3: Images from the community activism artwork *FORM, COLOR & EMOTIONS* | Artists: Darja Nordberg and Martina Claesson | Colour on the left, form on the right

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 glassmaking 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

2.3.2 EIKOLOGIA (ΕΙΚΟΛΟΓΙΑ) – Gen Daquinan – Greece

Overview of the intervention

EIKOLOGIA (ΕΙΚΟΛΟΓΙΑ) is a participatory photography and zine-making project co-created with youth living in Lesvos, 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.



Figure 4: Images from the community activism artwork EIKOLOGIA | Artist: Gen Daquinan Images taken by youth of Lesvos participating in Gen’s participatory workshops

Context

Lesvos 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. Lesvos’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 Lesvos. 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.



Figure 5: Images from the community activism artwork EIKOLOGIA | Artist: Gen Daquinan
The left image shows Lesvos youth engaging in the workshops, while the image on the right shows the public exhibition organised by the artist and youth together to showcase their work.

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 in 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 (ΕΙΚΟΛΟΓΙΑ) 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.

2.3.3 BETWEEN TIMEFRAMES – Anđela Bugarija – 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.



Figure 6: Image of artist Andela Bugarija with her community activism artwork *Between Timeframes*

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 Activism 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.



Figure 7: Images from the exhibition *Between Timeframes* organised as part of the community activism work of Andela Bugarija

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.

2.4 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.

EIKOLOGIA (ΕΙΚΟΛΟΓΙΑ) (*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 Artivism 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 artivism 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.

2.5 Innovations & added value

Each community artivism 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.

2.6 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.

2.7 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.

2.8 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.

2.9 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.

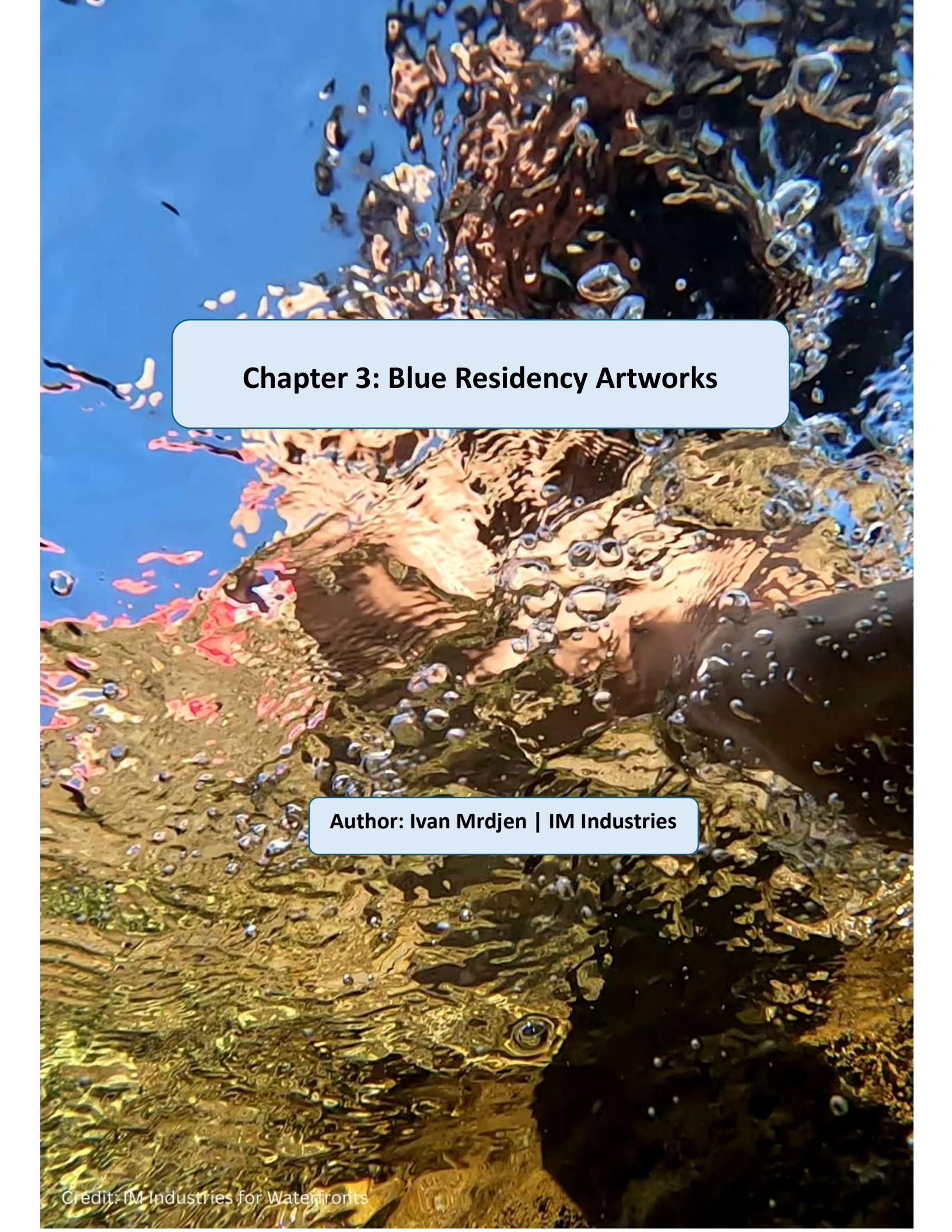
2.10 Conclusion & Next steps

The Community Activism 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.



The background of the entire page is an abstract artwork. It features a dense, textured surface that resembles water ripples or a highly reflective, uneven material. The colors are vibrant and varied, including deep blues, bright oranges, yellows, and greens, which are intermingled and reflected in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is one of a dynamic, fluid environment.

Chapter 3: Blue Residency Artworks

Author: Ivan Mrdjen | IM Industries

3. Introduction to the Blue Residency task

The following document presents the artistic outcomes created within the framework of the Blue Residency, an artistic core activity of the WATERFRONTS project. The residency was implemented between August and October 2025, involving six emerging artists from Croatia, Sweden, and Greece. Throughout this period, artists developed six original artworks, inspired by the project's core themes: climate change, coastal resilience, and community engagement.

The Blue Residency process was designed as both individual and collaborative. Artists engaged in regular local meetings with their respective partner organizations (IM Industries, LATRA, and Gotaland), who provided ongoing support, guidance, and mentorship throughout the research and creation phases. Additionally, monthly online group sessions brought all participating artists together, enabling interdisciplinary exchange and mutual feedback, and fostering a sense of European creative community.

The artistic research and creation processes took place across diverse working environments, including outdoor coastal sites, galleries, studios, and community spaces, and involved collaborations with other artists, craftspeople, and local community members. These interactions informed both the conceptual and material dimensions of the works.

The resulting artworks are:

From Sweden:

- Darja Nordberg and Martina Claesson, designers, co-created *AVTRYCK* and *TONER*, two series of glass objects developed in collaboration with glassblower and visual artist Bevan Tako.

From Greece:

- Aspasia Gianneta, a sculptor, crafted *VESSELS*, a collection of nine ceramic sculptures inspired by forms of resilience and care.

- Apo Gonidellis, a visual artist, developed *THE CURRENTS OF LESVOS*, a participatory photographic collage exploring memory, migration, and place.

From Croatia:

- Anđela Bugarija, a dance artist, created *I'MPRINT*, a choreographic reflection captured as a dance film.
- Kristina Bugarija, a visual artist, produced *TALES OF THE SEA*, a series of paintings exploring emotional responses to coastal change.

These artworks will be publicly presented during the Community Event activities in each country in the upcoming months and will also be used as a visual part of the project's online campaign.

3.1 Swedish artworks

3.1.1 Darja Nordberg & Martina Claesson: *AVTRYCK*

AVTRYCK consists of 3 large transparent glass sculptures created using bark and clay moulds. Each piece carries the texture of the natural surface. The transparency of the glass allows light to pass through, highlighting the material's delicate structure. The artists chose glass because it is fragile and interacts with light, it has potential for shadow play. Working with this unfamiliar medium required experimentation and collaboration with the glassblower. The artists approached the project as a process of exploration. They had no prior experience with glass and experimented with how bark could transfer its surface texture onto molten glass. They created clay moulds from natural textures and worked with a glassblower to test the results. Each mould changed slightly with repeated use, creating variations that reflect both the process and the material's response to heat and pressure. The whole artistic process builds upon their workshops held for community members in Sweden.



Figure 8: Images from the artwork: AVTRYCK | Artists: Darja Nordberg & Martina Claesson Discipline: Sculpture | Creative collaborator: Bevan Taka (glassblower and artist)

AVTRYCK explores how emotions and the environment can take form and leave traces. Through earlier workshops with local community members, participants linked feelings such as anxiety, balance, and resistance to shapes found in nature. These insights inspired the artists to use a fallen tree's bark as a mould, transferring its texture onto glass. The bark was collected after a storm and used as a casting surface, allowing

the natural pattern to shape the final pieces. Each imprint preserves the unique structure of the tree, showing how natural materials can record change.

AVTRYCK connects to the project's focus on resilience and community engagement. The artists used material from the local environment and techniques that reflect cycles of change and renewal. The glass imprints relate to the project's wider investigation of environmental processes and transformation.

This work represents an experimental journey in which the result was unknown at the beginning. The artists decided only on the material – glass - and allowed the process to guide them, taking bark from a fallen tree. No two pieces are identical, just as no two trees are alike. This variation is an expression of natural diversity. They intended to show the entire process - from bark to form to clay to glass - as a record of transformation. The moulds change with each use, an effect they find both unpredictable and beautiful.

3.1.2 Darja Nordberg & Martina Claesson: *TONER*

TONER (Tones) is a series of smaller glass objects, each coloured and textured by hand. The artists worked with a glassblower to explore different tones, opacity, and surface patterns. While they share a tactile quality with *AVTRYCK*, their texture is less pronounced because of the combination of colour and light. The result is a group of glass forms that reflect the community's emotional landscape through hue and material. The community workshop provided the foundation for *TONER*. Participants repeatedly associated the same colours with certain emotions, showing that colour can reflect shared understanding. The artists also noted the difficulty of reaching people outside the city center, a reminder of how access influences participation. These experiences informed both the artistic choices and the practical aspects of community work.

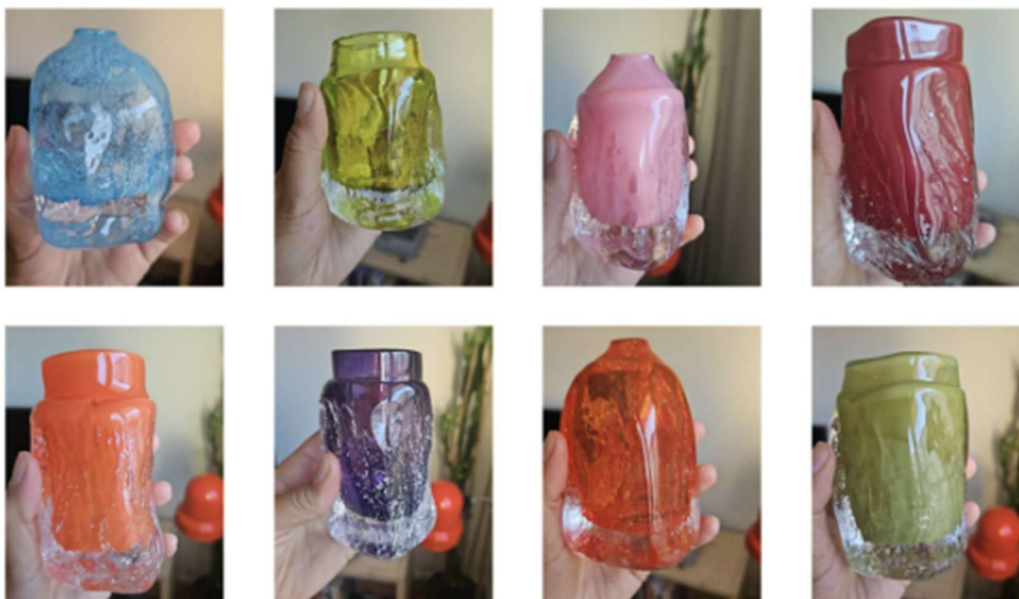


Figure 9: Images from the artwork *TONER* | Artists: Darja Nordberg & Martina Claesson | Discipline: Sculpture | Creative collaborator: Bevan Taka (glassblower and artist)

TONER is based on the exploration of colour and emotion researched within the community workshop. Participants connected colours with feelings such as hope, anxiety, and balance. Many chose the same tones for similar emotions, such as yellow for hope, grey for anxiety, and green for balance. These collective results became the basis for the coloured glass objects. Each piece represents one of these emotional responses, translating shared feelings into colour and texture.

TONER connects to the project's focus on climate and community by visualising emotional responses to environmental change. *TONER* transforms collective emotional results into a series of coloured glass objects. The process links personal feeling with shared experience, showing how emotion is part of climate awareness and resilience.

This work represents an experimental process where the result was not defined at the start. The artists wanted to highlight the colours that emerged during the community workshops and translate them into glass. Working with colour required new techniques and testing. Each piece reflects a balance between control and the natural

flow of molten glass. Colour is treated as both structure and emotion, and each object shows the outcome of that exploration.

3.2 Greek artworks

3.2.1 Aspasia Gianneta: *VESSELS*

Overview of the Artwork

VESSELS is a series of nine ceramic sculptures created by Greek artist Aspasia Gianneta during her Blue Residency with LATRA on the island of Lesbos. Rooted in tactile engagement, emotional resonance, and ecological awareness, the work explores the intimate relationship between humans and water — a relationship marked by fragility, dependency, and care. Each sculpture functions both as an individual artwork and as part of a collective ecosystem of meaning. Together, they embody a meditation on balance: between containment and flow, emotion and reason, scarcity and abundance.

The sculptors' forms evoke ancient amphorae — historical objects once used for trade and transport across the Aegean — but Gianneta subverts their function. Her *VESSELS* hold water but cannot carry it away. This conceptual gesture transforms a utilitarian form into a poetic statement on shared resources and environmental interdependence. In the artist's words, *"VESSELS is a study of care — for material, place, and emotion."*

Developed through the Blue Residency's collaborative model, *VESSELS* was informed by dialogue with local residents, marine scientists, mental health practitioners, and environmental NGOs. These exchanges shaped both the material and emotional architecture of the work, linking it to the core themes of the WATERFRONTS project: eco-anxiety, emotional resilience, social inclusion, and the collective stewardship of fragile environments. The artwork stands at the intersection of art, science, and community, proposing that care — rather than control — is the foundation of sustainability.



Figure 10: Images from the artwork VESSELS | Artist: Aspasia Gianneta | Discipline: Sculpture

Context

The work was conceived and produced in Eressos, a coastal village on the southwestern side of Lesvos, an island defined by its maritime identity and ecological complexity. Lesvos has long been a meeting point of cultures, trade, and migration, but it also bears the marks of environmental stress: prolonged droughts, shrinking freshwater sources, and the pressure of seasonal tourism on limited resources. In this landscape, the question of water is not abstract but immediate and embodied — influencing livelihoods, ecosystems, and emotional wellbeing.

Eressos holds a unique position within the island’s social fabric, as it has developed a culture of openness and solidarity that shapes its response to social and environmental change. Gianneta, who lives and works there, has deep personal and professional roots in this setting. Her long-standing relationships with residents, combined with her sensitivity to the island’s rhythms and textures, provided fertile ground for *VESSELS*. The project reflects not only the physical realities of Lesvos’s coastline but also the emotional currents that flow through its people — the coexistence of beauty and anxiety, connection and uncertainty.

By situating *VESSELS* within this environment, Gianneta transforms Lesvos’s waterfront from a picturesque backdrop into an active participant in the work’s meaning. The shoreline becomes both material and metaphor: a liminal space where ecological data, personal emotion, and collective care converge. The artist’s engagement with local scientists and NGOs grounds her creative inquiry in factual realities, while her collaboration with mental health practitioners and community members translates those realities into affective, accessible forms. In this way, *VESSELS* becomes a dialogue between the physical coastlines of the Aegean and the emotional shorelines of human experience.

Creative process and collaboration

The creative process behind *VESSELS* was research-driven, tactile, and participatory. Gianneta began by immersing herself in the daily life and ecology of Eressos, walking

the coastline, studying the textures of rocks and shells, and observing the shifting colours of the sea throughout the day. These observations formed a sensory vocabulary that would later inform the sculptures' surfaces and forms.

Collaboration was a defining feature of the process. The University of the Aegean's Department of Marine Sciences provided scientific data and insight into the island's hydrological systems, helping the artist visualise how water scarcity and marine change affect both ecosystems and livelihoods. Conversations with environmental NGOs such as local water management initiatives ensured that the work resonated with existing sustainability efforts.

Equally significant were collaborations with mental health practitioners, who guided the artist in exploring how colour and form might serve as tools for emotional resilience. The team discussed strategies for embedding sensitivity to eco-anxiety within the artwork's material language, resulting in the choice of vivid, optimistic hues and smooth tactile textures that evoke calm and reflection rather than fear or despair.

Community dialogues also shaped the project. Local residents shared stories of adaptation, resourcefulness, and care in the face of environmental change. These narratives were not only sources of inspiration but also ethical anchors, ensuring that *VESSELS* reflected the community's lived experiences rather than speaking about them from a distance.

Each sculpture was hand-built in Gianneta's studio in Eressos using locally sourced clay, connecting the work materially to its environment. The process of shaping, firing, and glazing became a meditative act that mirrored the project's thematic focus on containment, fragility, and transformation.

Themes and messages

At its heart, *VESSELS* explores care as both an artistic method and a social value. The work reframes water — a universal element — as a shared emotional and ecological resource. Each sculpture's inability to "carry" water beyond itself suggests a

philosophy of non-possession and interdependence, challenging notions of ownership and control that underlie many environmental crises.

A central theme is eco-anxiety, not as a pathology but as a collective emotional response to environmental instability. Gianneta's choice to address this through beauty, colour, and form rather than through overt representation of crisis marks a significant conceptual shift. The bright palette and organic textures encourage reflection through calm rather than confrontation. This approach aligns with recent research connecting aesthetic experience with mental wellbeing, positioning art as a form of psychological care within environmental discourse.

The recurring heart motif across several *VESSELS* serves as a subtle symbol of emotional resilience. It reflects the artist's belief that ecological sustainability cannot be separated from mental and social wellbeing — that communities must nurture empathy and solidarity as much as technical adaptation. The geometric protrusions on other pieces, inspired by wave patterns and sound ripples, represent the energy of collective response: the idea that listening and action radiate outward through community networks, much like vibrations across water.

Symbolically, the *VESSELS* 'surfaces encapsulate the story of Lesvos's landscape: eroded rock formations, marine spirals, and the delicate balance between permanence and change. The dialogue between smooth and rough textures, curves and edges, embodies the tension between stability and vulnerability — an emotional and ecological condition shared by many waterfront communities across Europe.

Through these layered metaphors, *VESSELS* becomes more than a series of objects. It is a conversation in clay — a translation of scientific insight, emotional awareness, and community voice into a tangible form that invites touch, empathy, and reflection.

Artistic and methodological approach

Gianneta's methodology merges material research, embodied observation, and collaborative dialogue into a holistic practice of ecological art. Her approach is

grounded in what might be called “empathic ecology” — an artistic framework that views emotional connection as a prerequisite for environmental care.

Rather than representing water literally, she translates its qualities — fluidity, reflection, containment, flow — into sculptural form. This abstraction allows audiences to engage sensorially and emotionally rather than intellectually, fostering a form of understanding that complements scientific knowledge.

Her use of local clay and marine data situates the work within ecological aesthetics, where materials and processes carry environmental meaning. The act of shaping clay — a substance that itself requires water to be formed and fire to be hardened — mirrors the delicate balance of natural systems under stress. The artist’s decision to retain imperfections on the surface of the *VESSELS* signals respect for natural processes and the acceptance of change.

Methodologically, *VESSELS* exemplifies the transdisciplinary ethos of the WATERFRONTS project. It bridges art, science, and community psychology, positioning the artist as both maker and facilitator. By engaging stakeholders across disciplines, Gianneta demonstrates how creative practice can serve as a research method — generating knowledge through making and conversation.

Impact and reflections

The impact of *VESSELS* extends beyond its material form. Within the community of Eressos, the project became a catalyst for dialogue about water scarcity, emotional wellbeing, and collective responsibility. Through open studio visits and informal conversations, residents reflected on their own relationship with the sea, tourism, and local resources. The work inspired discussions among hospitality workers about sustainable water use and among local activists about emotional fatigue in environmental advocacy.

For the artist, the residency revealed the transformative potential of care as practice. In her reflection, Gianneta noted that what began as a study of scarcity evolved into a

meditation on abundance — the abundance of empathy and collaboration that sustains communities facing change. This shift captures one of the residency's most profound contributions: the redefinition of resilience not as endurance but as mutual care.

Audiences encountering *VESSELS* experience a sensory and emotional connection to the themes of water, fragility, and belonging. The tactility of the ceramics invites touch, encouraging slow contemplation rather than passive viewing. In this way, the work functions both as art and as an emotional literacy tool, enabling people to process environmental concerns in a constructive, embodied way.

In alignment with the broader objectives of the WATERFRONTS project, *VESSELS* contributes to community resilience, emotional awareness, and cultural transformation. It transforms data and anxiety into symbols of care, bridging the often-separated domains of environmental science and human emotion. The process of co-creation and dialogue embedded within the work models how art can support wellbeing and agency in the context of ecological change.

Connection to WATERFRONTS

VESSELS encapsulates the spirit and methodology of the WATERFRONTS project. It embodies the project's commitment to participatory, interdisciplinary, and emotionally attuned creative practice. By uniting the scientific study of Lesvos's fragile water systems with personal and communal narratives, Gianneta demonstrates how art can translate environmental realities into shared human understanding.

The work's grounding in local collaboration, its engagement with eco-anxiety and resilience, and its focus on care as a social and ecological value align closely with the project's cross-border mission. Just as the Community Artivism phase used participatory processes to give form to local concerns, *VESSELS* in the Blue Residency transforms those insights into a mature artistic expression — connecting emotional, scientific, and cultural dimensions of waterfront life.

Through its tactile beauty and conceptual depth, *VESSELS* positions the waterfront not just as a geographic site but as a space of emotional interconnection. It offers a model for how artistic practice can nurture resilience, bridge disciplines, and foster sustainable coexistence between people and their environment. In doing so, Aspasia Gianneta's work stands as both a symbol and embodiment of WATERFRONTS' vision: art as a vessel for care, community, and change.

3.2.2 Apo Gonidellis: *CURRENTS OF LESVOS*

Overview of the Artwork

CURRENTS OF LESVOS is a series of four photographic collages created by Greek artist Apo Gonidellis during their Blue Residency with LATRA on the island of Lesbos. Conceived as both artwork and social encounter, the project weaves together images, memories, and emotions shared by refugee and local youth living on the island. Each collage is built from photographs taken, selected, and assembled by participants, transforming their lived experiences of water scarcity, displacement, and adaptation into a collective visual narrative.

The work explores the emotional and ecological "currents" that shape life on the island's coasts—currents of migration, tourism, environmental change, and personal transformation. Through the participatory process of photography and collage-making, Gonidellis positions art as a tool for listening and connection. The resulting compositions juxtapose images of drought, sea, and human gesture, capturing both anxiety and hope.

Developed under the Blue Residency framework, *CURRENTS OF LESVOS* directly reflects the central themes of the WATERFRONTS project: eco-anxiety, social inclusion, and climate resilience. It exemplifies how socially engaged art can translate scientific and social knowledge into shared visual stories, empowering communities at the literal and symbolic edge of Europe to imagine sustainable futures.



Figure 11: Images from the artwork *CURRENTS OF LESVOS* | Artist: Apo Gonidellis
Discipline: Visual art, photography, participatory collage

Context

Lesvos is a frontline island—geographically positioned at the intersection of Europe and Asia, socially defined by mobility, and environmentally marked by fragility. Its coastline hosts fishing villages, agricultural lands, and tourist infrastructure, but it is also a humanitarian threshold, receiving thousands of refugees across the Aegean. This coexistence of beauty and crisis makes the island a microcosm of the wider challenges facing European waterfronts.

CURRENTS OF LESVOS was developed primarily in Mytilene and surrounding rural areas where environmental stress, migration, and social diversity converge. Seasonal droughts, water shortages, and the pressures of summer tourism place increasing strain on both natural and human systems. For young residents—whether born on the island or newly arrived—water is not only a physical necessity but a metaphor for movement, belonging, and uncertainty.

Gonidellis, a photographer and educator based on Lesbos, has long documented the island’s social transformations. Their personal connection to place is both intimate and critical: They know the rhythms of the sea, the stories of local fishermen, and the precariousness of everyday life shaped by fluctuating tides—literal and political. By situating their project in this context, the artist situates the waterfront as a site of entanglement: where environmental fragility meets human resilience, and where creative practice can offer space for dialogue across divides.

In this sense, Lesbos is not only the setting of the work but its subject and co-author. The island’s coastal ecosystems, social tensions, and flows of people become the very “currents” that structure the artwork’s form and meaning.

Creative process and collaboration

The making of *CURRENTS OF LESVOS* followed a participatory and iterative process rooted in workshops, field visits, and open conversation. Gonidellis began by engaging with a network of partners who grounded the project in lived realities: the University of the Aegean’s Department of Marine Sciences provided ecological context about coastal systems; Iliaktida, a local NGO supporting refugee youth and mental-health initiatives, facilitated access to diverse participants and ensured a safe, inclusive environment; local schools and vocational centres invited students and young adults—many at risk of social exclusion—to take part.

The first phase centred on collective research. Participants discussed what water meant to them—its absence, its power, its symbolic and emotional weight. These discussions surfaced shared feelings of uncertainty and eco-anxiety, connecting environmental degradation with personal experience. The group also explored photographic techniques, learning to use cameras and smartphones to frame the world through their own eyes.

In the second phase, participants captured images around Mytilene’s harbour, rural wells, and inland fields. Some documented cracked soil and empty reservoirs; others

photographed the sea as a space of both hope and fear. In later sessions, the participants met again to select and reinterpret their photographs. Using a mix of hand-cut and digital collage, they combined their images into layered compositions. The process was intentionally low-tech—drawing inspiration from zine culture and community activism—emphasising immediacy and co-ownership over polish.

Gonidellis functioned as facilitator rather than director. They encouraged participants to make aesthetic and thematic decisions collectively, ensuring that the collages reflected the group’s emotional landscape. Guest contributors—marine scientists, local farmers, and mental-health counsellors—joined some sessions, connecting personal stories with wider ecological and social systems. The final outcome consisted of four photo collages, each representing a distinct emotional current: fear, fragmentation, adaptation, and renewal.

This collaborative process transformed the act of art-making into a space of social encounter. Participants who began as strangers—refugees and locals, students and workers—ended as co-authors of a shared visual language of resilience.

Themes and messages

CURRENTS OF LESVOS navigates multiple intersecting themes: eco-anxiety, identity, displacement, and collective adaptation. At its core lies the question of how communities living on the edge—geographically, socially, and environmentally—can transform fear into empathy and action.

Water operates as both medium and metaphor. It appears in the photographs as sea, rain, and absence; conceptually, it signifies fluidity, transition, and interconnection. Through this imagery, Gonidellis examines how the material realities of drought and scarcity echo emotional states of uncertainty and instability. The collages’ fragmented compositions mirror the fractured experience of environmental and social upheaval, while their overlapping layers evoke the intertwined destinies of those who share the island’s limited resources.

The project's engagement with eco-anxiety is particularly nuanced. Instead of amplifying fear, the process of co-creation channels anxiety into dialogue and imagination. Participants translated worry into visual metaphor—dry fields juxtaposed with vibrant seascapes, broken pipes alongside blooming plants—producing an aesthetic of cautious hope.

Social inclusion is another central theme. By inviting refugee and local youth to collaborate as equals, the project dismantled hierarchies often present in public discourse. It demonstrated that environmental issues cannot be separated from questions of justice and belonging. The collages visualise solidarity: different hands shaping a single image, different experiences composing one narrative of adaptation.

Finally, the work engages the emotional and ecological dynamics of the waterfront. The harbour, as both point of arrival and departure, symbolises instability and renewal. By focusing on this liminal zone, Gonidellis situates Lesbos as a site of global resonance—where climate, migration, and emotion converge, and where new forms of coexistence might be imagined.

Artistic and methodological approach

Gonidellis's practice in *CURRENTS OF LESVOS* embodies a participatory documentary methodology informed by community activism, social photography, and ecological storytelling. Rather than producing a singular authorial vision, the artist facilitated a distributed authorship in which every participant's perspective contributed to the collective artwork.

Methodologically, the project integrates field research, creative pedagogy, and collaborative editing. The workshops combined education and expression: participants learned technical skills while simultaneously reflecting on their emotions and surroundings. This fusion of process and reflection aligns with WATERFRONTS' commitment to using art as a form of applied research—where the act of making generates knowledge about both place and self.

Aesthetically, the collages embrace imperfection. Rough edges, torn paper, and overlapping textures resist the smooth finish of digital media, asserting a tactile authenticity that reflects the island's rough beauty and the incompleteness of resilience itself. The inclusion of AI-generated images in some compositions introduces a subtle dialogue between organic and synthetic worlds, echoing the tension between tradition and innovation within the island's environmental future.

The methodological emphasis on collective authorship and emotional literacy positions the project within a broader movement of socially engaged ecological art. It demonstrates how aesthetic practice can operate simultaneously as social research, emotional support, and environmental communication.

Impact and reflections

The impact of *CURRENTS OF LESVOS* unfolded on multiple levels—personal, communal, and discursive. For participants, the workshops offered a safe space for expression and connection. Many refugee youth described photography as a means to reclaim agency: to represent themselves beyond narratives of crisis. Local participants, in turn, gained insight into the experiences of their new neighbours, discovering common ground in shared concerns about water and future livelihoods.

Teachers and NGO facilitators reported increased confidence and empathy among the youth involved. Several participants continued to meet informally after the residency, using photography to document everyday environmental observations—a testament to the project's sustainability as a community practice.

For Gonidellis, the residency redefined the role of the artist as listener and connector. In their reflection, they noted that “art can listen as much as it speaks,” underscoring the power of collaborative creativity to transform passive anxiety into active care. The process revealed that when people photograph their surroundings together, they do more than record—they begin to imagine change.

Connection to WATERFRONTS

CURRENTS OF LESVOS epitomises the values and methodology of the WATERFRONTS project—inclusivity, interdisciplinarity, and creativity as catalysts for environmental resilience. By bringing together refugees, local youth, scientists, and policymakers, the work translates the project’s theoretical framework into lived practice.

Its participatory method mirrors the earlier Community Activism phase, while its realisation under the Blue Residency deepens those insights into a finished artistic form. The project’s focus on emotional literacy and collective authorship reinforces WATERFRONTS’ central idea: that sustainable futures begin with shared stories and mutual care.

Through its layered imagery and collaborative ethos, *T CURRENTS OF LESVOS* re-imagines the waterfront not only as a physical boundary but as a social and emotional commons—a place where diverse experiences flow together, shaping new understandings of belonging and responsibility. In doing so, Apo Gonidellis’s work stands as both documentation and transformation: a living testament to how art can navigate the currents of change, binding community, ecology, and imagination into one resilient horizon.

3.3 Croatian artworks

3.3.1 Anđela Bugarija: *I'MPRINT*

I'MPRINT is a short dance film which combines underwater archival footage and dance. Through editing, the choreography on land merges with underwater imagery, integrating the dancers’ bodies into diverse environments. Each site-specific movement sequence responds to the natural and built environment, turning familiar landscapes into metaphors for ecological vulnerability. The resulting work takes the form of a short dance film (20 minutes), blending dance, video art, and environmental storytelling. This dance film consists of 3 dance miniatures that can also be presented as separate solos in space when needed.



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Figure 12: Images from the artwork *I'MPRINT* | Artist: Anđela Bugarija | Discipline: Dance film | Concept, Script, and Choreography: Anđela Bugarija | Creators of Movement and Performers: Gendis Putri Kartini, Kristina Lisica, Nataša Kustura | Matija Lukman | Editor and VFX: Vedran Kastrapeli | Underwater Footage: Đani Iglič

The dance film *I'MPRINT* explores the complex relationship between humans and nature through the lens of climate change and ecological anxiety. By merging the media of dance and film, the project evokes an inner sense of tension and unease, using the body and movement as tools to reflect on the climate crisis and its impact on both the planet and human life. At the same time, *I'MPRINT* reveals the beauty and vitality of the underwater world - a vibrant ecosystem that reminds us of what must

be protected and preserved. These short dance films aim to raise awareness about the fragile balance between human existence and the environment.

Through contemporary dance, the project gives a voice to the vulnerability of coastal ecosystems, embodying motifs of tension, uncertainty, fragmentation, and adaptation. The movement of the dancers becomes a reflection of both natural processes and human resilience in the face of environmental instability. Invisible threats circulating through the sea and air are transformed into bodily motion - a means of questioning and reimagining the world we inhabit. The work is deeply rooted in the local coastal environment of Bibinje (Croatia) engaging directly with the community through collaboration with local diver Đani Iglčić, whose underwater footage documents marine life, seabed textures, and pollution. This collaboration connects artistic expression with environmental awareness, highlighting the importance of collective responsibility for the coastal ecosystem.

Full video available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ny3dgsWrxOO>

3.3.2 Kristina Bugarija: *TALES OF THE SEA*

TALES OF THE SEA is a series of 3 paintings. The thematic focus on the sea offered a direct point of engagement for the artist, as it represents both a recurring subject and a source of material within the artist's previous work, establishing a natural connection with the residency's objectives. The paintings were made using acrylic on canvas. For additional effects, shells, pebbles, and wire were used. Shells and pebbles emphasize the richness of the sea and biodiversity, while wire, as an artificial material - shiny and thin - represents civilizational progress.



Figure 13: Images from the artwork *TALES OF THE SEA* | Artist name: Kristina Bugarija | Discipline: Visual art - painting

TALES OF THE SEA consists of three paintings that form one narrative in the following sequence:

The first painting, titled *Sunny Day*, represents life bathed in sunlight and surrounded by the sea, which in its beauty and biodiversity contributes to the revitalization and preservation of life in small coastal towns (communities). For the residents of coastal

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communities, the sea represents life - it helps meet existential needs (food, jobs). The waterfronts are social gathering spots, the beaches are places for rest and relaxation. The progress of civilization has perhaps improved quality of life. However, small coastal towns have been overtaken by villas with pools, the coast has been concreted over, and beaches covered with gravel. Civilization has forgotten moderation.

The second painting, titled *Tidal Wave*, depicts the sea's response to human excess. The sea responds with all its force to concrete, gravel, and plastic, showing us the consequences of disrespecting nature. A tidal wave catapults fish - a marine army - into the air, while it submerges ships and cities. Chaos ensues.

The third painting, titled *Sea Side Town*, shows the sea's victory over human excess. But it is a Pyrrhic victory, because the submerged cities have destroyed marine life.

4. Artistic Process and Transnational Exchange

4.1 Cross-border collaboration and shared learning

From the earliest planning stages, the artists from Greece, Sweden, and Croatia worked together through a series of joint online sessions facilitated by the partner organisations. These exchanges began before the transnational meeting in Lesbos, allowing participants to share early ideas, visual references, and concerns related to waterfront life. The dialogue revealed both differences in local realities and a strong sense of common purpose around mental health, care, and climate adaptation.

During these virtual meetings, artists compared the sensory languages of their coastlines. The Swedish team introduced experiments with glass and wood casting, developed in collaboration with local makers, which later inspired Croatian artists to incorporate translucent resin forms in their own work. In return, the Lesbos group shared their eco-pigment techniques made from natural clay and seaweed, which several Swedish artists tested during the residency to achieve colour tones resembling tidal changes.

Moments of deeper reflection emerged when artists compared the social narratives behind their coastlines: stories of refugee arrivals on the Aegean were discussed alongside industrial decline in Gothenburg and mass tourism on the Adriatic. These dialogues helped artists understand that environmental stress and loss of identity manifest differently but stem from shared European dynamics.

By maintaining this ongoing conversation (supported by shared digital folders, regular feedback calls, and in-person discussions during the Lesvos Clinic and Gothenburg Residency) the artists built a genuine network of mutual learning. Their collaborations created subtle but visible links between the final artworks, turning local experiences into a collective European story about vulnerability, adaptation, and care.

4.2 Influence of local contexts

Each partner region shaped the creative process through its own social and environmental realities, giving the project a layered and comparative depth.

In Sweden, artists and community participants worked along the redeveloped waterfronts of Gothenburg, where former shipyards are turning into innovation districts. Encounters with this landscape of transformation brought forward questions about industrial memory, mental health, and belonging. The works produced here echo the psychological tension between progress and loss, the noise of cranes replaced by the quiet anxiety of rapid urban change. Artists explored how built environments can hold emotional residue and how art might serve as a gentle act of repair within the rhythm of regeneration.

In Greece, the island of Lesvos offered a very different atmosphere: a place where environmental fragility intersects with migration and displacement. Artists and local participants reflected on eco-anxiety as part of everyday life—felt through droughts, storms, and the uncertainty of those who arrived by sea. The creative process emphasised care practices and collective healing, transforming community workshops into spaces of empathy and inclusion.

In Croatia, the coastal city of Zadar provided a lens on cultural memory and the pressures of urbanisation and tourism. Artists observed how rapid development threatens to erase the rhythms of traditional life tied to the Adriatic. Their artworks integrated found maritime objects, oral histories, and traces of seasonal flux, expressing nostalgia for balance between human presence and the sea's autonomy.

Taken together, these distinct contexts illustrate how environmental and emotional resilience transcend borders. The transnational structure of WATERFRONTS enabled direct comparison between northern industrial transition, southern humanitarian tension, and Adriatic urban over-exposure. Through artistic dialogue, these local narratives converged into a shared European reflection on how communities inhabit—and imagine healing for—their changing waterfronts.

4.3 Exchange mechanisms

Transnational exchange in WATERFRONTS unfolded through a well-balanced combination of in-person gatherings and ongoing online collaboration. These mechanisms created continuity across countries and ensured that artists could learn from and support one another throughout the entire creative process.

Regular online sessions.

Beginning in April 2025, a rhythm of online meetings every three weeks was established for all participating artists. These informal yet structured sessions functioned as open studios where participants could present progress, raise questions, and receive guidance from peers and mentors. The meetings provided continuity between fieldwork, artmaking, and reflection, cultivating a sense of shared purpose that has continued beyond the residency phase.

In-person gatherings.

Two physical meetings served as milestones of collective learning:

- The Capabilities Clinic in Lesvos (April 2025), where artists first met face-to-face, received interdisciplinary training, and began shaping early ideas for their artworks.
- The Blue Residency meeting in Gothenburg (October 2025), which functioned as a transnational review and creative laboratory. Here, artists presented works-in-progress, exchanged feedback, and participated in an open-studio event with local stakeholders and experts.

Shared digital workspace.

A OneDrive environment hosted planning documents, sketches, and reference material accessible to all partners. Alongside this, a shared OneNote notebook was created specifically for artists; a living notebook for them to post drafts, visual progress, and reflective notes.

Peer-to-peer critique.

Cross-country feedback circles paired artists from different regions to comment on one another's work. These exchanges helped translate local perspectives into shared European narratives while offering emotional support and professional mentorship.

4.4 Reflections from artists and partners

The collaborative rhythm of online meetings, residencies, and peer exchanges gave artists and partners space to pause and reflect on what they were learning together. Beyond the creation of artworks, the process became a dialogue on empathy, care, and the shared emotional dimension of living beside water in times of change. The following short reflections capture key insights that emerged during the exchanges:

"Seeing how others approached eco-anxiety in their own communities changed how I understood care as a creative act." Artist, Lesvos

"Working between North and South made us aware of different relationships to water — from fear of flooding to fear of scarcity." Artist, Zadar

“Facilitating these sessions reminded me that collaboration is not only about sharing results but about creating trust across distances; the artwork grew out of those small moments of listening.” Partner facilitator, Gothenburg

These reflections illustrate how artistic collaboration became a form of mutual mentoring. By recognising differences in local realities yet resonating with the same emotional and environmental concerns, participants developed a deeper collective understanding of resilience, one that is artistic, social, and profoundly human.

4.5 Outcomes of exchange

The transnational exchanges between artists and partners have strengthened the coherence and European identity of the WATERFRONTS project. By maintaining continuous dialogue across borders, the consortium moved beyond isolated national activities and built a shared artistic language grounded in empathy, experimentation, and environmental awareness. The process confirmed that despite different coastal realities, the emotional and cultural challenges faced by waterfront communities are deeply interconnected.

Aesthetically, the exchange shaped a collective visual and material vocabulary. Ideas first tested in Lesvos, such as natural pigments and participatory forms of care, reappeared in the Swedish and Croatian works through new materials like glass, sound, and recycled marine objects. The rhythm of online meetings and peer feedback encouraged reflection rather than competition, resulting in artworks that complement each other thematically; transparency, movement, and traces of human impact recur as unifying motifs across all pieces. Methodologically, the consortium gained a clearer understanding of how regular peer interaction, reflective documentation, and hybrid collaboration can foster creativity even in geographically dispersed teams.

The outcomes of this exchange extend directly into upcoming dissemination actions. The shared experiences and artistic insights will feed into the WATERFRONTS Toolkit,

providing practical guidance for future community art projects addressing climate anxiety. They will also inform the Policy Recommendations, translating artistic reflections into cultural and environmental strategies, and enrich the final exhibition and online campaign, where artworks from all three countries will be presented as parts of one continuous European narrative.

Through this sustained collaboration, the project has demonstrated how cultural cooperation can weave individual acts of creation into a broader tapestry of European resilience, turning artistic dialogue into both method and message.

5. Conclusion

The 9 artworks presented in this report reflect a diverse and compelling range of artistic responses to the complex challenges facing coastal communities in Europe today. Whether rooted in personal reflection, community memory, or scientific research, each work offers a unique perspective on themes of climate change, water scarcity, eco-anxiety, and the need for collective resilience.

Together, these nine works, emerging from both the Community Activism and Blue Residency activities, demonstrate the power of interdisciplinary, community-based art to engage, provoke, and inspire. The artists have worked across different media and geographies, collaborating with community members, professionals, and institutions to create works that are not only aesthetically powerful, but also socially relevant and grounded in the lived realities of their local contexts.

As the WATERFRONTS project moves into its final phases, including upcoming Community Events, Policy activities, and the Final conference, these artworks serve as both evidence and inspiration. They highlight how art can function not only as a mirror to our environmental and social realities, but also as a tool for imagining and shaping better futures.

WATERFRONTS

Waterfront Culture For Resilience Against Climate Change & Eco-Anxiety

WATERFRONTS Consortium



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