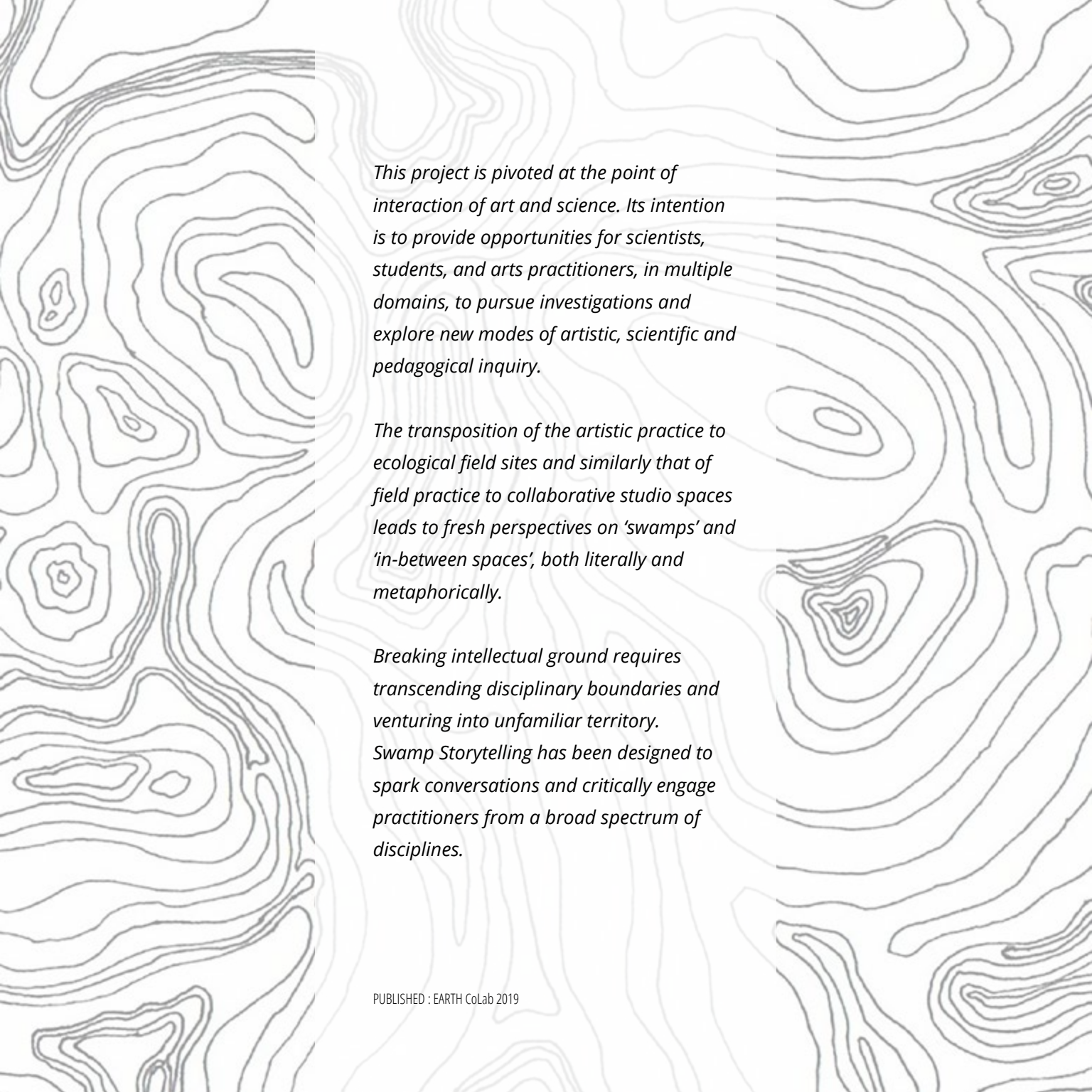


SWAMP  
STORYTELLING  
2015 - 2018

#SWAMPSTORYTELLING



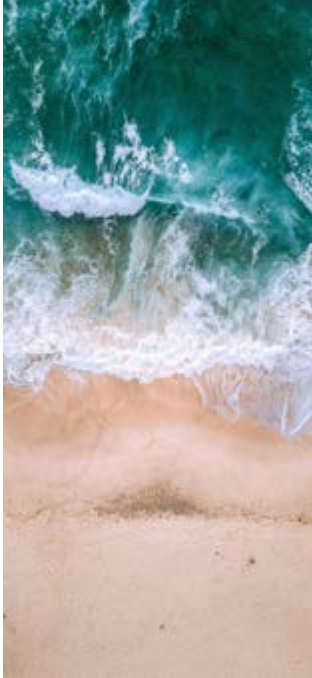
*This project is pivoted at the point of interaction of art and science. Its intention is to provide opportunities for scientists, students, and arts practitioners, in multiple domains, to pursue investigations and explore new modes of artistic, scientific and pedagogical inquiry.*

*The transposition of the artistic practice to ecological field sites and similarly that of field practice to collaborative studio spaces leads to fresh perspectives on 'swamps' and 'in-between spaces', both literally and metaphorically.*

*Breaking intellectual ground requires transcending disciplinary boundaries and venturing into unfamiliar territory. Swamp Storytelling has been designed to spark conversations and critically engage practitioners from a broad spectrum of disciplines.*

# EARTH CoLab

## the ART-SCIENCE process



1

### Our Process

With inquiry at the core - we create, do and collaborate in order to dissect and relish the process.



2

### Projects & Partners

The evolution of a living, growing idea with its numerous moving parts, people and places.



3

### Swamp Residency

The concepts, people and outcomes that developed in every wetland we explored collectively.



4

### Swamp Camp

Using swamps as text, catalysing biophilia, experimenting and collectively building knowledge.

5

### Swamp Scoping

'Do try this at home' a quick guide to creating your own field residency and learning zones.

6

### Notes from the Field

Behind the scenes with EARTH CoLab practitioners. Our observations, documentation and experiences.

7

### Measuring ripple-effects

A summary of people involved, our reach, publicity and the purpose of long term interventions.

8

### Reflections & Projections

A review of the original goals, their evolution, achievements, pitfalls, learnings and hopes.



# OUR PROCESS

## *The Practice of Perspective*

An exercise to aggregate diverse ways of viewing a space. In facilitating the collision of perspectives, one enhances the techniques of art production and academic enquiry in the natural environment.

The 'Practice of Perspective' is pivoted on the relationship between the viewer and the subject – where the appearance of viewed subjects depends on the relative position and distance from the viewer. Here 'position' refers to a point of view, and 'distance' refers to one's reason for viewing.

The residencies we curate adopt this approach, providing artists and scientists a variety of locations, interactions and views, based on their area of study.





The background of the entire page is a topographic map with contour lines of varying thickness and grey tones, creating a textured, landscape-like effect. The lines are more densely packed in some areas, suggesting higher elevations or steeper slopes, and more spread out in others.

## ***Mobile residencies & Field Studios***

Coastal & marine research in India spans across its extensive coastline of 17,717 km. Today, we find that environmentalism in India is at the cusp of cataclysmic change. It is clear now that the effects of Climate Change manifests not just through rising sea-levels and temperature, but more significantly is about health, education and poverty, with an increasing awareness of impacts on food, energy, water, resource and social security. This coupled with national and regional policy to accelerate economic growth poses questions not just to ecological security but also on mass scale displacement of communities.

In this landscape there is a need for art, science and education to create a critical mass to address these issues. While EARTH CoLab's area of expertise is rooted in the pedagogical 'site-specific' or 'place-based' approaches in science and education, the artistic practices blends with our ideologies and methods in an effective manner. This broadens our engagement with communities, public spaces and promotes an interdisciplinary approach to learning.

Collaborating with various institutions and individuals along this extensive coastline enhances the possibilities for authentic trans-local exchanges. Translocality refers to the ability of individual localities to transcend their geographical boundaries and exchange views, ideas and practices with other (even dissimilar) locales without being subsumed by a global paradigm.



## PROJECTS & PARTNERS

### *Swamp Storytelling*

The project *Swamp Storytelling* manifests at the cusp of land and water. It investigates the wetlands of *Sweden and India*, which are culturally perceived to be wastelands, grounds of mythical creatures in folklore and places of decay. Moving between the border of science and art, the project aims at bringing deeper insight into contemporary art production, socio-political thought processes and scientific method.

Through this project, Art Lab Gnesta's vision to push the boundaries of the artistic process blends seamlessly with Earth CoLab's experiments with different ways of viewing an ecosystem. This collaborative approach draws multiple perspectives and expertise, to bring attention to wetlands and their ecological significance, through engagement and immersion for practitioners, students and through public events.

It attempts to find an entry point for necessary dialogue around the idea of what is perceived as 'wasteland'.





This collaborative project between [EARTH CoLab & Art Lab Gnesta](#) was conceptualised and piloted in 2015 with a grant from the [Swedish Arts Council](#). It was then established as an evolving three year programme with the support and participation of [The Swedish Institute](#), 'create in residence' programme - through the years 2016, 2017 and 2018.

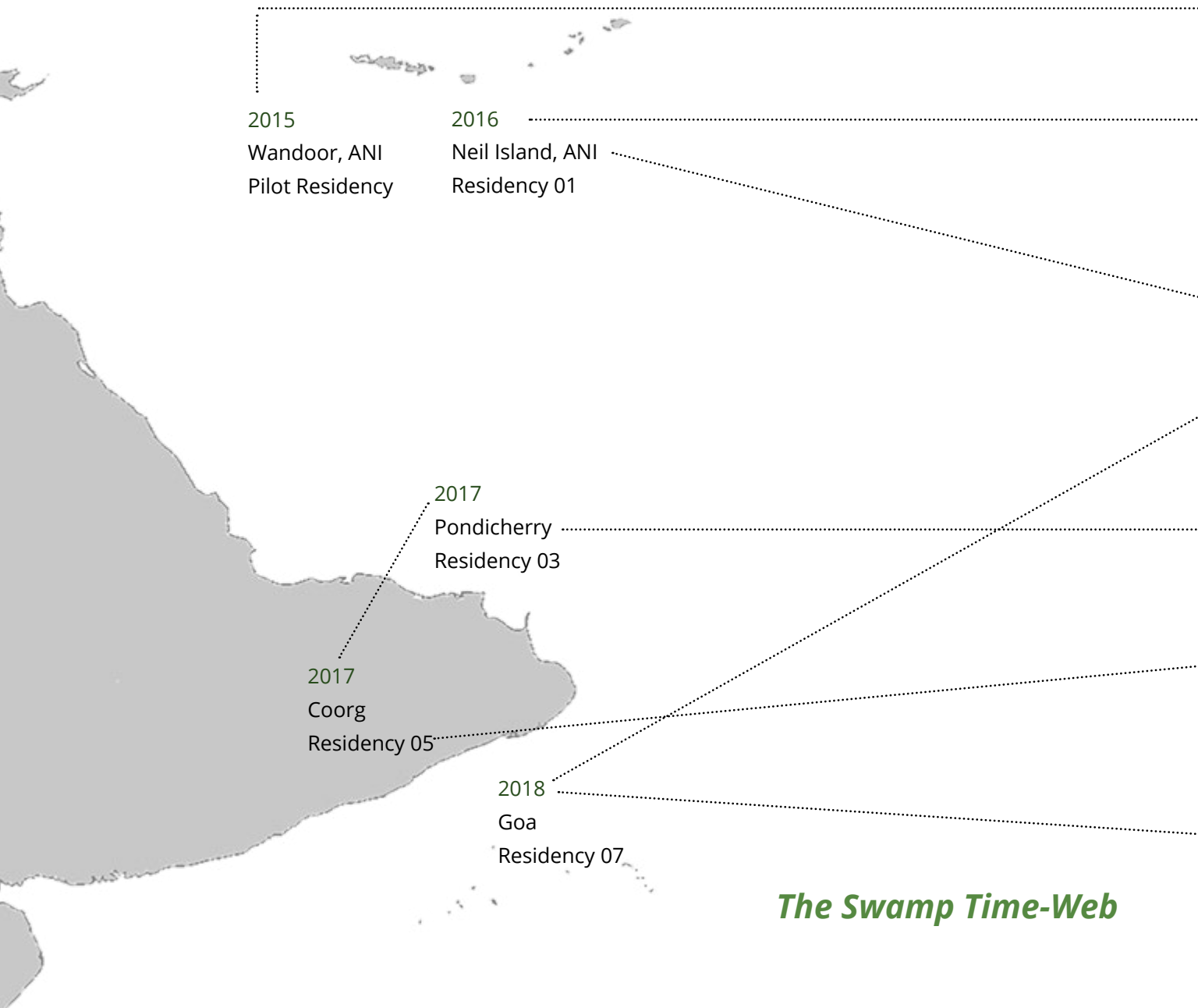
The key activities within the scope of this project included:

- [The Swamp Residency](#)

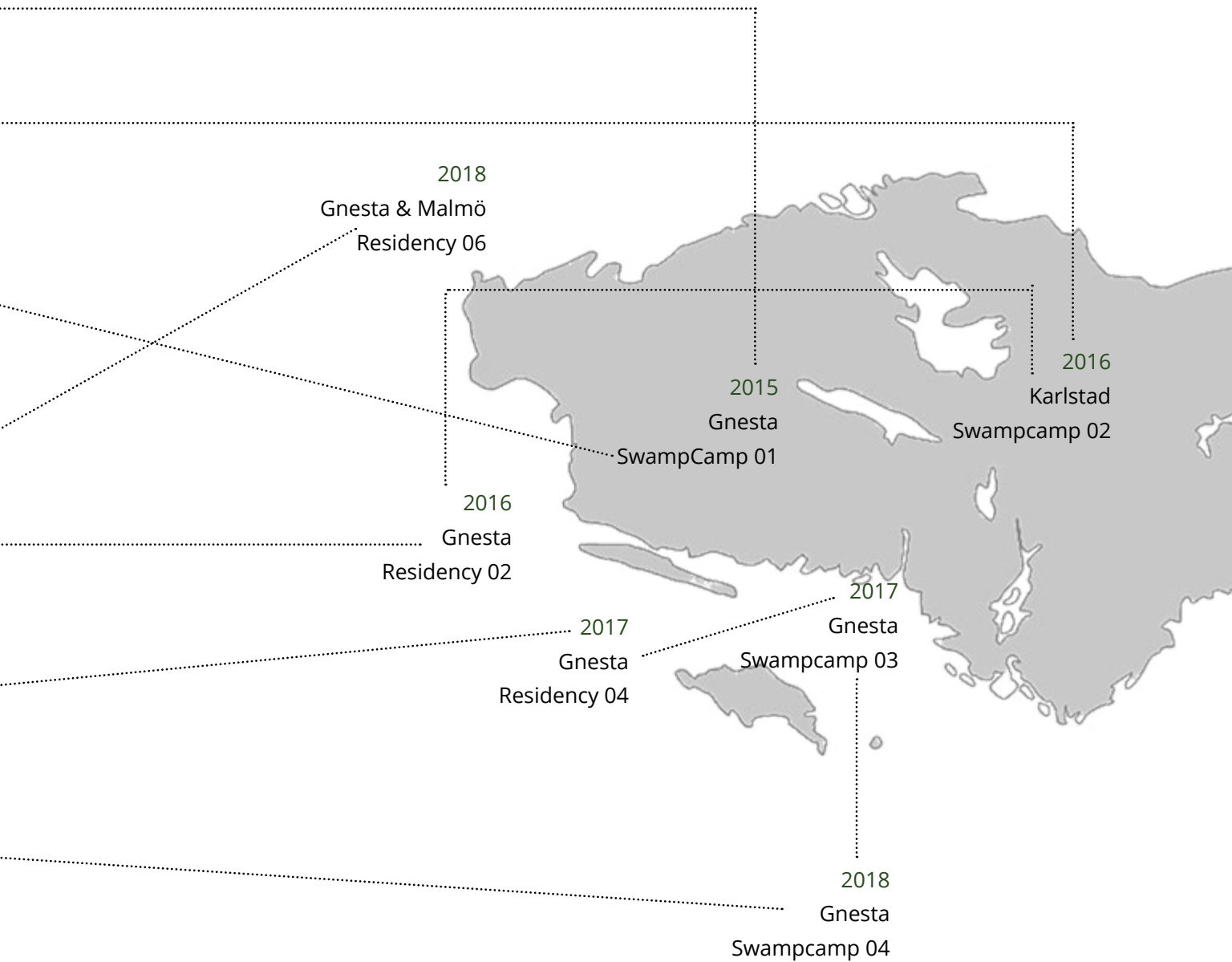
  - Annual process based artist-in-residence exchange programmes

- [Swamp Camps](#)

  - Field education experiences with local schools using art-science methodologies



***The Swamp Time-Web***



# SWAMP RESIDENCY

## ***Facilitating practice & process in situ***

We view the swamp as both a symbol of the prevailing climate policy, the very cradle of life, processes of transformation, of birth, death, renewal, love, possibility and life as we know it. We encourage an interdisciplinary, non-literal approach to this project. Making connections and thinking outside the box is central to our approach. We invite practitioners from every field to join us – positioning themselves among artists in their studios, among researchers in their field sites, among local practitioners in their realities - allowing context to feed into their individual process and outcomes.

As a society, we are acutely aware of the effect of the last hundred odd years of industrial and human activity on our planet. Some of the world's leading cities, like Mumbai and Stockholm, now exist on reclaimed swampland. Disregard and misuse of wetlands around the world have led to a tremendous degradation of these important ecosystems. This loss leads to depleted groundwater reserves, flooding, loss of vital habitat, flora and fauna and the cascade of adjacent marine habitats – all with devastating long term consequences.

In Swamp Storytelling we juxtapose scientific understanding and artistic perspectives on wetlands in Sweden and India – as ecosystems and conceptual spaces.



## *In India*

As part of these residencies, practitioners were invited of a month long immersion into one of EARTH CoLab's field sites. Each location was selected for it's inherent value, the exposure and opportunities. Each residency addressed a new aspect of 'swamps' at a new location in the country, thus creating a wide reach and network within the project at large. Each selected artist was paired with EC practitioners, researchers and field experts to explore their chosen ecosystem. Thus providing a platform to both conduct parallel and collaborative artistic research. They were guided by 'EARTH CoLab across a variety of field sites and provided with a wide range of on-site training, equipment and assistance to enable them to best engage with the ecosystem.

While residencies were tailored to best support the artist's research goals, there were curated as a continuous process of cultural exchange with people, skill-sets, places and local nuances.



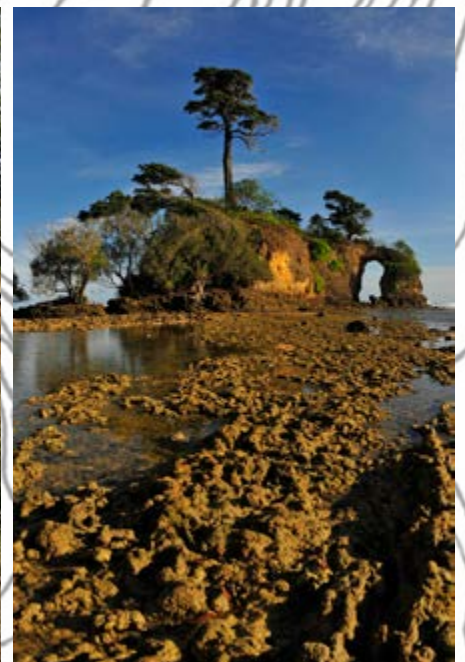


## *In Sweden*

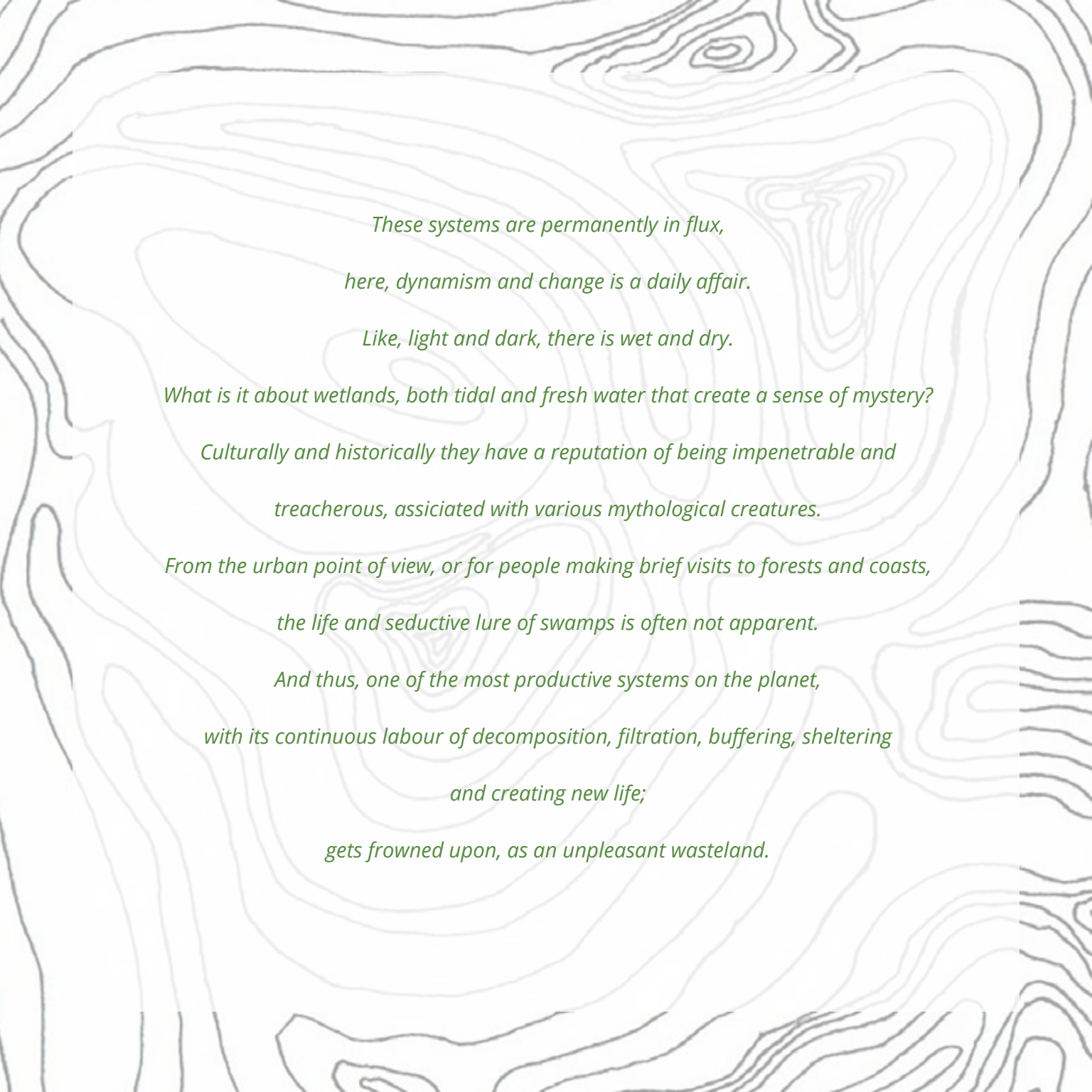
As part of these residencies, practitioners were invited into close dialogue, observation and collaboration with the ALG network of artists, projects, and numerous field practitioners in Sweden. Under the roof of a well-established art institution, participants engaged with experts, institutions and the community – thus formulating new perspectives and research on issues of wetlands, the environment and climate challenges. This engagement also encouraged a metaphorical view of “swamps”, as something ignored, unwanted or cast aside.

In addition, participants are encouraged to engage with migrant communities, their craft and food production on site as part of ALG’s ongoing projects.

The residencies were conducted with cross-cultural exposure and exchanges as a central methodology. These were in the form of informal gatherings, food, events, wilderness immersions and the sharing of ideas.







*These systems are permanently in flux,  
here, dynamism and change is a daily affair.*

*Like, light and dark, there is wet and dry.*

*What is it about wetlands, both tidal and fresh water that create a sense of mystery?*

*Culturally and historically they have a reputation of being impenetrable and  
treacherous, associated with various mythological creatures.*

*From the urban point of view, or for people making brief visits to forests and coasts,  
the life and seductive lure of swamps is often not apparent.*

*And thus, one of the most productive systems on the planet,  
with its continuous labour of decomposition, filtration, buffering, sheltering  
and creating new life;*

*gets frowned upon, as an unpleasant wasteland.*

*Mikael Lindahl*

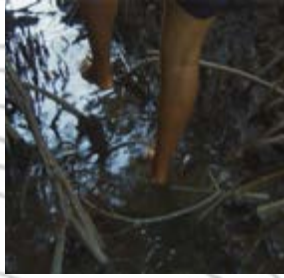
# MANGROVE SWAMPS

*2015 January*

WANDOOD,  
ANDAMAN ISLANDS



## Practitioner's experience



*Mikael is an artist and filmmaker focusing whose main interest and focus has been to explore how human morals are transferred through wildlife films and other representation of nature. He is interested in the manner of the human-nature relationship and how that is effected by wildlife films. In his previous work, "Mulldjuret" - a short fictive wildlife film - he uses an underwater swampy environment as the set.*

*This choice of location was based on his hypothesis that our lack of a strong or positive relationship with these environments, predisposes us to accept the fictional element easily.*

"I focused on the mangrove swamp where I spent most of my time. I was interested in its sublime characteristics (from my point of view). Like the murky water in high tide, filled with crabs and (some) snakes."

"Being close to the swamp and within it - while also being in a scientific and educational environment - gave me a different view of my surroundings, as compared to most artist in residence programs. The combination of tactile and physical experiences and an intellectual immersion resulted in new ideas that I might not have had otherwise."

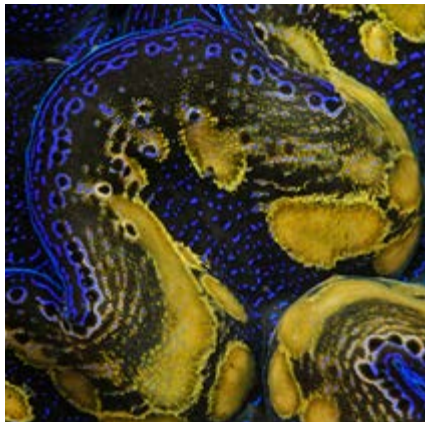
"I am now working on a short essay-style film about the swamp as an undefined place. A space where humans can project whatever they feel is needed - a place each individual sees and creates what they imagine."

*Ingela Irhman*

# INTERTIDAL SWAMPS

*2016 March*

NEIL ISLAND,  
ANDAMAN ISLANDS



## Practitioner's experience



*Ingela is a visual artist based in Malmö. She graduated with an MFA from Konstfack University of Arts, Craft and Design, Stockholm in 2012. Her work departs from an interest in desire, identification and temporality as well as the relation between man and other lifeforms often referred to as 'nature'.*

"Initially my interest in giant clams lay in their big shells. I had an idea about using the giant shells as a point of departure and work sculpturally in a white chalk based clay that clicks a bit when dry. After a while I redirected my focus. I was fed up with the fact that it's always the hard that gets preserved."

"Calcium carbonate is everywhere - in fossils, corals, chalk, bone and rocks. Instead I wanted to approach what's soft, slimy or alive. Things that evaporates in only a few minutes, rotten away or is easily rinsed off."

"... drawings and photographs that all takes on Seved as "a place like any other"; an area surrounded by porous borders; a marine eco system and an Inner Ocean.

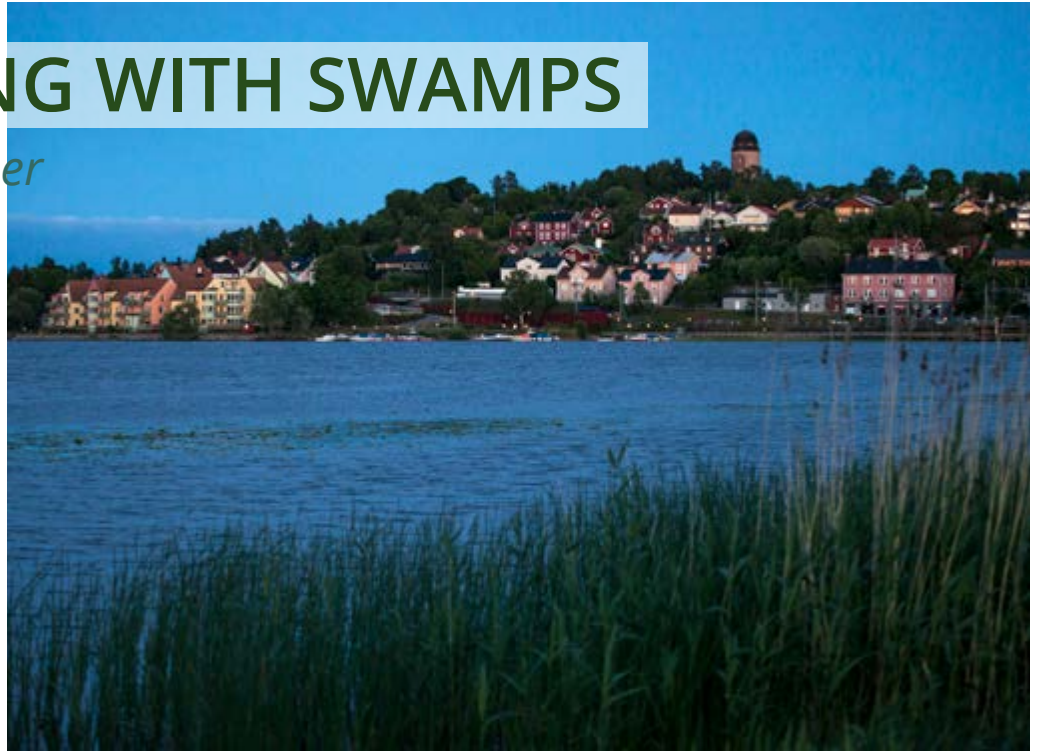
The Inner Ocean is a notion borrowed from Vetenskapens värld (The World of Science), a popular science programme broadcast on Swedish Television during the 90's. The notion refers to the liquid in the ovarium follicles, a cellular structure that surrounds maturing oocytes (egg cells) in all animals. The follicle liquid has the same salinity as the primeval sea once had - the sea where life arose."

Zeenat Nagree

# CURATING WITH SWAMPS

2016 September

GNESTA,  
SÖDERMANLAND



## Practitioner's experience



*Zeenat Nagree is an independent writer and curator based in Mumbai. She recently completed an MA in Modern and Contemporary Art History from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with research on indigenism and transnational networks of modernism. Over the last six years, Nagree has written criticism for Time Out, Art India and Artforum, and has contributed curatorial texts for a number of publications. Her curatorial practice is concerned with performance, new media and public spaces. She recently co-curated Place Interminable, a solo exhibition featuring Falak Vasa, at The Storefront in Chicago.*

In Gnesta, Zeenat's residency, explored the possibilities of intellectual and poetic 'swamps'. As a curator she commented on the idea of 'field' from the point of view of a residency and the multiple meanings one could make of 'swamps'.

"I have set up Nodes, a Facebook group, as a platform to exchange individual perspectives on the wetlands. This could turn into a site to develop a collection of essays or research papers on the wetlands. The formats of the exhibition, the book and the conference can be used to expand the scope of the Swamp Storytelling project. These activities will serve to explore what inter-disciplinary means within the structure of Swamp Storytelling."

*Jennifer Rainsford*

# CONNECTING SWAMPS

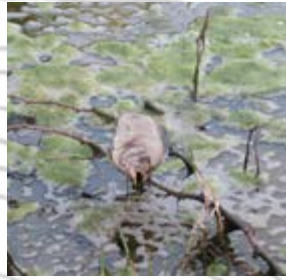
*2017 January*

BANGALORE &  
PONDICHERRY





## Practitioner's experience



*Jennifer is an artist and film maker - since 2013 she has worked on projects emanating from places where disasters or major changes in the landscape took place and how it affected the lives of all scales, from micro particles people, volcanoes and seabed.*

"In the same way I have worked with debris in the past, I want to collect stories from in and around the swamp by filming both over and under the water..."

"It kind of inverted my process. In swamp storytelling I came to a site and explored it from the inside out"

"A month of exploring the fresh water and tidal wetlands of Pondicherry, with a focus on nature's methods of destruction and its simultaneous power to create new life. This has involved documenting and mimicking degradation processes, making collections of water and seeds that participate and bare witness to processes of life and death."

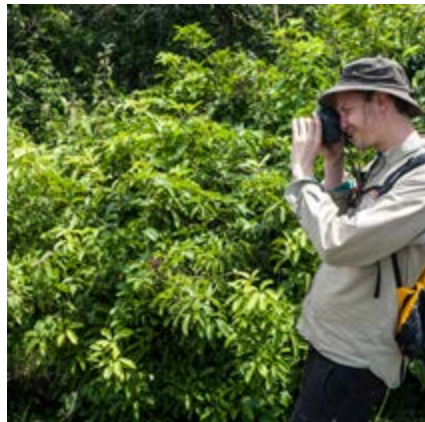
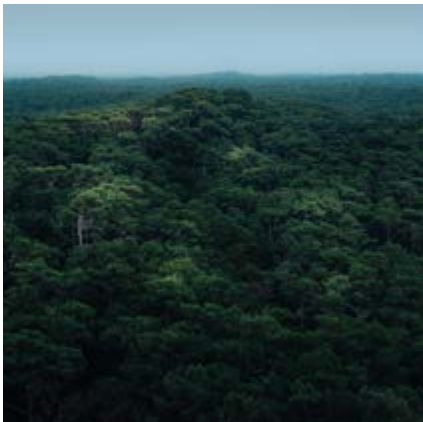
"Being in a place 24h, eating, sleeping, walking and thinking in the same space for an extended uninterrupted amount of time. The temperature, light, sounds, smells, birds, insects change and come back as the days unfolded. Noticing small things; new spiderwebs, bird's nests, a marvelling feeling of seeing hundreds of eyes of spiders glistening back at me when shining a flashlight into the darkness in the night. The sense of wonder watching and filming dragonflies emerge and metamorph from nymphs to flying creatures"

*Gideosson & Londré*

# SEASONAL SWAMPS

*2017 May*

COORG,  
WESTERN GHATS



## Practitioner's experience



“The Monsoon Library is a film that explores how books is decomposed by moisture, based on Maya Goels families’ library in the Indian rain forest and the department for conservation at the National Library of Sweden. How climate change also changes time when books decomposes, moulds and float together into another historical narrative and other memories. A wetland time.”

*GIDEONSSON/LONDRÉ formed as a duo in 2009. Their work is centered around the notion of the third, referring to that which is created by two individuals, but can't be attributed to either one of them. The descriptions of the third vary between the unidentified presence of a person, or simply as referring to something subconscious and repressed. the resulting product of their collaboration and within a temporary structured situation. The structure function as a limitation of possibilities for the performers, but also as an opportunity for unpredictable events to happen within that narrow frame.*

*Rajasee Ray*

# IMAGINING SWAMPS

*2017 October*

GNESTA,  
SÖDERMANLAND



## Practitioner's experience



*Rajasee is an illustrator and graphic designer based in Kolkata. She's 1/3rd of Ladyfingers Co. â a communication design studio that brings fun and a sensitive approach to all their work. She is all about telling stories - short ones, tall ones, ones with twists and ones with turns, through graphic design, typography, illustration, website design and branding.*

"In my practice as an illustrator I work in the spaces where fiction and the everyday can co-exist. My process often consists of encountering everyday spaces, and layering them with a touch of the magical."

"I re-encountered the fairytale forest as a living breathing eco-system, with its highly tangible politics and economies"

"The idea of the collective world-building exercise was to examine each other's personal fairy-tale, and facilitate discussion that helps re-evaluate one's own childhood characters - how we have let them evolve with us. With this exercise I hoped to provide an example of how contextualized fiction can be a revealing tool to explore and re-construct contemporary and evolving shared spaces, using reflection exercises, drawing, map-making, and world-building."

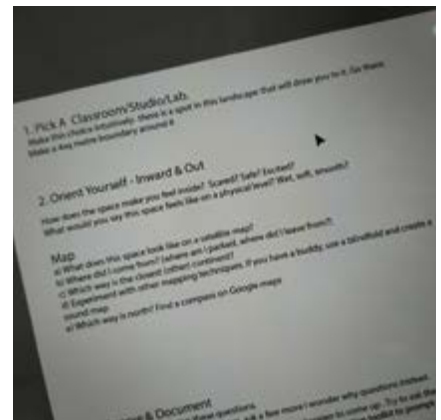
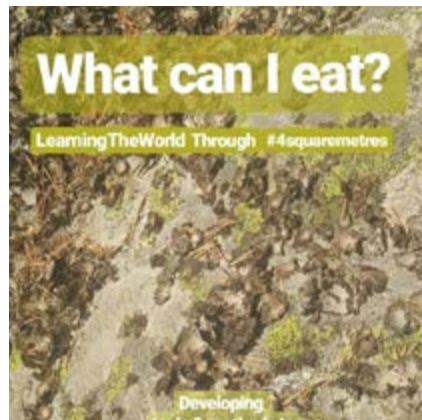
"I see various threads running through the experiences I had at the residency, and the work that I have done after, especially in my illustrations and contexts."

Danika Tavora

# LEARNING FROM SWAMPS

2018 August

GNESTA &  
MALMÖ



## Practitioner's experience



*Danika is an educator based between Goa and Hydrabad. Her practice draws from her outdoor literacy as a diver, hiker, documenter and keen observer of the natural world. Her work blends creative thought, scientific observation, curiosity and play - to develop curriculum and learning experiences.*

"As keen as I am about a 'no-boundaries' approach to exploration and learning, I have come to believe that defining 'space' is essential in aiding immersive, deep exploration especially when the process is constrained by time, which is almost always the case."

"Everyday, over the course of 5 weeks, I witnessed a magical transformation - not just with the magnificent colours and textures of the changing seasons, but also with the wonderful new sets of expert eyes"

"Understanding the relevance of both, the need to dissolve as well as create boundaries, at different points in the learning curve has inspired a huge shift in my design process."

"Over the year that followed I have merged these outcomes with developing an outdoor curriculum for a city school with no more open space than a 6sq metre yard. Another indirect project is now creating "accessible open-source libraries" of tide-pools & shores in a citizen-science initiative in Goa."

*Malin Franzen*

# RIVER-ISLAND SWAMPS

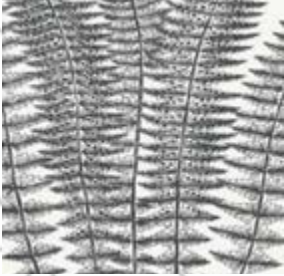
*2018 November*

DIVAR ISLAND,  
GOA





## *Practitioner's experience*



*Malin was born in Stockholm in 1982 and studied at Malmö Art Academy in Sweden. She works with video, objects, and installations, often using documentary material. Her works explore the role of legends and myth, as well as religion and politics.*

This has been a time of play, with the collision of time, geography, nature, and man. Where in the past the natural harbour and highly network river system allowed for a flourishing trading port. In the last 50 years it has become a site for an unprecedented transformation - as a highway for iron ore mined in the interiors of goa, to casinos and hotels on the the river, while still retaining the ancient practices of agriculture and aquaculture through its "Khazan System" in the swamps.

# SWAMP CAMP

## ***Facilitating exploration & learning in situ***

It is difficult for a person to care deeply about anything that he or she hasn't experienced or doesn't know much about. It is unrealistic to expect our children to care about their neighbourhoods, much less the earth, if we haven't taught them to see it and to feel what it means to them. Recording observations and feelings can be a powerful way for students to get to know their natural community and the geography of their home environment, so that they can develop that sense of caring commitment.

'Place' and 'Interconnectivity' are at the center of EARTH CoLab's pedagogy for learning. Employing exploratory techniques to

discover a 'place', this approach is designed to highlight nodes at which disciplines intersect. At its core, this is an effort to depart from the fragmented processes of learning, to create an interconnected view of a system.

Our intention has been to use swamps in and around Gnesta, Sweden - over a four year period - where historically and culturally these systems have been viewed as places of dark mythical folklore, death and waste. The idea has been to use them as spaces for students to play, learn, reimagine and have adventures that create positive memories.

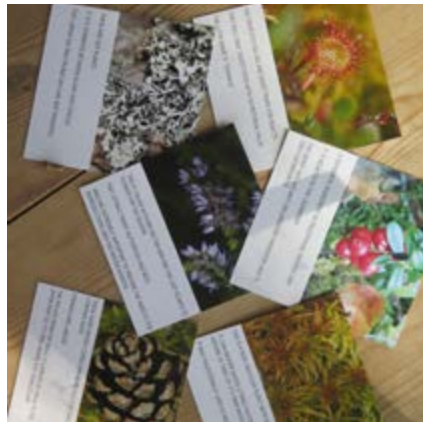
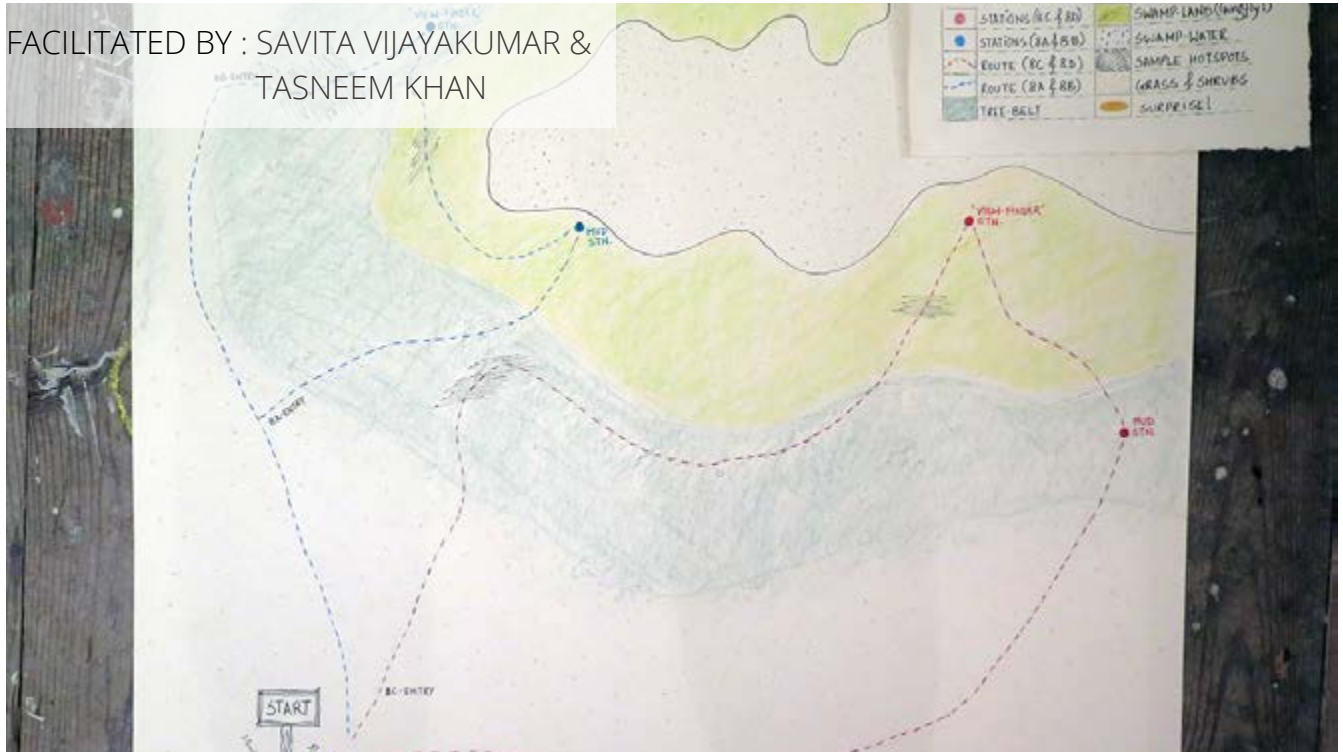
With over 220 participants, from three different institutions we have been co-experimenting - making these swamps an extension to their classrooms, calendars and daily lives.

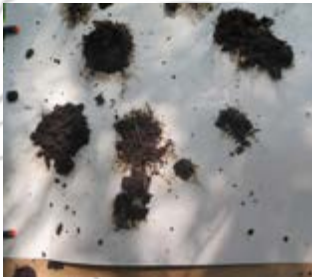


June 2015

LOCATION: GNESTA

FACILITATED BY : SAVITA VIJAYAKUMAR &  
TASNEEM KHAN



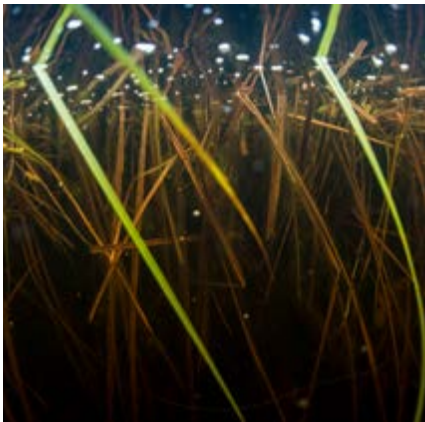


*Notes on the activities etc*

*June 2016*

LOCATION: KARLSTAD

FACILITATED BY : SAVITA VIJAYAKUMAR  
TASNEEM KHAN  
UMEED MISTRY  
ADRIEN ROCHE





*Notes on the activities etc*

*June 2017*

LOCATION: GNESTA

FACILITATED BY : SAVITA VIJAYAKUMAR &  
POOJA GUPTA







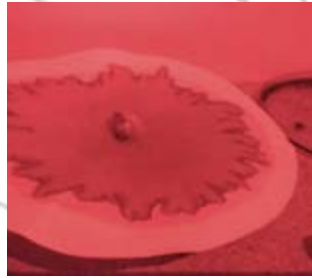
*Notes on the activities etc*

*June 2018*

LOCATION: GNESTA

FACILITATED BY : SAVITA VIJAYAKUMAR &  
TASNEEM KHAN





*Notes on the activities etc*



NSOR



## *Swamp Tuner*

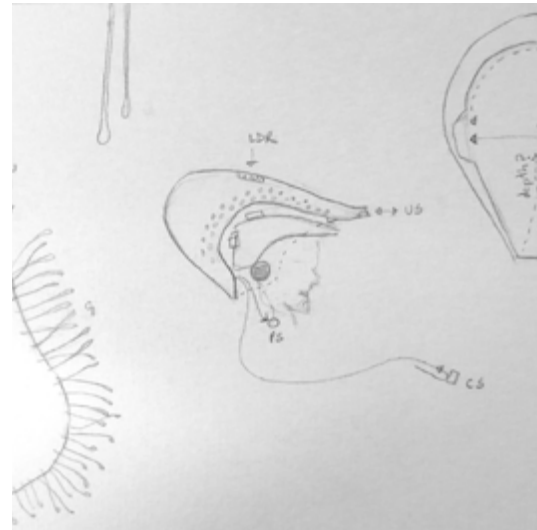
designing a pedagogical tool

Can we measure with music? Can science be written in sound?

The 'Swamp Tuner' is an experiment that aims to explore these very questions.

This two part device – the 'helmet' and the 'spider' is outfitted with a number of sensors, designed to extend the range of your ability to observe this swamp ecosystem. While technology today tends to breed isolation, this hack is intended to enhance our engagement with the living environment around us.

Built through a series of DIY sessions by Earth CoLab with the ISRO (Indian Sonic Research Organization) in Bangalore , the construction of 'Swamp Tuner' involved building and callibrating different sensors to measure specific environmental parameters.



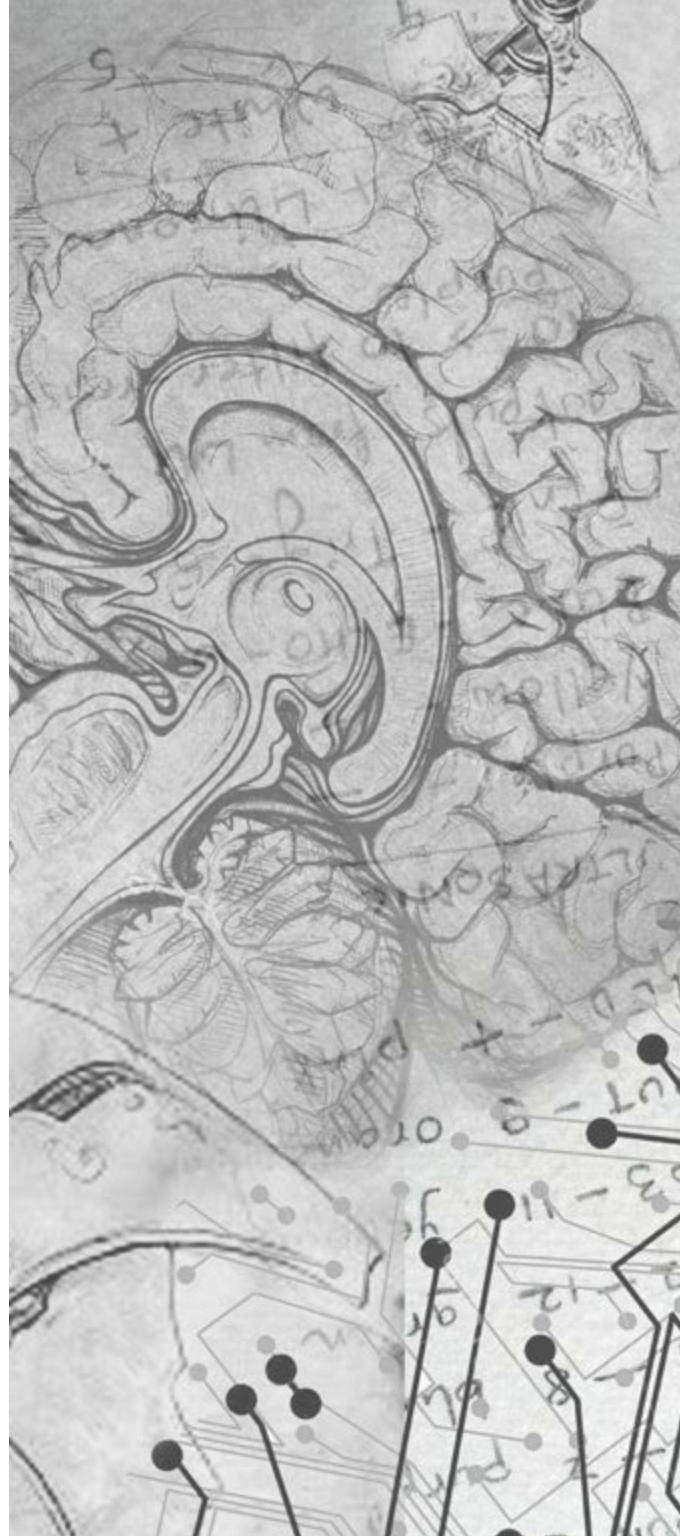
*“There are numerous ways to learn, teach and explore the sphere of environmental sciences and systems thinking”*

The various separate components designed and constructed here are a work in progress - moving towards a wearable environmental sensor - one that will capture, filter and systematically log the readings collected by each sensor simultaneously - while providing the wearer with a live feed of all parameters in the form of sound.

In this orchestra each parameter will then function as an instrument - and each instrument has a set range of frequencies that correspond to the relevant scale of measurement.

### ***Imagine...***

every swamp, will have a unique symphony and each symphony will carry a vast amount of information about the conditions, health and history of that swamp.





# SWAMP SCOPING



## ***The learning constellation***

“ Arriving from a tropical coastal swamp into a temperate fresh-water swamp, had all our senses on alert instantaneously. After extended observation and awe at the variety and density of moss alone - it was possible to broaden ones gaze. The concentric zonation was striking and visible by the transition in flora and the type of soil. From the forest and moss covered periphery to the tall grasse (that I later discovered from the floating skeleton of a living swamp) and the swaying sensation underfoot. This yellow waterbed of moss makes you slow down and be cautious of your next step. Every inch was full of new colours, signs, trails, smells and

textures. A number of edible berries and flowers were on their last flurry before the autumn set in.”

this section is about creating a resource for field practitioners --- need to write an elegant brief - elegant like the models in the photograph here :)







• • •

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