

NBRC 2023: Baltic Sea(I)

- Exploring conflicts in the seascape

Paavo Jordman

MAAN6502, Participation in a Geographical Event, 3 ECTS

Learning Diary

Department of Geography and Geology

Faculty of Science

University of Turku

May 2023

Contents

Introduction to NBRC 2023.....	2
Mart Jüssi: Seals as explorers	3
Anu Printsman: Tools for planning coastal landscapes	4
Excursion to the Käsmu Maritime Museum	5
Svenja Ehlers: Potential conflicts between munition clearance operations and different sea users	6
Paavo Jordman: coastLINES	6
From conflicts to syntheses.....	7
References.....	8

Introduction to NBRC 2023

From May 2nd to May 6th, I participated in a scientific congress that was aimed at Geography students and young geographers around the Baltic Sea region. The congress, called NBRC (“North & Baltic Regional Congress”), was one of the yearly regional congresses of EGEA (“European Geography Association”). This year, it was organised by EGEA Tartu with the assistance of EGEA Turku – two local student organisations in the association. It took place in Võsu, Estonia, close by the Gulf of Finland.

Not only was the Baltic Sea related to the location and the participant base of the congress, but it also formed the very theme of the event. Both the lectures, workshops, excursions and trainings during the congress were mostly related to the Baltic Sea. Along with the *sea*, the name of the congress also referred to a group of aquatic mammals, collectively called the *Baltic seal* (lat. *Halichoerus grypus* and *Pusa hispida botnica*; see Jüssi 2012).

In this learning diary, I will cover the scientific and academic content of the congress and reflect on my interpretations and learning outcomes. However, the congress program (see Annex 1) also included leisure activities that I consider important for my experience. Even though I have worked

on marine and coastal themes in my recent studies (see Jordman 2022a, 2023a), my goals for attending the congress were also partly recreational. For this reason, this diary is not a comprehensive description of the congress, but a collage of my experiences, thoughts and interpretations.

Mart Jüssi, 2.5.2023: Seals as explorers

On the first day of the congress, PhD Mart Jüssi from Tartu University gave a lecture on the Baltic seal. Jüssi (2012) had written his dissertation on seals' (in)ability to adapt to the current climate change. However, in his lecture, he covered an even broader range of themes related to the species. Among others, his topics included the historical connections between seal evolution and coastline transgression, methods of using terminal-based positioning in monitoring seals' mobilities, and even seal folklore.

Folklore may seem like an obscure topic that Jüssi possibly used only as an introduction to the main content of his lecture. However, folklore can reveal surprising perspectives on humans' experiences and worldviews (Knuuttila 2007). Furthermore, it can potentially be studied to discover the place of human beings in the terraqueous, multispecies world. I have noticed that this goal has increased in popularity in recent decades along with the focus on *human-animal studies* in Folkloristics (Hiltunen 2021: 7), other Humanities (Schuurman & Räsänen 2020: 8) and the Finnish academia as a whole. For example, Ylimaunu (2000) studied the historical "human-seal relationship of the Baltic Sea" in his dissertation.

How does that relationship appear nowadays, and should it be re-evaluated somehow? According to Jüssi's lecture, the relations between humans and seals are conflicted. Yet, I want to argue that understanding seals' position in that conflict could open alternative, holistic understandings of the marine environment. In his lecture, Jüssi referred to the seal as a "theoretical model organism": while it shares multiple biological traits with humans, it also is "free rolling in 3D" as a highly mobile aquatic species. Could seals' ability to explore "underwater seascapes" (see Le Dû-Blayo & Musard 2014: 2–3) also be used to explore or even harmonise humans' coexistence with the underwater environment?

Anu Printsman, 3.5.2023: Tools for planning coastal landscapes

Before the congress, the participants were provided with a questionnaire. There were five options for workshops, all of which concerned either remote sensing, biogeography or spatial planning. I chose a workshop related to Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), as it felt the most useful in both continuing and diversifying my academic paths.

The five-hour workshop was led by PhD Anu Printsman from Tallinn University. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that she is a fellow humanist of mine, since the subject of Geography apparently is under the umbrella of Studies of Cultures (2023) at the university. Many of Printsman's academic interests, such as "land-sea interactions" (Ruskule et al. 2021) and using participatory emotional mapping (see Nenko et al. 2022) in coastal planning, are also similar to mine.

Printsman introduced us to several frameworks or "tools" for both spatial planning and "better thinking" as a whole (see Amran 2023). I also felt that the methods presented for spatial planning were useful and worth applying to other problem solving scenarios too. For example, Printsman had us fill in a matrix with actors and sectors of interest that maritime and coastal planners need to consider. After choosing the actors, we estimated whether the relations between them were conflicted or not. Among others, my working group identified a potential conflict between landscape protection and renewable energy (Annex 2), because on- and offshore wind farming implies an impact on land and seascapes.

Other methods demonstrated during the workshop included scenario-building. A bit like the method called "FAR" in Futures Studies (see Jordman 2022a: 5–6), Printsman intended it as a tool for imagining alternative futures and assessing the impact of different actions. She appointed that as an independent task for the group. At least one of my groupmates anticipated that the group would break and abstain from executing the task, "as is usual at EGEA congresses". Fortunately, the situation developed differently. Instead, the group agreed on a break and reunion, to which Printsman also arrived (see Annex 3), visibly amazed by the team spirit. In the end, my workshop became the one with the most people performing for the congress audience in our "workshop presentation" (see Annex 1).

Excursion to the Käsmu Maritime Museum, 4.5.2023

The third day of the congress was free of strictly scientific content. Instead, it consisted of two mutually exclusive excursion options: travelling to Narva by bus or hiking to the nearby coastal village Käsmu. I chose the latter, but not because of the hike. Even though I *did* enjoy the total of eighteen kilometres and seven hours of walking by the shore, my choice was based on the destination, Käsmu Maritime Museum.

The museum exhibited both Käsmu's local maritime history and the fictional interior of a woman's dwelling, most likely in the early 20th century. As such, the building symbolised Käsmu's history as a "village of captains' wives and widows". Much of the interior was not original; instead, the rooms had previously served different functions. For example, the bedroom served as a Lenin exhibition during the late Soviet era. (Kapteniprouatuba 2023)

This conflict between exhibiting either Soviet or Pre-Soviet history was not the only one I recognised while in the museum. In addition, I had conflicted feelings about some of the practises of the museum staff: they did not seem to conform to the best practises of professional museum curation. For example, the museum guide, a lovely old lady and possibly a resident of the museum building, told me that she burns wood in the building's fireplaces. I had earlier been taught in Museology that such a practice can damage museum artifacts and biospecimens. However, I want to tolerate these alternative practises and ideologies in the museum industry, as I also have elaborately argued elsewhere (see Jordman 2022c).

Not only was my experience in Museology beneficial to me during the hike. Besides, as an Ethnologist, I was able to observe some objects in the landscape with meanings possibly hidden to some. One such object was a village swing (est. *külakiik*), more precisely "pole swing" (see Sarmela 2007: 275) on the coast of Võsu. Although Sarmela (2007: 276) ignores Estonia when discussing village swings, I suggest that such swings were a symbol of pre-industrial rural youth culture not only in Southern Finland and Ingria, but all around the Gulf of Finland. However, I have to admit that my knowledge of Estonian folk culture is limited. For that reason, I bought Habicht's (1977) book on Estonian vernacular architecture from the Maritime Museum's selection of books. Hopefully, the excursion thus increased my understanding not only of the Geographic but also Ethnologic aspects of Estonia.

Svenja Ehlers, 5.5.2023: Potential conflicts between munition clearance operations and different sea users

The congress program included a “mini conference” with five presentations by the participants:

1. Jan Rose delivered a geologic presentation on subduction processes.
2. Bogdan Dukic discussed the glacier ablation in his hydrogeographic presentation.
3. Elina Maarja Suitso presented her socio-economic research on transgenerational inequality on the outskirts of Tallinn.
4. Corina Todea told about her long trip in Mexico in a manner that resembled ethnographic fieldwork to me.

However, the presentation that was the most interesting to me was given by (5.) Svenja Ehlers from the Kiel University. She raised my awareness on the tons of munitions that were discarded and released into the Baltic Sea shortly after the Second World War. Nowadays, clearance companies are planning to raise the munitions back up. However, the clearance operations may conflict with the safety of seafarers. To improve safety, Ehlers suggested that ships should bypass the operation areas at specific distances. In addition, I thought and commented after the presentation that the seafarers’ awareness of the safety zones should also be improved to prevent the potential conflicts, for example by establishing a public GIS interface.

Paavo Jordman, 5.5.2023: coastLINES

On November 2022, I developed an idea for an art workshop that I nicknamed “coastLINES” (Annex 4). I had skimmed Ingold’s (2007, 2013) work on lines, “meshworks” and “correspondences” in my spare time, and was eager to put his fascinating yet abstract and high-flown theories into practise. Moreover, while participating in mapping workshops called “mapathons” (see Jordman 2022b), I had encountered a problem: geospatial datasets that represent coasts as line vectors often disregard the transitional aspects of coasts (Jordman 2023b). This univocality of representations encouraged me to rethink and broaden the geographic representations of coasts.

During this spring, I clarified my plans for the workshop. I noticed that a group of collaborators in Aberdeen, Scotland, had already implemented a project called “Walking Threads” (Caspersen 2015:

75–130) to apply Ingold’s theories. Inspired by the project, I decided that the objective of the workshop would not only be rethinking the coastal environment, but also humans’ entanglements with the environment. Moreover, I had participated in Heino’s (2023: 141–158) participatory, multisensory art experiment, the ‘listening walk’ (fin. *kuuntelukävely*). I estimated that the listening walk was compatible with the Walking Threads and decided to combine the best of both worlds in coastLINES.

The coastLINES workshop, nominally a “training” (Annex 6), lasted 2.5 hours. I conducted it as an alternative to the Regional Meeting in the NBRC program. There were twelve participants present, including myself. I led the group to the shore *in a line* (Annex 5), connected by a thread, in complete silence. While on the shore, we played the water of the Baltic Sea as a musical instrument, still otherwise muted. On the way back, we became entangled with each other using the thread (Annex 5) and began to visually resemble what Ingold (2007: 82) calls the meshwork. I was no longer in the lead, but the group spontaneously became autonomous, self-managed and even hive-minded. After returning to the congress location, the seawater we collected became a medium for watercolour painting, thus representing the coast in ways alternative to lines.

I was concerned about whether the participants enjoyed the workshop, since there were several intentionally awkward situations en route. However, when the group regathered to verbally reflect on the walk, I felt relieved: the workshop received only positive feedback. Participants also abstracted their experiences using words such as “flow”, “rhythm”, and “connection between nature, human and [one’s] own soul”. This connection was not completely harmonious, since the hive-mind occasionally conflicted with itself (by disagreeing on directions or walking pace) or the environment (by clumsily entangling with a pine). However, these unexpected conflicts were the very aspect that evidenced me that the workshop was a success.

From conflicts to syntheses

In this learning diary, I have discussed my interpretations of the congress program. One major theme I have explored has been that of *conflicts*. These conflicts have been both abstract (such as the one between humans and seals) and concrete (such as those in coastLINES). The importance of the theme was a surprise that I had not expected before the congress.

Do conflicts, then, have a significance in how I understand the marine environments and seascapes now? Heino (2023: 134) quotes Kantonen's [2007: 49, translated] clever thought that "conflict can be the beginning of insight": acknowledging one's own position in a conflict makes it possible to find ways to *dialogue* between counterparts (Heino 2023: 211).

During the congress, I learned that there are many potential conflicts hiding in the seascape. However, I want to reiterate that many conflicts can be resolved through dialogue. I consider the congress itself a proper example of international, intercultural and intercoastal dialogue. After participating in such an event, I feel more prepared to engage in new conflict-solving dialogues that I may encounter in the future.

References

Amran, A. (2023) Tools for better thinking. Untools. <<https://untools.co>> 20.5.2023.

Caspersen, H. (2015; ed.) Humans and the environment / walking threads. *The unfamiliar: an anthropological journal*, 5(1-2). <<https://doi.org/10.2218/unfamiliar.v5i1-2.2015>>

Habicht, T. (1977) *Rahvapärane arhitektuur*. Eesti Nõukogude Sotsialistlik Vabariik riiklik etnograafiamuseum, Eesti rahvakunst 2.

Hiltunen, P. (2021) "Sitä katselee pelon sekaisin tuntein samalla ajatellen, että jospa joutuisi sen hampaisiin niin jo olisi hyvästijättö elämälle lähellä.": Suomalaisten merimiesten ja haikalojen suhde 1800-luvun lopun ja 1900-luvun alun pitkillä merimatkoilla. Bachelor's thesis. University of Turku, School of History, Culture and Arts Studies.

Heino, M. (2023) *Taiteilijana työskenteleminen osana yhteisöllistä maisemansuojelua*. D.A. Dissertation. Aalto University, Department of Art and Media. <<http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-64-1093-7>>

Ingold, T. (2007) *Lines: A brief history*. Routledge, Abingdon.

Ingold, T. (2013) *Making: Anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*. Routledge, Abingdon.

Jordman, P. (2022a) Tulevaisuuskuvia järviruo'on niiton toimintaketjuista Suomessa. Turku University of Applied Sciences, Turku. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.20767.02723>>

Jordman, P. (2022b) Mapping out the mapathon. EGEA Turku. WordPress 4.11.2022 <<https://egeaturkublog.wordpress.com/2022/11/04/mapping-out-the-mapathon>> 20.5.2023.

Jordman, P. (2022c) On tämäkin varsinainen museo! In Anon. (2023; in print) *Museologian julkaisuja – Publikationer i museologi* 2. University of Turku, Pori and Turku.

Jordman, P. (2023a) “Koko Rauman saaristo”: challenges of aquatic representations in cultural mapping and beyond. University of Turku, Pori. <<https://users.utu.fi/pahjor/aquatic-representations>> 20.5.2023.

Jordman, P. (2023b; in print) The life of coastlines. *European Geographer* 17.

Jüssi, M. (2012) *Living on an edge: land-locked seals in changing climate*. PhD Dissertation. University of Tartu, Faculty of Science and Technology. <<http://hdl.handle.net/10062/28038>>

Kantonen, L. (2007) Tahroja esityksessä: yhteisötaiteen etiikkaa. In Jula, J. (ed.) *Taiteen etiikka*, 37–72. Areopagus, Turku.

Kapteniprouatuba (2023) Käsmu meremuuseum, Haljala. <<https://www.kasmu.ee/et/content/kapteniprouatuba>> 20.5.2023.

Knuuttila, S. (2007) Kansanomaisen maailmankuvan tieto-opillisia ongelmia: esimerkin esimerkki, teorian teoria, merkityksen merkitys. In Stark, E. & Stark, L. (eds.) *Kansanomainen ajattelu*, 342–358. Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki.

Le Dû-Blayo, L. & Musard, O. (2014) Introduction: towards a shared language: semantic exchanges and cross-disciplinary interaction. In Musard, O., Le Dû-Blayo, L., Francour, P., Feunteun, J.-P. B. E. & Talassinis, L. (eds.) *Underwater seascapes: from geographical to ecological perspectives*, 1–16. Springer, Cham.

Nenko, A. E., Nedoseka, E. V., Moloko, A. S. & Podkorytova, M. I. (2022) Emotional mapping as a method to analyze subjective quality of urban green zones. *Sociology of science & technology* 13(4). <<http://dx.doi.org/10.24412/2079-0910-2022-4-146-168>>

Ruskule, A., Veidemane, K., Pikner, T., Printsman, A., Palang, H., Arikas, D., Siegel, P., Costa, L., Piwowarczyk, J., Zielinski, T., Romancewicz, K. & Koroza, A. (2022) *Compendium of methodologies on how to address land-sea interactions and development trade-offs in coastal areas* <<http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.19062.06723>>

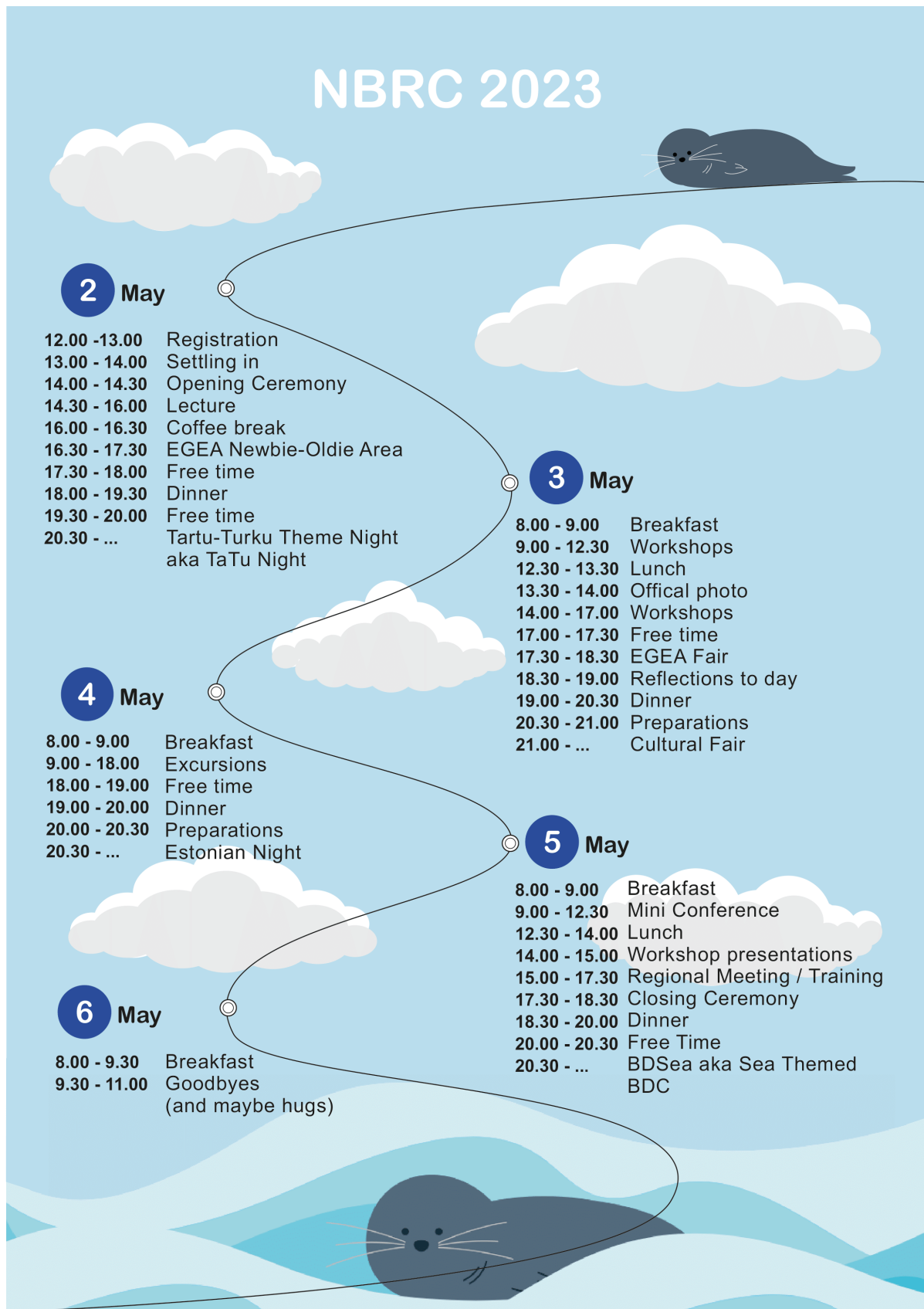
Sarmela, M. (2007) *Atlas of Finnish ethnic culture 2: folklore*. Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki. <<https://www.sarmela.net/suomen-perinneatlas>> 20.5.2023.

Schuurman, N. & Räsänen, T. (2020) Johdanto. In Räsänen, T. & Schuurman, N. (eds.) *Kanssakulkijat: monilajisten kohtaamisten jäljillä*, 7–19. Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki.

Studies of cultures (2023) Tallinn University. <<https://www.tlu.ee/en/ht/studies-cultures>> 20.5.2023.

Ylimaunu, J. (2000) *The sealing cultures and the human-seal relationship of the Baltic Sea*. PhD Dissertation. University of Helsinki, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry. <<http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:951-746-156-9>>

Annex 1. Congress Program



Annex 2. The matrix of conflicts in Maritime Spatial Planning

	Aquaculture	Renewable energy	Tourism: recreational uses of the coasts	Non-renewable energy	Transportation	Infrastructure and hydraulic engineering (piers, ports...)	National parks and landscape protection	Conservation and nature protection	Local inhabitants (and their properties)	Ecosystem services	Sustainability and climate change prevention
Aquaculture	X	1	2	2	1	2	0	1	1	0	0
Renewable energy		X	0	2	1	0	2	1	1	0	0
Tourism: recreational uses of the coasts			X	1	0	0	0	1	?	1	2
Non-renewable energy				X	0	0	2	2	2	1	2
Transportation					X	0	2	1	1	0	2
Infrastructure and hydraulic engineering (piers, ports...)						X	2	2	0	1	1
National parks and landscape protection							X	0	1	0	0
Conservation and nature protection								X	1	0	0
Local inhabitants (and their properties)									X	1	1
Ecosystem services										X	0
Sustainability and climate change prevention											X

Legend

0 – presents no relation or neutral one (green)

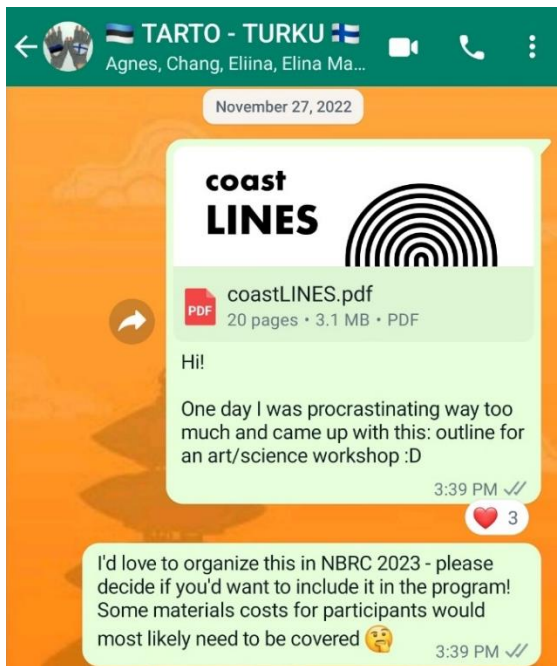
1 – presents problematic relationship (yellow)

2 – presents a conflict (red)

Annex 3. Group photo of Anu Printsman and her workshop participants



Annex 4. Screenshot of two WhatsApp messages



The “coastLINES.pdf” includes my presentation materials, even though I only partially used them in the training. The materials are accessible by using the following link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DmHmiML6vYzGDM7nzIT0ZnTzl1DlCHvM/view?usp=sharing>

Annex 5. Photos of the coastLINES participants



Annex 6. Certificate of participation



Paavo Jordman

has participated in

EGEA North & Baltic Regional Congress 2023

"BALTIC SEA(L)"

and has successfully carried out the training

CoastLINES

May 2–6, 2023
Võsu, Estonia.

Main Coordinator
Agnes Rosenberg

Main Coordinator
Marie Johanna Univer

Regional Contact Person
Veera Niemi



UNIVERSITY
OF TARTU



KÜSK Kodanikuühiskonna
Sihtkapital



egea

