

“Arts-based methods” in A Kobayashi (ed) International Encyclopedia of Human Geography, Second Edition, 2020.

Abstract

Researchers are increasingly using arts-based methods in geography to explore new pathways in the creation of knowledge through creative practice. This can be in any phase of the research, from initial data collection and analysis, to interpretation and representation. Creative practice in geography can stretch across different disciplines, from the literary arts of poetry and creative prose, to performance-based music and drama, to dance and the visual arts. The researcher can either work as ‘researcher-artist’ mobilizing these methods in their own work, or collaborate with research participants through participatory arts-based methods. Both approaches present geographers with new pathways to create knowledge within the qualitative research paradigm, expanding their capacity to explore varied understandings and experiences of place and space. These methods reflect a growing interest in geographical scholarship towards the affective and embodied aspects of everyday practice, offering a more fluid approach to understanding the emotional qualities of quotidian experience. They also open up opportunities to engage different publics, and to broaden research audiences beyond academia. Although these methods are gaining recognition, further work is needed to strengthen their position within the discipline, particularly addressing the cross-disciplinary creative skills that geographers need to develop further to give legitimacy to their creative practice in a research setting.