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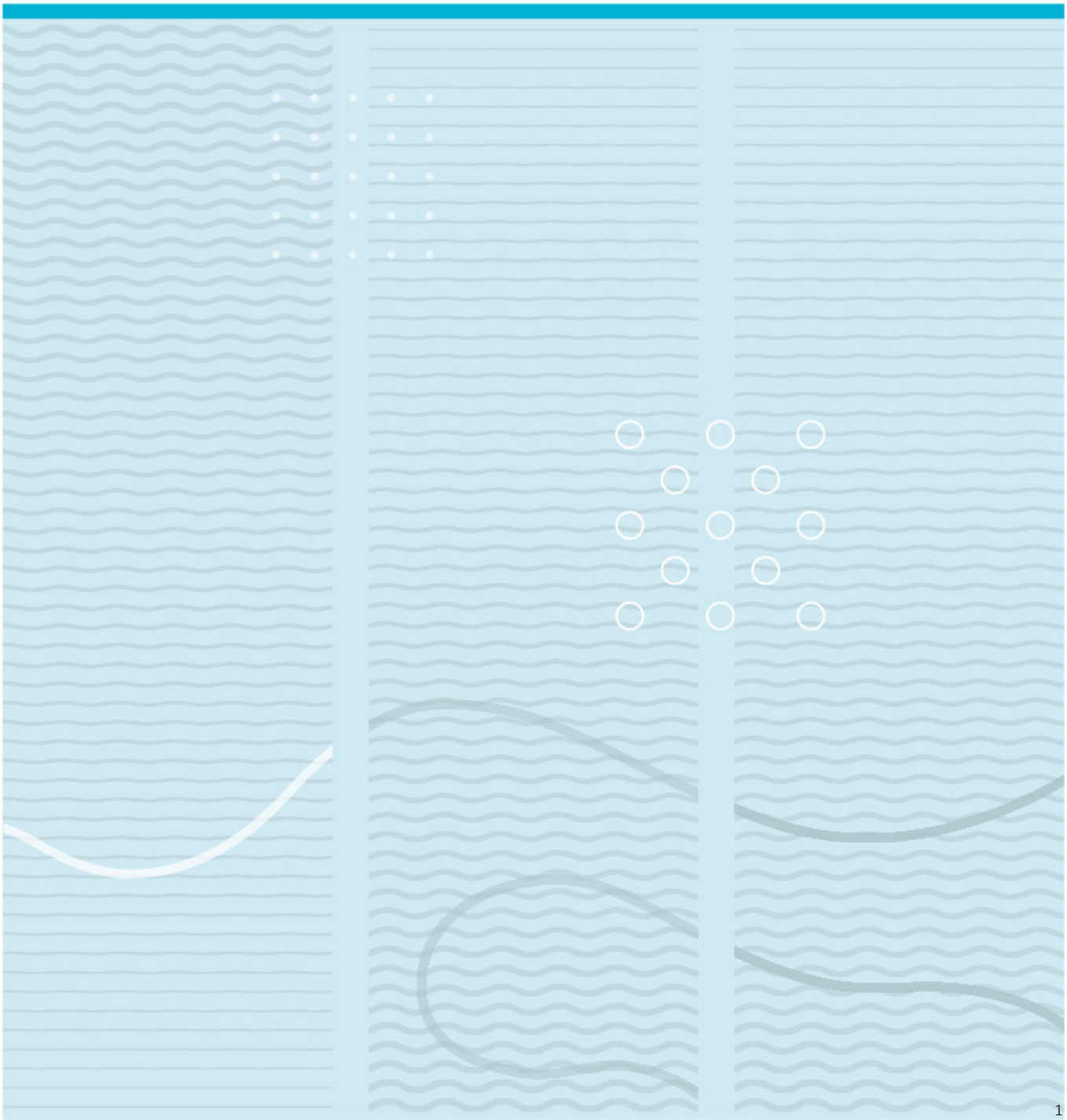
Where therapy and outdoor learning meet

A hermeneutic interpretation of learning perspectives in wilderness therapy



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This thesis is worth 60 study points

Foreword

The current thesis has been long on the way. Especially the writing process has been an extended journey through rough landscapes. Sometimes the view has been spectacular, and at other times the fog has been almost impossible to navigate through.

Looking back on the journey now fills me with gratitude for the experiences, friendships and learnings it has provided and where it has brought me to in life. My life "happened" several times along the way. Halfway through the thesis, beautiful Saga was born and completely took all my devotion, love and brain capacity. When I was about to pick up the thesis again, a pandemic separated our little family on opposite sides of the world.

Dearest Saga, thank you for coming into my life and filling my heart with love every day! Also, a big cheers to Riley for your Aussie patience and understanding.

I want to thank my supervisor Annette Bischoff for your eternal support and belief that I would finish this project - Even when I came up with the unrealistic idea of writing from a van in Tasmanian nature. Thank you for our long conversations, for sharing your knowledge, navigating me through the fog and telling me off when I need it. Without you, I had given up long ago.

There are many people to thank. A massive thanks to the informants in this project. I learned so much from the fieldwork and our dialogues. Also, deep gratitude to all the people I met on my way and shared your wisdom and experiences. To the people, I stayed with. To the programmes, I visited. To the nature places that inspired me. And a special big hug to Åse for endless and deep conversations, for reading and commenting and for being an incredible friend.

A whole-and-heavy-hearted thanks to my fantastic friend and greatest inspiration, Leiv Einar Gabrielsen, who no longer is walking on this earth. You sparked this process, taught me more than anyone else and pointed me in the right direction. You changed me as a person, and this thesis would not be without you. I cannot wait to surf waves with you again one day, my friend.

Overall, this thesis has been the most significant learning I had in my time as a student. There are so many perspectives still to be elaborated on and studied. But I believe writing a thesis can be compared to the apprentice's final exam in the carpenter´s shop – the apprentice does not build the whole house. She builds a staircase – and that is how I view my thesis – I have built the stairs from where I hope the reader will gain insights and good views of the practical and theoretical landscapes of my journey and wilderness therapy.

Kristiansand September 2021
Sophia Louise Hjorth Wahlgren

Summary

This master's thesis examines the learning processes in wilderness therapy practices in a European context. This group-based treatment modality for adolescents takes place in remote nature and combines psychotherapy with experiential learning, nature experience and basic outdoor skills.

Method: The thesis builds on four qualitative in-depth interviews with wilderness and adventure therapy therapists in Spain and Norway. Before conducting the interviews, participant observations were carried out on two-week-long wilderness therapy programmes, which provided a fundamental understanding of the context. The methodical approach is based on Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, where interpretation and understanding are inseparable from the context. To interpret the empirical data, thematic analysis is used to form overall themes.

Theoretical perspectives: Illeris' comprehensive learning theory, Lave and Wenger's situated learning theories, and Tordsson's perspective on outdoor learning are applied to interpret the generated themes.

The interpretation generated five themes: 1) The participants' learning process; 2) facilitation of learning; 3) the therapists' learning process; 4) nature's role; and 5) a theme about the therapists' characteristics. The interpretation shows that the situatedness and relations between the therapists, participants and nature are fundamental for the learning processes in wilderness therapy. Being together in nature over time develops an authentic and relatively equal relationship between the therapists and participants. The participants learn from and with their peers through holistic interactions. Nature provides situations where the participants can experience themselves in new ways and experience more profound and broader feelings. Combined with the in situ group conversations and reflections, it results in meaningful learning. Programmes and learning processes differ in relation to their socio-cultural situatedness.

Wilderness therapy has generally been related to the field of psychology. This research supports that the therapists are indispensable due to the target group, but it also suggests an integration of outdoor learning professionals to provide pedagogical perspectives and intentional facilitation of nature experiences. Interdisciplinary cooperation is proposed as the future development of wilderness therapy practices in Europe.

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1 The address of the research topic

"Understanding begins when something addresses us" (Gadamer, 1960/1989 p. 299). This quotation captures the journey of the present master's thesis —a journey led by curiosity, reflections, and emerging relationships worldwide. The address of this research topic came as I walked the Northern Camino in Spain in 2017. Everyone I met seemed to be there for a reason other than just the hike. They were there to get away from something, work through a rough time in their lives, and gain greater insight into themselves. I met people who had quit their jobs, left a life partner (or been left), struggled with mental health, and I even met a young man who had terminal cancer. The unusual was the deep conversations that would unfold in no time and the relationships created whilst walking part of the way together. I had a strong feeling of community throughout my hike. We were doing this together. We were walking the same path, sharing laughter, tears, fears, joys and dreams. As I walked into the Spanish nature and experienced how people and I changed over time, I became curious about why being in natural environments makes us humans feel better and how to facilitate this to other people in a therapeutic context. What do extended stays in nature do to our relationships with others, nature and self? Before this hike, I knew about the wilderness and adventure therapy concepts, but how is therapy in nature done? What does it take to be a wilderness therapist, and how would my professional background in outdoor education fit into this field? When I got back to Norway, I started reading research from the field to discover that the practical part of wilderness therapy is rarely discussed in the research literature. Yet, it was clear that this field was generally linked to psychology and counselling. It led me to reflect on what outdoor education can contribute with. Whilst being very aware that outdoor educators are not therapists, we are intentional in planning, practical in skills, and pedagogical in teaching. Maybe there are some new understandings to be discovered in the aspects of group-based learning?

Being in nature has long been linked to well-being, health and self-development. It can be traced to philosophical, religious and academic disciplines as far back as ancient Greece (Frumkin, 2001, p. 235). As an example, evolutionary psychology suggests that the human mind and body has been shaped by our extended history of living immersed in nature and small communities. The idea is that humans possess an innate biological attraction to nature and other forms of life providing us with a tendency to seek connection with the natural world. This subconscious affiliation with nature is referred to as the biophilia hypothesis (Kellert, 1993; Wilson, 1984, p. 85) which is thought to influence positively on our well-being (Cooley, Jones, Kurtz, &

Robertson, 2020, p. 1). Meanwhile, studies show that our opportunities to spend time in nature have reduced drastically over the past 100 years due to modern and urban living conditions, which in turn influence our well-being and health undesirably (Annerstedt & Währborg, 2011; Greenleaf, Bryant, & Pollock, 2014). Especially, children and youths spend less time outdoor than the generations before them (Mygind et al., 2019).

For many decades well-being and social- and self-development have likewise been recognised as an integrated value of outdoor learning traditions (Richards, Hardie, & Anderson, 2020, p. 1). This recognition entails that going into nature and undertaking outdoor activities "enables meaningful psychological change beyond that of the feeling of "wellness" from being "outdoors"" (ibid., p. 1). Participating in learning activities in nature can therefore play an essential role in contributing to people's health and well-being. O'Brien and colleagues (2011) argue that these benefits are derived through two possible mechanisms: 1) through general exposure to nature gained from being outdoors and 2) through active, extensive hands-on contact with nature gained through learning outdoors (O'Brien et al., 2011, p. 344). Potential effects from outdoor learning are depicted as changes in attitude and behaviour; gaining new skills and competencies; improved confidence and self-esteem; and interpersonal and social skills (ibid.). To assist these outcomes, the field of outdoor learning has for decades developed theories and practices for how to support group-based and individual learning processes in natural environments. They include identifying the conditions of the individual participant and the group as a whole, comparing these to the demands of nature, and continually evaluating and adjusting the practice to the altering situation (Tordsson, 2014). Outdoor learning has the small group as its basis and interaction with group members and nature as the encouragement to learn and develop. Involvement in the group thus brings about awareness of the individual's responsibility and ownership of experiences (Hofmann, Rolland, Rafoss, & Zoglowek, 2018, p. 16). As a facilitator of outdoor learning, one should be able to seek out learning situations and exploit them when they occur, giving the participants the chance to experience relevant and meaningful situations (Horgen, 2010). It demands intentional planning, preparation, awareness, flexibility, and facilitation skills from the leader involved (Priest, 1999, p. 238).

The field of psychology has an extended history of understanding the human mind, how it relates to behaviour and assisting people in enhancing functionality in their everyday life through structured psychotherapy (Richards, 2016, p. 252). The psychological therapy practice has traditionally been a verbal cognitively-mediated activity taking place indoors and having

the relationship between the client end the therapist as a fundamental component (Cooley et al., 2020, p. 2). The practices of outdoor learning and psychology have, over the past decades, merged increasingly in the belief of a synergetic effect derived from the combination of nature's restorative effect, the experience of accomplishment from learning basic outdoor skills and mental health improvements from intentional clinical therapy (Richards, 2016). Numerous different practices and approaches that incorporate the concept of healthy nature-based settings and accompanying treatment programs have evolved and are referred to by several names (Stigsdotter et al., 2011, p. 309). Adventure therapy (AT) is generally used as an umbrella term for a wide variety of therapy interventions encompassing nature as an essential aspect of treating mental health problems and/or behavioural problems (Becker, 2010; Gass, Gillis, & Russell, 2012). This concept includes modalities like adventure-based counselling, wilderness adventure therapy, therapeutic outdoor programming, bush adventure therapy, outdoor behavioural health care and nature-based therapy, to name some (Gillis & Ringer, 1999; Richards, Carpenter, & Harper, 2011, p. 84). AT thus spans from adventurous treatment sessions of a few hours' duration to prolonged wilderness expeditions. The overall aim is to engage the participants in meaningful experiences where the dynamic and unpredictable natural environment provides challenges and natural consequences influencing the motivation to learn and increase the participants' functioning (Gass et al., 2012, p. 3; Richards, 2016).

AT includes the concept of wilderness therapy (WT) which is the focus of the present study. WT is a group-based treatment modality taking place in remote wilderness areas in an expedition-like style. It combines structured and intentional group and individual psychotherapy with experiential learning, basic outdoor skills and nature experience (Fernee, Gabrielsen, Andersen, & Mesel, 2017, p. 116). WT is generally aimed at, but not limited to, adolescents as the target group. Most of whom struggle with emotional, behavioural, psychological and/or substance use issues. WT is distinguished from wilderness experience programmes in that it includes targeted clinical and therapeutic methods and professionals such as psychologists (Richards et al., 2020). The social context is viewed as a fundamental part of the WT programmes and the experiential learning process. It enables the participant to think beyond individual needs and cooperate with others (Carpenter & Harper, 2016, p. 62). Being part of a group is believed to become more significant when the situated remoteness of the programme calls for human interaction, interrelatedness and communication for the wilderness trip to progress and the group to function (ibid.). At the same time, the group's experience as an autonomic entity in the wider social system can lead to a feeling of connection between its

members (Taylor, Segal, & Harper, 2010). WT is therefore argued to promote a meaningful relationship between the therapists and the participants and among the participants, enhancing the therapy process.

The merge of the two separate yet, to some extent, overlapping fields have given rise to debates about skills needed to be a practitioner in AT and WT interventions and the differences between facilitating therapy and therapeutic experiences (Berman & Davis-Berman, 2013, p. 60; Norton et al., 2014, p. 53). Similarly, there is no clear limit between learning, personal development, and psychotherapy (Richards, 2016, p. 254). In 2020, the UK Institute of Outdoor Learning published a Statement of Good Practice within outdoor mental health interventions to meet the rapidly increasing development of programmes designed to improve mental health (Richards et al., 2020). The aim is to provide a framework so the range of outdoor mental health intervention can be considered clearly, and each programme can offer transparency of its capacity and intent. It assesses the competences, professional responsibilities and leadership in interventions from outdoor learning and psychotherapeutic perspectives to ensure quality within both areas (ibid. p. 5). The proposed model provides a continuum of practices from self-led experience, therapeutic enhancement to integrated outdoor therapy. AT and WT are used as examples of the latter, thus demanding professional accreditation in both outdoor learning and psychotherapy within the practitioner team (ibid. p. 14).

2 The inquiry of the thesis and research question

Numerous and broadly focused research studies have reported positive outcomes of exposure to and immersion into natural environments on human health. The practice of WT has likewise shown to be a beneficial treatment modality for adolescents with different struggles in their everyday life. Though these findings are relatively consistent (Bowen & Neill, 2013) a general critique in the field of AT and WT is the lack of transparency in what happens in the treatment process (Annerstedt & Währborg, 2011; Fernee et al., 2017; Gass et al., 2012; Norton et al., 2014). With almost as many different treatment modalities as there are programmes worldwide, the field of research has been challenged because reviewing the findings is difficult when the programmes are hard to compare or structure within specific categories (Berman & Davis-Berman, 2013, p. 59). In addition, Gass, Gillies & Russell (2012) point out that prevailing research within AT and WT is outcome studies looking at pre-, post and sometimes follow-up measures to report effects of the programmes. This, combined with simplistic or inadequate details about the content of interventions, "leave the reader wondering exactly what occurred in the intervention" (Gass et al., 2012, p. 288). As a result, several researchers refer to AT and WT interventions as a "black box", which should be attempted opened if the field is to gain recognition as an effective specialised approach to mental health treatment. Questions like: what, why, how, for whom, and under which circumstances WT and AT works should therefore be attempted answered (ibid.).

This notion complies with the relatively little literature dealing with learning in AT and WT. Most research studies mention the philosophical and theoretical roots in experiential learning, but few concrete examples are given of learning processes. This can amount to several factors, amongst others, the general limitation of space in peer-reviewed articles thus, the authors prioritise the space for outcomes. When looking into the learning perspective, more comprehensive descriptions are found in books about AT and WT (Gass et al., 2012; Harper & Dobud, 2020; N. J. Harper, Rose, & Segal, 2019; Norton, 2011) yet, it seems relevant to dig deeper into this dimension of the practices from an outdoor learning perspective.

It is likewise suggested that there is a need for more empirical studies on the processes leading to change (Revell, Duncan, & Cooper, 2014) and a call for a more comprehensive understanding of the processes in therapy situated in nature (Jordan, 2015). Revell, Duncan and Cooper (2014) researched helpful aspects in outdoor therapy practice and concluded that:

“further exploration of therapists’ perspectives and experiences could inform both training needs and highlight practice implications for the development of this emergent practice” (p. 286).

The concepts of WT and AT originate from the US and have been used as a treatment modality for several decades. Approximately 12.000 American youths partake in WT programmes annually, and a substantial part of the research stems from the US Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare industry (N. J. Harper, Gabrielsen, & Carpenter, 2017, p. 3). More recent reviews opening the “black box” of these programmes likewise accentuates the American dominance on prevailing literature though the concept has spread widely to all continents. The share of studies from the US was 100% (Fernee et al., 2017); ~88% (N. J. Harper, 2017); ~45% (Mygind et al., 2019); and ~37% (Cooley et al., 2020) in their respective reviews. Therefore, the interest of this thesis is to peak into the “black box” in a European context in the attempt to explore and gain a further understanding of the WT practice in a different socio-cultural context than the American.

Taylor, Segal and Harper (2010) bring attention to the fact that theory within AT and WT has “primarily developed within the context, dominant discourse, and territorialism of conventional psychological approaches” (p.77). This has contributed to overlooking the interplay with the natural environment and nature’s active role in the therapy both in practice and literature. Over the past years, this has been a growing research inquiry, and the case has been made for nature’s restorative effect on the WT participants (Harper, Fernee, & Gabrielsen, 2021; Naor & Mayseless, 2021; Taylor et al., 2010). This dominant research discourse adds legitimacy to a study conducted from an outdoor learning perspective as a contribution to open up the scope.

This thesis aims to contribute to the field of WT by exploring learning in four therapists’ WT practices situated in two different European countries. First, I will experience the WT practices by partaking on trips with the therapists’ and their participants, followed by four in-depth interviews with the therapists. The present study thus attempts to explore the questions of “what” and “how” of the WT practices involved.

On that basis, my research question is formulated as follows:

How can wilderness therapy in a European context be understood from a learning perspective?

This research question requires clarification of some terms, which are elaborated on in the following sections.

Learning

A key interest of this thesis is the term learning. It is a concept that has been of human concern throughout history with many different angles and understandings (Illeris, 2018, p. 86). The concept of learning processes is complex and multifaceted, which can be considered from phycological, biological, social, neurological, bodily or unconscious perspectives. These are overlapping yet different ways to understand and explain how we learn something. In this thesis, I lean on the definition of learning in a broad sense from Knud Illeris (Illeris, 2012, p. 16) and learning is defined as:

Any process that leads to permanent capacity change which is not solely due to biological maturation or ageing.

I have chosen this definition because it encompasses learning processes like socialisation, gaining qualifications, skills development and therapy. Those processes can be seen as particular types of learning processes or angles to understand learning from (Illeris, 2012, p. 16). In the context of group-based WT, these processes are essential to understand learning.
The word permanent indicates that the learning is a somewhat persistent change in the person that stays until it is replaced by new learning or forgotten because it is not used (ibid).

Wilderness therapy

I use the term "wilderness therapy" in the current research because the interest is multi-day experiences in nature. There is no universally accepted definition of WT (Jong, Lown, Schats, Otto, & Jong, 2019, p. 2), but in this project, it is used for week-long hiking trips in wild nature with clinical therapists. However, there is not always a clear line between when the informants talk about their nature-based therapy practice in general, which also includes day trips into nature environment with participants, and when they talk about the expedition-type practice. It can be argued that the term "outdoor therapy" would be more suited, but this is a relatively new

umbrella term introduced in literature after I did my empirical data collection in 2018 (Harper & Dobud, 2020).

European

The European context is here represented through WT practices taking place in Norway and Spain.

Therapist

The term therapist is in this thesis related to licensed clinical therapists practising psychotherapy. That means they are educated within and are part of a professional monitoring system to maintain ethical practice (Richards, 2016, p. 252). I use "informant" and "therapist" interchangeably when referring to the informants, who are all therapists.

2.1 Research design

To answer the abovementioned research question, I choose a qualitative research design with four semi-structured in-depth interviews as the primary empirical data. Because understanding is the aim, I will use a hermeneutic approach where interpretation and increased understanding is gained throughout the research process.

In hermeneutics, emphasis is put on the context of the researched phenomenon. Based on the relative unfamiliarity the field of WT has to me, I use a participatory and explorative approach where I partake in the field with the therapists before interviewing them. It seems necessary to understand the context before doing interviews, especially since the current project focuses on learning perspectives. Learning has practical, theoretical and social dimensions, which are easier to understand and have an in-depth interview about when it can be related to practice examples and the context of the practice.

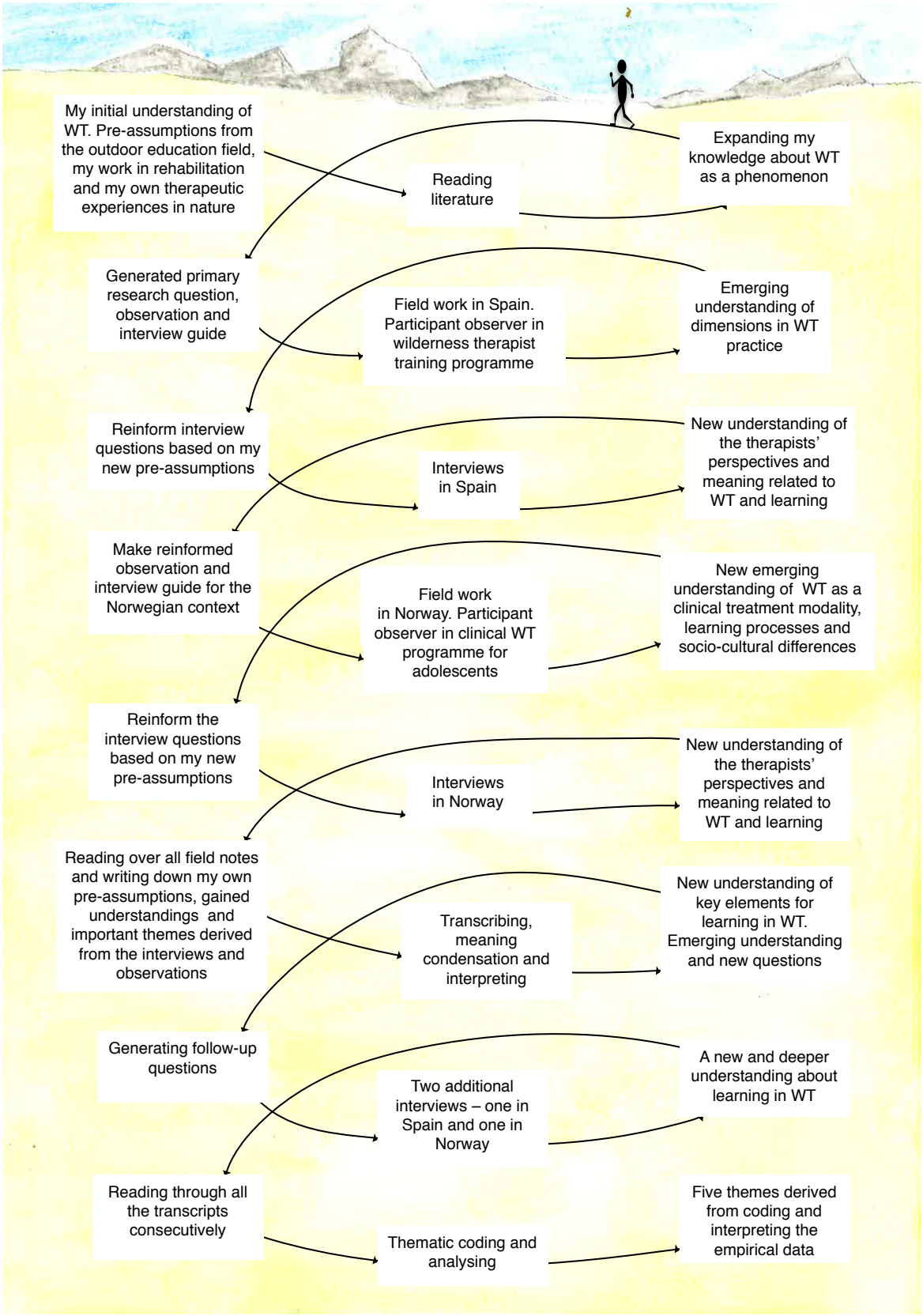
The study includes four informants educated and licensed in psychology and several years' experience working in the field of WT and AT. From each programme, a female and a male therapist are interviewed.

The programmes are located in Spain and Norway and are based on six consecutive days hiking trips in mountain areas. The Spanish programme is an international training programme for

professionals wanting to implement WT in their practice. The Norwegian programme is a clinical treatment programme with adolescents struggling with different mental health issues.

The hermeneutic research process of this thesis is depicted in model 1 on the next page and will be explained in the following.

1) To gain an initial understanding of WT, I begin with acquiring knowledge through published research.
2) This will lead to formulating the research question, semi-structured interview guide and an observation chart for the fieldwork.
3) Then I will travel to Spain to partake in the programme as a participant-observer and gain a context-specific understanding of the Spanish therapists' practice.
4) After the interviews, my newly gained understanding will be integrated into the interview guides
5) Then, two separate interviews will be carried out with the therapists.
6) Returned to Norway, I will reinform the observations and interview guides before entering the fieldwork in the Norwegian context.
7) After the fieldwork, I will again integrate the new understandings from the field into the interview guides and
8) carry out the two interviews with the two Norwegian therapists.
9) Before transcribing the empirical data, I will read through my notes and write down my overall understanding.
10) Transcribing the interviews will then bring about new details and comprehensions where key elements for learning in WT will emerge.
11) New questions will be formulated in a follow-up interview with one Spanish and one Norwegian informant.
12) The follow-up interviews will be carried out online.
13) All the collected empirical data will be read through as a whole before
14) splitting it into parts in thematic coding and analysis, generating overall themes.
15) I will choose the theory for the interpretation based on the themes and the, at the time, understanding.



Model 1: The continuous path of interpretation and understanding in this thesis. The path is to be understood as a spiral where I sometimes have to walk back up to find the right way down.

3 Methodology

The previous chapter described the thesis' research design and the hermeneutic path I will follow to answer the research question. Hermeneutics can be described as the tradition, philosophy, and practice of interpretation (Moules, McCaffrey, Field, & Laing, 2015, p. 3). The present study carries out a qualitative inquiry with a hermeneutic approach. In the following section, I will describe hermeneutics as a philosophy and how it is applied as a method in the current project.

3.1 Hermeneutic philosophy

Hermeneutics can be traced back to ancient Greece and derives from the Greek verb hermeneuein, meaning to say or interpret, and the noun hermeneus, which is the explication of thought (Moules et al., 2015, p. 2). Hermeneutics, therefore, deals with interpretation and understanding in human context and has both a historical and current tradition holding a rich legacy of theory, philosophy and practice (Thornquist, 2018, p. 168).

In this inquiry, I will base my approach on Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1900-2002) philosophical hermeneutics. Gadamer is a student of German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), and his hermeneutics builds on phenomenology. Gadamer rejects the belief that scientific methods based on causal relationships and verifiability result in true knowledge (Højberg, 2004, p. 314). Central in his description of truth is the subjective perception of reality and experiences (Gadamer, 2010, pp. 21-22). Gadamer is inspired by the thoughts of Heidegger regarding understanding as an essential characteristic in humans (Krogh, Endresen, Iversen, & Reinton, 2003). Human existence itself is hermeneutic: We are in the world as understanding, interpreting and historical beings (Thornquist, 2015; 181).

Another characteristic of understanding is the "historically effected consciousness" (Gadamer, 2010, p. 340). When we understand something, it is conditioned by our historical and geographical situatedness in the world. The social and cultural society we are part of and the knowledge and practices this encompasses will influence how we interpret and understand a phenomenon. Gadamer calls this the tradition. Tradition affects our values, behaviour and way of life (Walstad, 2011). The tradition is an inseparable part of us, and it represents what Gadamer calls preunderstanding and prejudice. The notion of prejudice is neutral in the way Gadamer uses it. It simply means that we meet new experiences, texts, topics, or the world in

general with prior understandings, which allows us to interpret them. “The recognition that all understanding inevitably involves some prejudice gives the hermeneutic problem its real thrust” (Gadamer, 2010, p. 305). Prejudices have a productive character and are a prerequisite for understanding and experiencing something as true.

3.2 The fusion of horizons

A horizon is an individual’s collected understandings, experiences and expectations at any given time. It is unconscious and conscious, but our attention is normally not directed at it (Thornquist, 2018, p. 170). The horizon of understanding has an outer limit but comprises all that can be detected from the point the person is at (Olsson & Sörensen, 2003, p. 135). The unconsciousness suggests that we never meet the world as a completely blank slate, nor are we constantly aware of what we bring with us in our horizon of understanding. Instead, it is by virtue of the person’s prejudices she sees and comprehends any given situation.

Gadamer talks about horizons in relation to history, which is an essential point for interpretive research. Our present horizon is formed by the current values, assumptions, and concerns that determine how we look out on the world (Moules et al., 2015, p. 47). It is forever changing according to new experiences and new knowledge gained from testing our prejudices (Gadamer, 2004, p. 305). At the same time, horizons of the past are continuously shaping our perception of the world in the present. It can be understood as a dialectic relationship; as we interpret the past from the present changing horizon, understanding the past changes too (Moules et al., 2015, p. 47).

In hermeneutic research, this suggests that I, as the researcher, continuously change my horizons as I gain an understanding of the phenomenon of WT. Gadamer introduced the understanding of research findings through a fusion of horizons. This means that the historical horizon of the past and the horizon of the present bridge the gap between the familiar and the unfamiliar (Paterson & Higgs, 2005, p. 346). In this research, the historical horizon is the account of learning perspectives in WT found in the literature. The present horizon is the text from the transcribed interviews with the wilderness therapists embedded in the emerging interpretation of me as the researcher.

Fusion of horizons also applies to the evolving understanding between the researcher and the informants during the interviews. We meet each other with our separate horizons, and through the dialogue, we can venture into the other individual's meaning-field. This, however, is not enough. To understand, we must constantly alternate between merging into the other's world and linking back into our own reference system. By means of this back and forward moving, we can come to understand an unfamiliar reference system which in turn gradually revise and enrich our own: there is a fusion of horizons (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2018, p. 150).

4 Hermeneutic research method

The purpose of this chapter is to create transparency of the thesis' methodical approach. First, I will present and give the reason for the pertinence of a hermeneutic research method guided by Gadamerian hermeneutic philosophy. It will include how qualitative interviewing is carried out and the role of the hermeneutic researcher. Then I will include a section about the context in hermeneutic research, how I gained access to the field and the informants. Next the interview guides and the interviews setting will be described. And lastly, the transcription of the interviews, problems encountered due to the multi-language interviews and how the coding of the interviews was done.
The primary resource for the project's research method is the Canadian Hermeneutic Institute and their book "Conducting Hermeneutic Research: From Philosophy to Practice", published in 2015.

4.1 Qualitative interviewing

The current project attempts to understand WT from a learning point of view. This involves the subjects, in this case, the therapists working with participants in nature, who are facilitating and actively engaged in the meaning-making of their actions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 3). To interpret the meaning of the therapists' experiences and understand their thoughts, motives and feelings towards the phenomenon, they must be made available for the researcher (Højberg, 2004). Language and conversation are key elements in hermeneutic research; therefore, qualitative interviewing is chosen as the primary data source (Moules et al., 2015).

Gadamer has been referred to as "the dialogical thinker" (Sand Gjersøe, 2011;46). This description indicates an essential point in Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy and how research is performed in line with his philosophy. When we interpret and understand the world, it is done through conversation with it. Consequently, reading, thinking, and understanding are brought about through dialogue with other people, texts, and oneself. Therefore, asking the therapists questions and understanding their context is the best way to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and its learning implication. The therapists are the experts on their actions, and their lifeworld stories convey the meaning of those actions. Thus, a hermeneutic interview takes the form of dialogue more than an interrogation or predetermined questioning (Moules et

al., 2015). Gadamer emphasised this through the dialogic model of conversation and his description of a genuine conversation:

> "We say we "conduct" a conversation, but the more genuine a conversation is, the less its conduct lies within the will of either partner. Thus a genuine conversation is never the one we wanted to conduct. Rather it is more correct to say that we fall into conversation, or even that we become involved in it. The way one word follows another, with the conversation taking its own twists and reaching its own conclusion, may well be conducted in some way, but the partners conversing are far less the leaders of the led. No one knows in advance what will "come out" of a conversation. Understanding or its failure is like an event that happens to us. Thus we can say that something was a good conversation or it was ill fated. All this shows that a conversation has a spirit on its own, and that language in which it is conducted bears its own truth with it – i.e., that it allows something to "emerge" which henceforth exists" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 383).

The difference between a genuine conversation and a research interview is the purpose and focus. When carrying out a hermeneutic interview, it might not be apparent where the conversation will go and what twists it will take, but it necessarily has a structure and an objective. If not, it is not research. Furthermore, it entails an asymmetrical power relation, unlike a genuine conversation. "The research interview is not an open, everyday conversation between equal partners" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 37). However, a hermeneutical questioning is driven by a genuine curiosity and "a humility towards one's not knowing" (Moules et al., 2015, p. 42) with the purpose of a shared understanding – a fusion of horizons. Thus, an interview with a hermeneutic approach must be open to following leads and allow storytelling within the topic. Its flexible structure allows the researcher to ask unplanned questions as the conversation unfolds and, in the process, generating new and additional insights (Smith & Sparkes, 2016, p. 108). The interviewer's responsibility is to keep the topic in mind when probing questions for a deeper understanding of the said and allow the truth within the informant to emerge and become knowledge for interpretation and understanding.

The interviews with the wilderness therapists had an interview guide with predetermined themes and questions within these themes. It was not the aim to ask all questions to all informants, and the questions varied with the context of the interviews. In Spain, the interviews took an unforeseen twist in that the informants talked a lot about their previous experiences from WT in the US. This required questions to understand the context of American WT. These additional questions arose in the course of the interview as part of my continuous interpretation;

the researcher thus takes a particular place in hermeneutic work. This will be described in the following.

4.2 Role of the researcher

The hermeneutic researcher is situated in the work, but the result is not an autobiography. I, as the researcher, must allow the world to read back to me while having a self-understanding of my position in the work. The aim is not to remove subjectivity, which within the hermeneutic philosophy is impossible, but to acknowledge how it influences the hermeneutic process (Moules et al., 2015, p. 120). It involves a sense of responsibility in recognising how it allows me to listen to the informants, what stands out to me and how I interpret it. Deep listening is crucial throughout the research process, which implies a genuine interest in what the informants have to say about the subject. The listening intends to explore, question further and understand the truth the other person holds (ibid., p. 94).

4.3 Context and access to the field

An essential point in hermeneutics is that meaningful phenomena only are understandable in their context (Gilje & Grimen, 1993, p. 152). It is in their frame of reference that they convey a certain meaning and become available for interpretation. In a research project, it is thereby necessary for the researcher to place the studied phenomenon in its context. Moules et al. (2015) argue the importance of visiting the social phenomena in person as an essential part of the hermeneutical research method:

> "Hermeneutics is about context and the recognition that phenomena cannot exist uncontextualised. For example, if one were studying children's cancer camps, one would need to attend them, to know them in some way, to have experience of what happens at them, to appreciate the atmosphere, process, and interactions. This is not the same as in ethnography where participant-observation or observation-only is an essential part of the research; it is more of an awareness of the topography of the topic, the topos" (pp.90-91).

In acknowledgment of the importance to understand the context, I choose to focus my data collection on programmes where I could participate in the field with the therapists. I found the WT programmes of interest through internet searches, relevant literature and insider

recommendations. Due to the projects' interest in longer trips in nature, the searches focused on WT programmes in Europe.

Three programmes of interest were found, and the programme coordinators were contacted by e-mail describing the themes of interest, a request to join on a trip, and perform follow-on interviews. Two of the programmes were therapists having trips in wilderness with participants. One of these replied with a positive response. The other did not respond. The third programme was a training programme for professionals wanting to learn how to combine WT with their work. The programme was carried out by psychologists working in the WT and AT fields themselves. That programme also replied positively to the research project, themes and practical partaking. The programmes were situated in Norway and Spain.

In Norway, access to the field was granted through a formal application procedure. This involved a thorough presentation of my background and possible contributions to the field, leading to a selection process from a subgroup in the programme. It resulted in an invitation to join the therapists on a course of an entire three-week programme. The Spanish programme gave access through an application to participate in their WT training course. Included in the application was a request to interview the therapists after the programme from my gained experience-based understanding.

During my participation in the field, I wrote down descriptive notes, situations that stood out and questions that arose. These were used in the following interviews and as a part of my interpretation. It was not meant to be used as ethnographic fieldwork but rather for context understanding and descriptions.

4.4 Informants

This study included four informants, all educated in psychology and working within WT and AT. From each programme, a female and a male therapist were interviewed. A recurring question revolves around the number of participants needed to generate valid and reliable research (Smith & Sparkes, 2017; 116). On the one hand, it is argued that the more interviews, the more reliable are the findings brought about. On the other hand, qualitative research concerns the ability to get close to people and look in detail at their experiences and the meaning of the studied phenomenon (Brinkmann, 2013; 59). Due to the hermeneutic approach, I decided only to interview therapists I could be on a trip with and get a prior understanding of their

practice. This naturally narrowed the possible number of informants but also allowed for more profound and continuous dialogues.

The four interviews performed varied in duration from 90 to 160 minutes, and three of the informants were asked additional questions in writing or as a second elaborating interview.

4.5 The interview guides

The interview guides were developed as semi-structured interviews. To comply with the hermeneutic approach, I adjusted each interview guide to the specific informant based on my preunderstanding from the participation observations (Moules et al., 2015, p. 90). Each interview guide had the same themes with relevance to the research question. Questions and possible probes were formulated within each theme, but not all questions were asked in all interviews (ibid., p. 90). Throughout the interview, clarification, elaboration and completion probes were used to deepen the understanding of what was articulated. Table 1 shows examples from the different themes.

Theme	Example
Biographical data	What is your educational background? - Do you have any education in outdoor learning?
Identity	How would you describe yourself as a wilderness therapist? Are there anything that becomes more prominent when you work outdoors vs. indoors?
Wilderness therapy in general	Can you describe some positive aspects of working therapeutically in the outdoors? - What are the challenges?
Wilderness therapy specific to the programme	How has the programme developed over the years?
The Spanish context	How would you describe the Spanish outdoor recreation culture?
Pedagogy	Can you tell me about the planning you do in advance of the wilderness therapy trips?
Learning	Can you tell a bit about your development as a wilderness therapist and what has influenced this process? What do you hope the participants gain from the programme?
Nature	Can you describe what value nature has to you? What role does nature have in your practice?

Table 1: Examples of interview themes and questions.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Data Protection Official for Research, Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) (Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk Senter for forskningsdata (NSD)) approved the request for ethical clearance (Annex 1). In every stage of the research, requirements from the University of South-Eastern Norway and NSD was followed. Before participation, all informants were emailed an information letter describing the research project and a consent form in accordance with these requirements (Annex 2). The informants were encouraged to ask clarifying questions if needed, and when they agreed to participate in the project, the date for the interview was picked. Each interview was commenced with a review and signature of the informed consent. The informants were informed about their right to withdraw at any time or not answer questions they did not want to.

Data was recorded on a dictaphone and immediately after the interviews transferred onto the researcher's computer, where it was later transcribed and analysed. The collected data was only kept on a password protected computer accessible only to the researcher. All identifying information was coded, e.g., Informant 1, Informant 2 etc. and when names were used, they were changed to pseudonyms or taken away, i.e. <name of wilderness therapy programme>.

Due to the sensibility of the participants and therapists in the researched programmes, details about the programmes, participants and informants are not included in this project. Some context descriptions are provided to allow the reader to understand the empirical data and to set the stage for the interview dialogue.

4.7 The interview setting

The interviews were carried out at a place and time chosen by the individual interviewee in their hometowns. This approach was chosen partly because it was convenient but mainly to allow the informants to select a place they felt comfortable. Therefore, the interviews were done in different locations: in nature, at workplaces, and in a private home. The follow-up interviews were done online. The interview setting is essential and can influence the answers, especially if the interviews can be overlooked or interrupted (King, N. & Horrocks, C., 2010). During communication with the informants about the interview location, I emphasised that the place should be a private, quiet, and comfortable. Before each interview, a sound test on the voice recorder was performed to ensure good sound quality.

4.8 Transcription

After each interview, the recordings were transferred to the programme Express Scribe Transcription Software Pro for transcription. The transcription was done verbatim to catch the language of the research conversation. Likewise, non-verbal aspects such as silences, laughs and words with tonation were all included (Moules et al., 2015, p. 92). This helped me recall the interview situation in the later perusal and gave valuable indications of how the informants related to the questions. The transcription was done within a month after the interview being carried out. This allowed the conversation to be clear in mind and to include context-specific actions in the transcript. During the transcription process, I wrote down thoughts, interpretations and questions and elements that stood out. These were used as part of the interpretation process.

4.9 Validity

The process of transcribing has an interpretational character (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 203). Before commencing the transcription, all interviews were listened to in their entire lengths. This was done to clearly understand the whole before listening to the parts, i.e. each sentence one by one. All sections were listened to in a slowed tempo while writing and then gone back over while listening to the natural speed of the dialogue. In some sections, this was done several times to ensure the correct wording and promote reliability.
The data was quality-assured in early 2021 by sending the transcriptions to each informant. They then had the opportunity to read the dialogue and add corrections and comments to the different subjects if needed. It also allowed me to ask clarifying and additional questions that arose during the transcription or coding process. Two of the informants was interviewed twice to add some questions and further interpretations of the phenomena.

I acknowledge that this is a research project informed by my interpretation and co-creation of the empirical data with the informants. It would therefore be unlikely and unintended to reproduce the exact findings. Yet, I intend to ensure enough detail and transparency in the presentation of the method and process of interpretation that the same research project could be carried out.

4.10 Language

All interviews were conducted in languages that are not the researcher's mother tongue. In Spain, the interviews were carried out in English, which, likewise, is not the first language of the informants. This adds to the complexity, which means that some nuances of explanations and interpretations might have gotten lost in translation (Fryer, 2019). To ensure the correct meaning, the informants read and approved their dialogue before the coding. During the interviews, I retold my understandings of the said several times to affirm the meaning with the informant. It also must be pointed out that the informants and I are fluent in English and have all lived for extended periods in English-speaking countries.

On the contrary, the translations between languages have been the paths to some of the main topics of the analysis. Due to the many languages at play and the importance of the meaning of language in hermeneutics, I have extensively used wordbooks, dictionaries and English-speaking persons to translate as correctly as possible. Several times I had difficulties finding adequate translations for specific and central words, which sent me on an unfolding journey to find the real meaning of the words. This became part of my interpretation of the empirical data. Moules et al. (2105) state that "sometimes a particular word or turn of phrase, in the context of an interview transcript, might be enough to suggest that there is potential for reflection, questioning and elaboration" (p. 128). An example of such is the Norwegian word "medmenneske", which translates directly to "fellow human being", but it loses its core implications in that translation. In the search for a better alternative, I understood the deepness of the therapist's statement and how encompassing it is for the therapists' role in WT. Section 8.5 will elaborate on this.

4.11 Coding

All transcripts were coded in the qualitative data analysis programme MAXQAD 2020. Before using the programme, I took an online introduction course to understand the available features. MAXQDA allows for colour coordinated, inductive coding distributed on different levels. Codes with many sections can therefore be divided into subcodes and make the data more perspicuous. While coding, each section can be allocated a descriptive note, which I used for meaning condensations. Additionally, in-text memos can be written, making ongoing interpretations possible. When the coding is done, different tools let the researcher get an

overview of how the codes are related to each other (see model 3) and retrieve the code separately into Microsoft Excel. I used all these features in the thematic coding process to move between the parts and the whole interview and between interviews.

5 Learning in wilderness and adventure therapy research

The initial step in the thesis process consisted of forming a general idea of the concept of AT and WT. I did this through a broad literature search in the university search engine Oria and continued with chain searching, where one article led me to the next through the reference list. This method was used because it is a helpful way to build a substantial reference list in a short time (Jones, 2015, p. 67). Before participating in the programmes, I had gained an understanding of WT, but research related to the learning processes seemed scarce. When writing the thesis, I decided to search more systematically for WT and AT literature comprising learning in their scope. With assistance from a skilled librarian, the Scopus and PsychINFO databases were chosen for the literature search. Scopus covers peer-reviewed journals within life science, social science, physical science and health science, and PsychINFO contains psychological abstracts from key journals.
On 15.04.2021, a final systematic search was done on the Scopus database with the string:

> TITEL(wilderness) OR (adventure) OR (outdoor) OR (nature-assisted) OR ("nature assisted) OR (nature-based) OR ("nature based") AND TITEL(therap*) OR (counsel*) OR (health care) AND TITEL-ABS-KEY(pedagog*) OR (learn*) OR (teach*) OR (pract*) OR (educat*) AND LIMIT TO (PUBSTAGE, "final") AND LIMIT TO (LANGUAGE, "English")

It resulted in 125 hits after cross-checking for duplicates. The titles and abstracts were first skimmed, followed by a more thorough read-through of articles that seemed relevant to the current project.

The search gave a slightly better overview of what learning perspective is prominent in the field. Generally, in-depth descriptions of approaches to learning and facilitation are limited in the research literature. Most of the articles refer to experiential learning as the root of AT and WT. In particular, American philosopher and educator John Dewey (1859-1952) who is one of the founders of the concept of experiential education, and David Kolb's (1939-) experiential learning cycle are mentioned in introductions to research and programme descriptions (Norton et al., 2014). Experiential learning is thus described as a process that actively involves the learner and promotes intrinsic motivation for change and growth through reflection on the impact of the experiences (Tucker, Norton, Itin, Hobson, & Alvarez, 2016, p. 196). In the following, I will present two studies going deeper into learning processes in WT and AT. These

two studies were chosen because they connect mechanisms and context to learning outcome whereas most other articles only convey the outcome.

Healing fears, conquering challenges: Narrative outcomes from a wilderness therapy program"

An Australian qualitative study investigates the narratives of the staff and youth participants in a wilderness therapy programme. The study aims to identify what the participants consider meaningful learning outcomes, experiences and insight and the most significant changes they went through (McIver, Senior, & Francis, 2018, p. 392). The programme encompasses 11 outdoor sessions and concludes with a three-day bushwalk. It is led by an outdoor educator and an additional staff member with different backgrounds. 19 participants recovering from significant mental health issues, and 11 staff partook in the interviews. The research found the key elements to be relationships to a) professional staff; b) nature; c) peers, and d) self.

a) the relationship to staff is informed by creating a safe, inclusive and supportive space and building a sense of community. Commitment to the group and programme is fostered through co-creating the curriculum with the participants and letting the individual's meaning have influence. b) Being active is an essential element in the therapy because it is different from the participants standard "head-oriented" therapy. Being in nature and away from the stressors of everyday, invoke reflexivity. Nature is found to have an intrinsic way of letting the participants gain a more holistic perspective of themselves where experiencing stillness and silence is particularly important (ibid., p. 398). c) The social aspect is feared the most by the participants, but through the programme, the relationship with peers become strong and supportive. The participants report that they become aware of their own social growth through experiencing their peers' personal growth (ibid, p. 399). d) the relationship to self is initially informed by previous failures. Being in nature with a group allows for "releasing anxieties, building friendships, and sharing positive experiences" (McIver et al., 2018, p. 399). Conquering activities and making the participants "go beyond their comfort zone" (ibid., p. 399) are likewise highlighted as important to increase confidence and self-esteem. Overall, the experiential learning approach is concluded to reshape the participants' values, attitudes and beliefs, and that automatic self-reflection appears to be a unique feature of WT (ibid., p. 401).

"Unpacking the black box of wilderness therapy: A realist synthesis"

Some studies have investigated the mechanisms leading to outcomes in WT, which can be understood as the learning processes. One such example is Fernee et al. (2017), who opened the black box in a realist synthesis reviewing qualitative WT studies and proposed a clinical model for WT. They looked at what combinations of contexts, mechanisms and outcomes the included studies elucidated and combined it with Russell and Farnum's (2004) WT treatment milieu model, also called "the concurrent model" (Fernee et al., 2017, pp. 115-118). Russell and Farnum's model identify three factors consistently present in WT programmes but to a varying degree depending on the temporal progression of the programme. The factors included are; a) wilderness; b) the physical self, which relates to the participant's interactions with the wilderness environment and partaking in activities aiming at learning and self-development; and c) the social self, concerning social interaction among participants and with the WT practitioners.

The literature search only identified seven empirical qualitative WT studies that fitted the inclusion criteria of an adolescent clinical population and programmes explicitly offering intentional therapy as a component published after the year 2000. All studies were from the US. The seven studies were analysed for therapeutic configurations of contextual factors, proposed mechanisms and treatment outcomes and allocated them to the three theory factors: wilderness, the physical self and the social self. The findings suggest extending the concurrent model by adding a psychological dimension, integrating it into the social self-factor, and calling it the psychosocial self.

Summed up, *the wilderness* is believed to be a healing place where the participants might find peace. Initially, some individuals are likely to experience a shock and despair from being situated in the wilderness, yet increased management of basic outdoor life skills will promote self-confidence. Wilderness allows reflecting on life and can bring about increased awareness and personal insight. *The physical self* relates to overcoming inherent challenges in WT and enduring the demands associated with the programme components. Over time this is thought to enhance self-efficacy, which is hoped to transfer into other domains in life. Rest days, for example, a basecamp day on a multi-day hike, can be an essential contrast to hiking all day where the participant has time to think. The proposition for *the psychosocial self* relies on the small treatment groups in WT where trusting peers and therapists are likely to challenge participants' relational patterns and behaviours. This social aspect of being in a group can be a

demanding process for some due to negative experiences in the past, e.g. bullying and neglect. A strong alliance with the therapist and dynamics with the peers is thought to be vital influences of the treatment outcome and experience. Meanwhile, the duration and context of WT seem to provide the needed time to process and change emotional problems and stimulate personal issues to the surface, which have not been reached in prior conventional treatment modalities.

Summary of previous research

I choose to present two types of articles in the overview of learning: One narrative investigation of a single programme and one review of mechanisms in several programmes. These were the two most relevant articles dealing with learning in WT, I could find. Other articles provides examples from AT but these are generally limited to specific adventurous activities and not to prolong stay in nature. It mirrors a shortage of research literature in WT specifically dealing with learning processes or relating the outcome to processes and the lack of research in the European context. AT a WT are becoming a recognized treatment modalities worldwide (N. J. Harper et al., 2019) but critical investigations of practitioners' educational background reported lack of formal training[1] (Tucker & Norton, 2013, p. 341). With a growing interest in facilitating nature-based therapeutic programmes, an increased offering of educational courses, subjects and degrees are seen globally. In relation to this positive development several workbooks dealing with learning processes in AT and WT have been published recently.

The two research articles presented have similar divisions of important elements in the WT learning process: The self – physical and psychological; the natural environment, and the social aspect – interaction with peers and therapists. These elements promote different learning processes and have a varying degree of presence at different times in the programme. I the beginning it is mainly the social aspect that is dominant until the group feel secure. The physical self is related to doing activities in nature and overcoming challenges. This is also the focus in the beginning but spending extended time in nature allows silence and time to reflect to become more prominent mechanisms. The natural environment therefore gets a more healing character over time. The social aspect, described as interaction with peers and practitioners, likewise

[1] Tucker and Norton (2013) found that only 17,6% of practitioners using AT techniques had formal training and concluding that: "The field needs to organize and provide better trainings that focus on assessment, group and individual facilitation and technical skill involved in adventure therapy, as well as offer more structured educational opportunities (...)" (Tucker & Norton, 2013, p. 341).

become more profound over time where the participants learn to support each other and create relationships, which for many has been difficult previously.

The present thesis attempts to look at the learning processes with concrete examples and understand the meaning the therapists ascribe to these processes.

6 Analytical strategy

In this chapter, I will present the thesis' analytical approach. I will explain how I reached the five themes presented and further analysed in chapter 8. As stated by Gadamer in chapter 3, human existence is hermeneutic. For this research project, it means that I have been continuously interpreting throughout the whole process. The more structured interpretation began at the first meeting with the therapists. Since then, I have kept an interpretation diary that shows the loops I have done. This is also called the hermeneutic circle, which will be described first since it is the core of hermeneutic interpretation. Next, I will explain how I did the meaning condensation, which was done to get an overview of the large amount of empirical data. It will be followed by a review of the six stages in thematic analysis, which I choose to follow. Lastly, I will display the interrelations between the main codes. The relationships between the codes have been central to the interpretation, forming the five themes and the choice of theories.

6.1 The hermeneutic circle

Hermeneutics is the interpretation of lived experiences. A fundamental principle for the hermeneutic interpretation is that the meaning of the part has to be considered in relation to the whole, whilst the interpretation of the whole is understood by virtue of the parts (Thisted, 2018, p. 60). This is termed the hermeneutic circle. It is characterised by a dynamic and generative interaction between the data as a whole, in this case, learning processes in WT, and the data in part, referring to a particular instance in the interviews (Moules et al., 2015, p. 122). This is done through extensive reading, re-reading, reflection, following ideas and writing. Focus is on the particular and unsaid and on isolating understandings.

The process of analysis commenced at the first meeting with the informants. From the very start, I noted down interesting statements, observations, the atmospheres, thoughts and questions that arose. The same was done during the field trips. I had several longer dialogues with each informant before the interviews, and I felt I had gotten to know them quite well on the previous field trips. This made it easier to ask critical questions and understand the meanings they expressed during the interviews.

6.2 Meaning condensation

First, all transcripts and notes from the field were read through so I had a sense of the data as a whole (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 205). Then the transcriptions were read one by one. This

was done repeatedly in a paper version while noting interesting sections, keywords and interpretive questions in the margins. Moving back and forth between specific sections and the full interview and relating it to the other interviews, some patterns started forming. The initial analytic interests and thoughts were written down in interpretative conjectures. Next, all the data was transferred to the qualitative analytical computer programme MAXQDA. Here the interviews were gone through section by section, adding meaning condensation to all the meanings expressed by the interviewees. This was done as an abridgement of more extended expressions without changing the meaning. Through the meaning condensation, I had a good overview of the meaning in the interviews, where they differed and what themes were interesting based on the informants' descriptions. This led me on to thematic coding.

6.3 Thematic analysis

In hermeneutic research, it can be a helpful tool to identify themes in the empirical data (Moules et al., 2015, p. 119; Thisted, 2018). To form the themes, I used Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis as a method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method was chosen because it emphasises the researchers' active role in interpreting the themes and the recursive process of moving back and forth throughout the different phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 82-86). This movement can be related to the interaction between the parts and the whole in hermeneutics. In line with hermeneutics, the thematic analysis moreover advocates flexibility and leaves it to the interpreter to define what counts as a theme. "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Braun and Clarkes (2006) describe the process of developing themes through coding as an inductive analytical process. The formed themes will then be analysed further with theories to understand and structure the informants' meanings and generate a new understanding. The selection of theory is based on the informants' descriptions and the created themes, which follows the inductive method according to Braun and Clarkes (ibid. 83).

The thematic analysis is a six-phase process spanning from transcribing the data to reporting the themes. The first phase contained a close reading of the transcripts, which was done prior through the meaning condensation.

In phase two, thematic coding was used to organise the interview material and relate it to emerging interpretations. An advantage of using thematic analysis is the flexibility it allows for and the continuous interpretation. This meant that no codes were predetermined. Instead, they were formed and reformed as I went through and interpreted the empirical data. It resulted in approximately 700 coded segments distributed on 37 codes in the first cycle of coding. Some segments were coded to many different codes, and some were not coded at all (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Since the codes were made while going through the interview material, it seemed necessary to go through all the transcripts twice to make sure that the interviews that were coded first were adjusted to the latter codes. All coded sections were annotated meaning condensations, and I wrote interpretative conjectures and a data diary throughout the whole process.

In the third phase, the aim is to collate the codes into themes. All the meaning condensations and interpretive conjectures were read through within each code, and relations between the codes were established as a mind map. Furthermore, the visual code relation browser in the coding programme was used. This showed the relationship between the coded segments and their allocated codes. Segments coded to several codes then show a relationship between those codes. The codes were then structured into primary themes and subthemes, which in the fourth phase were assessed again in relation to the transcript to ensure the themes were related to the actual content of the empirical data.

The fifth phase established the five themes and subthemes, which in the sixth phase are analysed further in the analysis chapter. **Model 2** shows which codes belong to the different themes, and **model 3** shows the relations between a selection of the main codes.

The five derived themes are:

- **Theme 1: The participants' learning processes**
  This theme concerns the learning process the participants go through during the WT programmes. The group and the relations established within the group showed to be central to their learning process. While establishing relations with peers and therapists is a learning process in itself, it also encourages other learning processes to occur.

- **Theme 2: Facilitation of learning in WT**

  Theme 2 deals with how the therapists facilitate the learning processes. During my participation in the field, it was noticeable that the therapist used different approaches to facilitation. It depended on the atmosphere in the group but also the therapists' themselves. In this theme, the facilitation is further analysed.

- **Theme 3: The therapists' learning process**

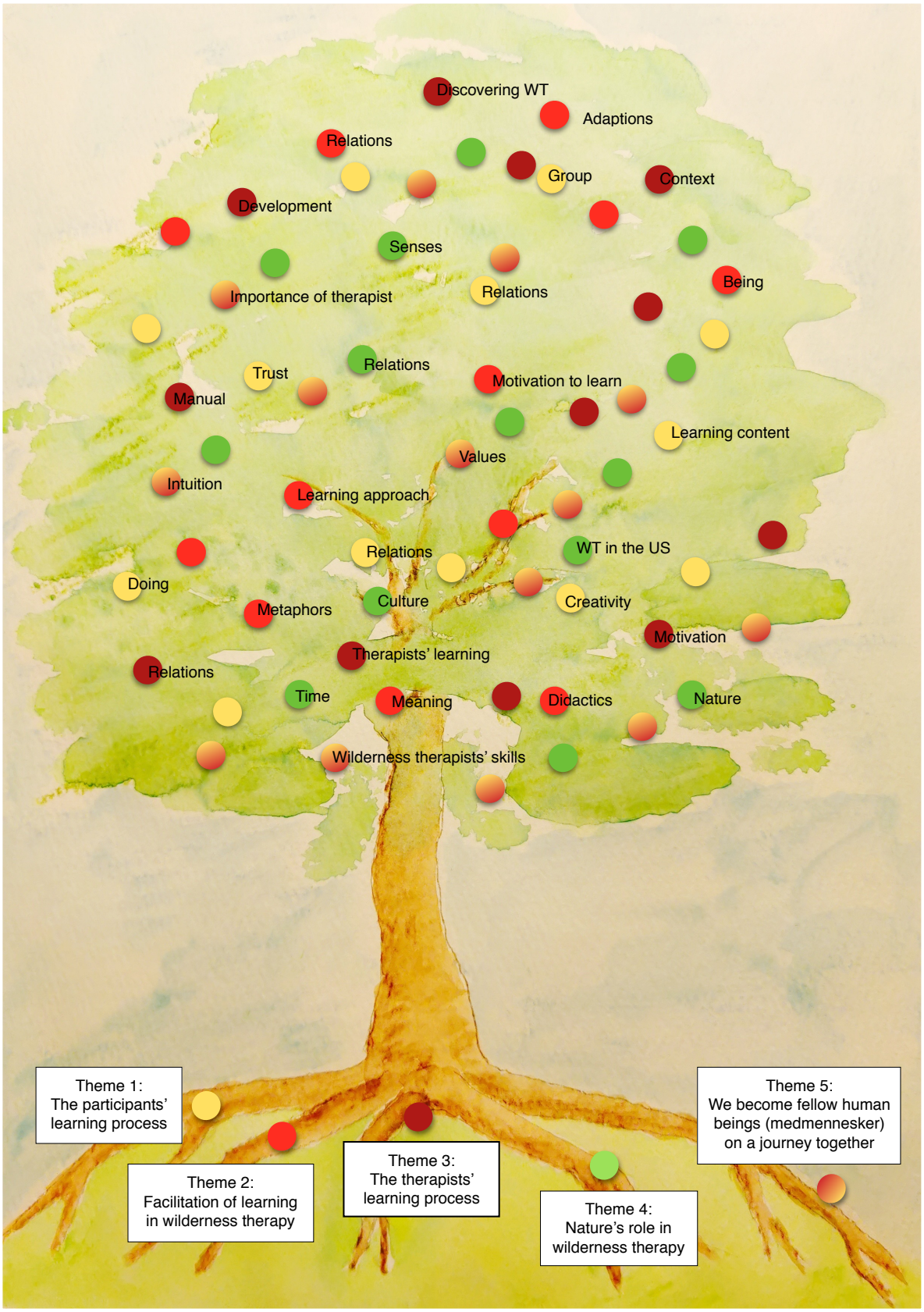
  This theme concerns the therapists' learning processes and how it reflects on the development of the programmes over the years. Both in Spain and Norway, the inspiration to establish the WT programmes came from abroad. Developing the programmes to the respective socio-cultural setting has been a learning process for the therapists.

- **Theme 4: The role of nature in the WT practices**

  Here the approach in the US is used as a comparison because the empirical data suggest a difference between the European and the US context. Furthermore, how nature is incorporated in the programmes is analysed to understand what extra dimensions therapy situated in natural environments brings.

- **Theme 5: We become fellow human beings on a journey together**

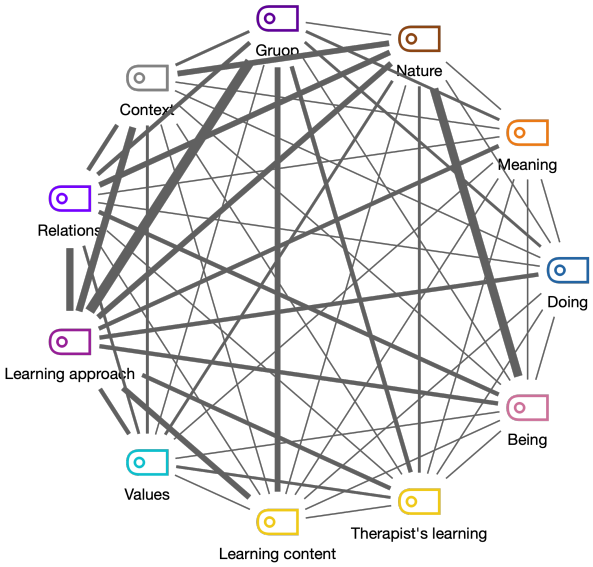
  This theme takes its starting point in an extract from one interview that has stood out to me since the interview. The theme explores the characteristics of the therapists working in WT and why they are central in their work.



Model 2: "The tree of codes". Each separate code belongs to a root (theme). Some codes belong to several roots, and a few stay as unidentified on the tree. This tree showed to have five roots.

6.4 Interrelations between the codes

A starting point to relate the individual parts of the interviews to the whole was to establish an overview of how the main codes were associated with each other. This is depicted in model 3, and the central relations are described in the following text with the number of coded segments in brackets. The strongest but also the weakest interrelations are then used to analyse why, or why not, they relate to each other.



Model 3: The interrelations between some selected main codes. The thicker the line is, the more segments overlap both codes.

The code called *learning approach* encompasses how the therapists facilitate learning processes for the participants and why they do what they do. This is the code affiliated with the most segments (91), and the most substantial relation between all the codes in this thesis is between the *learning approach* and the *group*. The approach to learning is also strongly related to the *context*, *nature* and *relations*.

The *group* code (54) comprises segments where the informants talk about how the group of participants function together, learn from each other and establish relations or conflicts. The code is relatively strongly related to all codes except *being*, *values* and *nature.*

The *relations* code entails (42) segments where the informants talk about the formation of relations, the importance of relations and relations between someone or somethings. It can be relations to the natural environment, among the participants or the relationship between the

therapists and participants. Strong relations are *group*, *context*, *learning approach*, *nature*, *being* and *values*.

Nature (52) is strongest related to *being* but also the *context* of the learning, *relation*s and the therapists' *learning approach*.

The *therapists' learning* (46) encompasses sections where the therapists express directly and indirectly what they have learned. It is strongest related to the *learning approach* and the *group*.

Learning content (52) includes the segments where the informants talk about what they wish to teach or what they think is learned in the programmes. It relates mainly to the *learning approach* and the *group*.

The code called *being* (27) is about being in the present, how it is facilitated and why. It overlaps largely with *nature* but also *learning approach* and *relations*.

Doing (16) includes sections about practical active activities and why they are facilitated. Doing is mainly associated with the *learning approach* and the *group*. Unlike *being,* it does not relate strongly to *nature.*

Context (52) encompasses segments where the context of the programme, the learning situation etc., are talked about. It, for instance, includes socio-cultural descriptions.

Segments are coded to *Values* (29) when the informants express their values directly or through the actions they explain. It relates to *learning approach*, *nature* and *learning content.*

The code *meaning* (24) relates to how the informants attempt to create meaningfulness for the participants and what they experience as meaningful themselves. It relates to the *learning approach* and the *group.*

Based on the thematic analysis and the codes' interrelations, I select the theories for further interpretation. Because the *group, nature, context, relations* and *learning approach* are closely related, I choose theories that include interactions with the learning situation. These will be accounted for in the following chapter.

7 Theory for interpretation

To interpret and understand the learning processes in the WT programmes, I have chosen three different theories based on the outcome of the thematic coding. The three theories complement each other while they also overlap in some areas. Learning is a broad concept. It can be understood as a purely cognitive process taking place in the individual or as a process only appearing through social engagement. To include both these processes and analyse the learning processes as a whole, I take my starting point in a holistic learning theory.

As a holistic experiential learning theory, I have selected Knud Illeris' comprehensive learning theory (Illeris, 2012, 2018) because it encompasses several learning theories into a broad, coherent theory, including both the individual cognitive learning process and the interaction process with the surrounding world.

I did not have the opportunity to interview the participants about their learning processes, and the interviews with the therapists mainly deal with the learning processes they aspire to facilitate. In addition, the two WT programmes are group-based and situated in two different socio-cultural settings. I will therefore elaborate on the aspect of Illeris' theory called the "interaction" process, which concerns the social situation the learning takes place in.

Illeris' uses Lave and Wenger's situated learning theories to explain the interaction process, and I have therefore included Lave and Wenger's concept of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Etienne Wenger's social theory of learning has communities of practices as its core element (Wenger, 1998). These two theories can be viewed as one, as the social theory of learning further develops concepts presented in legitimate peripheral learning.

To interpret the empirical data related to the situatedness in nature and the outdoor learning aspects, Björn Tordsson's perspective on outdoor facilitation is included with emphasis on his concept of phronetic facilitation (Tordsson, 2014).

7.1 A comprehensive understanding of human learning

A contemporary theory of learning was developed by the Danish researcher and professor in lifelong learning, Kund Illeris (1939-). His holistic theory is an experiential learning theory that

comprises two simultaneous processes and three dimensions of learning that are always present when someone learns something (Illeris, 2012; 2018, p. 2).

The two basic processes in learning

Illeris argues that there are always two different and integrated processes actively involved in any learning situation: An external interaction process and an internal psychological process. The former concerns the process between the learner and her social, cultural and material environment. Interpersonal relationships and time and place are thus of importance for the learning outcome. This interaction is ongoing throughout a person's awake time, but we can be more or less attentive towards it (Illeris, 2012, p. 39). The internal process is the personal psychological processing of the stimulus and influences from the interaction. The acquisition often happens as an elaboration of relevant previous learning, leading to an individual character of the learning result (Ibid. 40).

The three dimensions of learning

The acquisition encompasses an interplay between two equally important psychological functions involved in learning. Illeris uses the term content about managing what is learned and incentive about the function of directing the required mental energy to carry out the learning process. Together with the environment the learning is happening in, they constitute the three dimensions of learning: content, incentive and environment.

Content

The content is what the individual learner has learned, which is often described as skills and knowledge in learning theories. Illeris accentuates that the content can take many other forms: "opinions, insight, meaning, attitudes, values, ways of behaviour, methods, strategies etc. may be involved as the learning content, and contribute to building up the understanding and the capacity of the learner" (Illeris, 2018, pp. 3-4). When we learn something, it is partly because we are trying to make sense of our lives through a coherent understanding of the different situations our existence brings. And partly, to develop skills in ways to behave and obtain abilities to handle the practical challenges life gives us (Illeris, 2012, p. 45). The more we learn, the more we develop our functionality in the different situations we take part in.

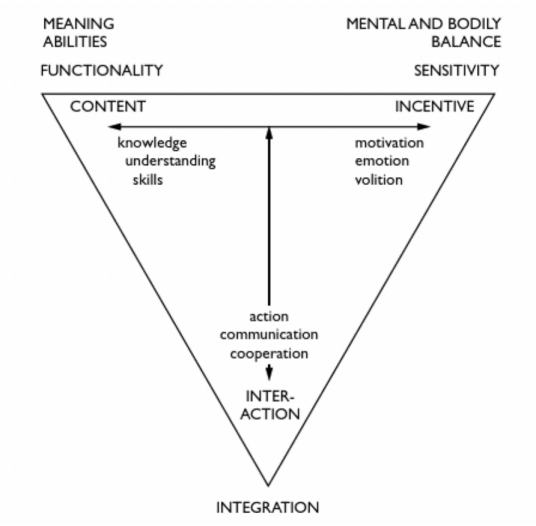
Incentive

Learning something can be demanding and requires mental energy to be mobilised. This energy is brought forth through motivation, emotions and volition and is by Illeris termed the incentive dimension. When we engage in something, it is stimulated by the humans' fundamental desire to maintain our mental and bodily balance (Illeris, 2012, p. 45). It can, for example, be activated by curiousness, pleasurable engagement to fulfil needs or as an inevitable necessity creating an unbalance in what we know, can do, understand or feel. Consequently, it will make us seek new knowledge, understandings or skills to restore the balance. The result of experiencing unbalance and restoring it is a development of our sensitivity towards ourselves and the surrounding world (Illeris, 2012, p. 46)

Environment

In the environment dimension, attention is brought to the surrounding world and the individual's actions in relation to it. The fact that all learning is situated means that the learning situation influences the learning outcome and is also a part of the learning (Illeris, 2012, p. 124). Illeris is influenced by Lave and Wenger's theories but expands them by pointing out the double character of this situatedness. In his learning theory, the learning situation always consists of the immediate situation the learner is in and the broader societal situation (ibid, p. 125). This implies that the interaction dimension is influenced both by the close learning situation in, for example, the group-based outdoor activity and by the more general norms and structures of the society in question. Most prevailing literature on situated learning, including Lave and Wenger's, focuses on the near and direct learning situation.

Interaction with the material world, e.g., the places, tools and materials used in the learning, are encompassed in these social learning situations. Illeris accentuates that the present society always mediates the material world and that the human influence is so pervasive that nothing is unaffected by us (Ibid., 126-127). Therefore, it does not make sense to separate the interaction with the material world from the interaction with the social surrounding world. The interaction dimension as a whole, provides the impulses that initiate the individual learning process. When a person interacts with the surrounding world, "it serves as the personal integration in communities and society and thereby also builds up the sociality of the learner" (Illeris, 2018, p. 5). However, this social development essentially takes place through the two other dimensions, content and incentive.



Model 4: A comprehensive understanding of human learning by Knud Illeris

To sum up, Illeris' theory deals with the general processes and dimensions always present in a learning situation. He refers to other learning theories when he explains the dimensions. One such is Lave and Wenger's situated learning theory that elaborates on the interaction process with the environment dimension. Situated learning is the second theoretical perspective I will include for theoretical interpretation in the present thesis. Situated learning and its related learning processes – legitimate peripheral participation and community of practice – will be accounted for in the subsequent sections.

7.2 Situated learning

Since the 1970s, there has been a growing interest in social learning and a movement away from traditional cognitive and behaviouristic learning approaches (Illeris, 2018, p. 91). Some of the most influential contributors are American anthropologist Jean Lave (1939-) and the Swiss-American IT researcher Etienne Wenger (1953-) and their book Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation published in 1991. Their objective is that learning always takes place in a specific situation, which influences the learning process and outcome. In 1998 Wenger extended the theory in his social theory of learning, focusing on how learning happens in communities of practices (Wenger, 1998). In this section, I will elaborate on these concepts.

7.3 Legitimate peripheral learning

Lave and Wenger argue that learning is not just situated in practice but "learning is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-world" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 35). Therefore, learning is a process that takes place in a framework of participation rather than in the individual mind. Attention is brought to the situated character of human understanding and the relationship between learning and the social situation in which it occurs. Consequently, learning is mediated by the different perspectives and positions among the coparticipants (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 14-15).

The concept of legitimate peripheral learning concerns the relations between new participants (newcomers) in a community of practice and those who are "old-timers" (experts). Learning exists in the process of moving from newcomer towards expert and full participation. The legitimacy of participation can take different forms, which is decisive for ways of belonging in the practice and is therefore also a condition for learning. Moreover, it has a significant influence on the learning content (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 35). For example, suppose a novice enters a community of practice with great knowledge and skills relevant to the practice but with an attitude unacceptable to the community. In that case, the membership of the novice will get a less legitimate role and less influence on the learning content. If the novice adjusts herself through negotiating the way of being, the relation will take a more legitimate form and belong to the community more profoundly. In this process, both novices and full participants will develop and learn, and the practice will likewise be transformed (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp. 17-18). The latter example explains the peripherality. It suggests that there are multiple ways of being located in the field of participation defined by the community, and "changing locations and perspectives are part of actors' learning trajectories, developing identities and forms of membership (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 36).

An important notion is that "(…) legitimate peripheral participation is not itself an educational form, much less a pedagogical strategy or teaching technique. It is an analytical viewpoint on learning, a way of understanding learning" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 40).

7.4 Community of practice

A community of practice is described as a practice for collective learning with a sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise (Wenger, 1998, p. 45). The relationship between community and

practice is created through the practice, which becomes the source of coherence. Wenger defines three dimensions that create coherence in a community of practice: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire. I will, in the following section, elaborate on what these dimensions entail.

Mutual engagement

To be a member of a community of practice implies mutual relations between the participants. It is not just a synonym for group, network or team, and membership is not merely dependent on personal relations with some people or to belong to an organisation (Wenger, 1998, p. 74). Instead, it requires mutual engagement and to be included in what matters in the specific community of practice. "(…) engagement is what defines belonging" (Wenger, 1998, p. 74) and the mutual relations consists of complex contrasts such as" (…) expertise and helplessness, success and failure, amassment and deprivation, alliance and competition, ease and struggle (…)" (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). Therefore, mutual engagement does not require homogeneity, nor does it necessarily lead to it. A productive engagement is rather based on diversity and homogeneity in the participants.

Joint enterprise

The second source of community coherence is joint enterprise which describes the collectively developed understanding of what the community is about (Wenger, 2000, p. 229). It is not just pre-stated goals. Instead, the participants create mutual accountability through the practice that becomes integral to it (Wenger, 1998, pp. 77-78). Joint enterprise does not mean that everyone has the same opinions, but it means that the accepted ways of being and doing are continuously negotiated to a common agreement. It is a process of coordinating the different participants' wishes and differences to a shared whole that everyone can acknowledge. At the same time, communities of practices are not self-contained entities. They develop in cultural, historical and institutional contexts, which gives certain possibilities and limitations. These terms are guidelines for the joint enterprise, but the participants' resources and confines in given situations are what influence the most. Thus, the joint enterprise has a local character and is specific to the community of practice and the participants. Two different groups going through the same programme will therefore develop distinctive joint enterprises.

Shared repertoire

The third dimension, shared repertoire, involves the communal resources developed over time. It includes "(…) routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols (…) or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which has become part of the practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). The shared repertoire reflects the history of mutual engagement through which it has developed. Because of the diversity in mutual engagement, the shared repertoire has an inherent ambiguity (ibid.). We recognise routines, artefacts etc., and it gives us shared points of reference within the community of practice, yet our history of interpretation differs. This gives room for a continuous negation of meaning and development of the shared repertoire.

7.5 Meaning

Meaning-making is a central point in Wenger's learning theory. The concept concerns what makes our body movements and brain functions meaningful. In practice, it is about what is meaningful in everyday life, which is gained through experience. Wenger specifies that meaning exists as a process called negotiation of meaning and as an interaction between participation and reification. These concepts are explained in the following sections.

Negotiation of meaning

When we take part in a practice, specific patterns develop. In an outdoor learning context, this can be how we organise ourselves in the group. After a day's hike, we find a camp spot which we chose from certain criteria (the sun's passage, the wind direction, the view, access to water or rules and regulations). We put up tents or tarps in a certain way, find a gathering spot where we place ourselves in a circle etc. All these actions are routines, and" it is the production of such patterns anew that gives rise to an experience of meaning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 52). Although the situations are recognisable, they are also always new. In every situation, we produce meanings that extend, dismiss, reinterpret or confirm our predetermined meaning from prior experiences. Therefore, "living is a constant process of negotiation of meaning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 53). The negotiation process is productive, continuous and unique. It is contextual and implies the reciprocal ability to be affected and to affect what is meaningful. Meaning is in the relation between us and the world but always have a personal character due to our prior personal experiences (ibid. 54).

Participation

In Wenger's theory, participation involves the whole person: body, mind, emotions and social relationships. "Participation refers to a process of taking part and also to the relations with others that reflect this process. It suggests both action and connection" (Wenger, 1998, p. 55). The complexity of participation in a social practice becomes apparent when we recognise the process as a combination of actions, thoughts, conversations, feelings and belonging. To participate is, therefore, an active process. It involves a possibility for mutual recognition in that we recognise some of ourselves in the others through the negotiation of meaning. Whilst participation in social communities has the potential to form us and our experience, it also works back on those communities, which in turn are shaped by our participation.

Important to note is that participation is not equivalent to good cooperation or relations of equality. It can be that, but it can also be conflictual, agreeable, competitive or take many other forms.

Reification

Reification means: "to treat an abstraction as substantially existing, or as a concrete material object" (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). Thoughts and ideas are, through reification, projected out into the world through which they can get an independent existence. Through reification, our experiences and practices are congealed into something solid, which give them status as objects. Reification can provide a shortcut to communication because it can guide the negotiation of meaning. It creates focus points which the negotiation of meaning is organised around. For example, when a discussion about how to act appropriately in an outdoor learning group takes its starting point in the predetermined group norms. Or when we talk about "stepping out of society and into nature", as if there is a limit drawn on the ground where nature is on one side and society on the other.

7.6 Outdoor Life's immanent pedagogy

To analyse the outdoor learning aspects of the empirical data, I will use Swedish outdoor educator and researcher Björn Tordsson's perspective. He writes from a Scandinavian "friluftsliv" viewpoint.

Tordsson writes about facilitation and pedagogy in outdoor learning and education[2]. Central to his perspective is what he calls the "immanent pedagogy" in outdoor learning. It means that when we as facilitators are living in nature with a group where the aim is to provide good and rich experiences, outdoor learning becomes a pedagogy in itself. In outdoor learning, we meet each other as whole persons with mind, body, and emotions, providing authentic opportunities to develop ways to be human and meet the world. Therefore, outdoor learning is merely about providing outdoor skills and knowledge to participants through specific teaching methods; it also encompasses continuing assessment of conditions and actualising deeper values. But these values of outdoor learning cannot be presupposed, "they have to be realised in and through our working methods and the ways we act within these[3]" (Tordsson, 2014, p. 14). Learning in Tordsson's perspective thus includes the person's fundamental relations to oneself, other people, nature, and the world in general.

Tordsson's outdoor learning is based on the small group and learning in and through real and concrete situations with an open interaction between facilitators and participants (ibid, p. 239). The learning processes progress from the close and familiar to the distant and unfamiliar. As a facilitator, one should seek out and generate learning situations that are meaningful to the participants and create reflection and awareness about experiences.

The phronetic facilitator

Tordsson applies Aristotle's dispositions for knowledge in his outdoor learning and facilitation and describes outdoor facilitation as phronetic knowledge. Within the field of experiential learning in general and outdoor education, particularly Aristotle's concepts of knowledge and action have been applied to explain its peculiar practice and facilitation (Løvoll, 2009; P. Stonehouse, P. Allison, & D. Carr, 2010; Tordsson, 2014).

Aristotle emphasised three dispositions to knowledge: episteme, technê and phronesis. Episteme is scientific knowledge, and technê is practical knowledge that deals with universal, context-free rules. Where episteme and technê are impersonal in nature and can be taught by others, phronesis is an ethical and intellectual virtue informed by reflection and developed through personal experience (Tordsson, 2006, pp. 205-206). Phronesis is often referred to as

[2] I refer to "outdoor learning" as learning in the outdoors in general and "outdoor education" as the institutionalized education of facilitators often taking place in universities.
[3] My translation from Danish.

practical wisdom. It concerns practical judgement and value-based deliberation related to the practice in which it takes place (ibid., p. 260). This means that it is context-dependent and is oriented towards action. Phronesis deals with the variable in the specific situation and thus cannot be defined by universal rules. At the same time, it demands interaction between general experience and the particular situated instance to make decisions and act.

Tordsson describes the abilities of the competent outdoor learning facilitator in relation to phronesis which comprises three characteristics.

1) The ability to see and take in the peculiarity of the present situation. It involves seeing what the situation is about; how the individual group member and the group as a whole feels; what is going on in the surroundings; what will happen next, and what can and should be done. Sensing vigilance is the key, and the facilitator can direct her attention towards the relevant and separate the unimportant (ibid., p. 265).

2) The ability to see oneself and recall pictures from similar situations from prior experience. This happens through recognising patterns and applying them in the current situation, which by the experienced facilitator happens spontaneously (ibid., p. 265).

3) The ability to anticipate the result of different and possible actions and choose what to do based on that. This characteristic likewise demands experience and having practised ideals beforehand (ibid., p. 266).

8 Presentation and interpretation of the interview material

In this chapter, my interpretation of the interview material will be presented. In the attempt to gain a deeper understanding of what WT practice is and how it is facilitated to the participants, the analytical objective is to explore which learning processes are prevailing from the therapists' practical experience and meaning. In addition, my own experiences from participating in the programmes works as a basis for the interpretation. The analysis is structured in five themes with associated subtitles generated through the thematic coding.

I will start the analysis with a short introduction to the programmes and the basis for the interview material to give the reader an understanding of the context.

Context of the programmes and the interviews

The two WT programmes were set in Spain and Norway. In Spain, the programme was a training intended for mental health professionals who wished to implement WT in their work. The leader team consisted of two therapists and two additional staff all of whom had experience from working with therapy in nature. The two therapists, Informant 1 and Informant 2, had developed the programme based on their experiences. They normally worked with therapy in the outdoors with a wide range of client groups including both adolescents and adults. In addition, they had both worked or done internships in WT programmes in the US. The training had a duration of six consecutive days where we hiked in a mountain area. Though this was not a clinical programme it provided me with insight on how the therapists would work with their normal clinical participants, and it gave us a shared reference frame for talking about their personal meanings and experiences with WT in general.

When the therapists talk about the programmes in the US, they distinguish between the "therapist" and the "field guide". The informants describe the field guides as the practitioners who live with the participants in wilderness. They are typically not therapists but can have different backgrounds and their role is often referred to as mentors. In the American programmes the informants refer to, the therapists are not continuously present in the wilderness. Instead, they come out to the wilderness once a week and have structured therapy sessions with each participant and a group therapy session.

The Norwegian programme was a clinical WT treatment programme for adolescents. The participants were referred to specialised treatment based on different mental health struggles and had been offered to participate in the WT programme. The participants had themselves chosen to participate in the three week-long programme, which could be a stand-alone treatment or treatment in conjunction with other treatment. The programme was first three half-day sessions and two full-day sessions and then a seven-day wilderness trip. The leader team consisted of two therapists, Informant 3 and Informant 4, both holding long experience with therapy and several years' experience from therapy in nature.

In the following analysis I use the words "informants" and "therapists" interchangeably. Likewise, I primarily use the word "participants", but the informants also uses "clients", "kids" and "youths" as synonyms for the participants on the WT programmes.

8.1 Theme 1: The participants' learning process

When we talk about learning processes, it is always someone's learning process, and something is always learnt, and it is always learnt in a context (Illeris, 2012). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to deal with what the participants learn since I could not interview the participants. The empirical data primarily concerns what the therapists wish to facilitate, how they do it, the meaning they ascribe and the related learning processes.

8.1.1 Learning as belonging

A large amount of the empirical data concerns interrelations created in the WT groups and how it affects learning. The interview segments related to the "group" code indicate that group dynamics are critical for the therapy and learning process. In this section, it is mainly the relations between the code "group" and "relations" and "learning content" that will be interpreted.

8.1.1.1 The group as a practice-family

When the informants talk about the participants being a group, they remark how this fosters an extra dimension to the learning experiences. They explain that the development of interpersonal relationships is an integral part of the learning in group-based therapy. All the informants agree that WT is not a suitable treatment modality for all adolescents with mental health challenges,

but living together in a group can be a potent way to gain social skills, insight and explore new sides of oneself. The skills they develop through the group is explained as being aware of and handling one's own and others' feelings, communicating, compromising and taking responsibility. Informant 4 recounts the social learning process:

> "I think that one gets many extra dimensions related to seeing oneself not only in relation to oneself but to see oneself in relation to others. To learn about oneself in relation to other people. How others influence one and how the feedback to each other can be valuable as well as the bodily interaction. Many things happen in a group, which can give a lot more insight into oneself." (Informant 4)

Through physical, mental and social interaction, the group setting gives the participants different perspectives on themselves. Learning in a group can lead to further insight into oneself than one-on-one therapy because the participants must communicate and relate to each other through cooperation, body language and feedback. Informant 2 likewise values the group setting as a powerful learning context:

> "I think the group has power in itself. I really like working in groups and recommend it because I believe it allows you to learn by observation. It will enable you to find your place within the group without the facilitator telling you something. It is more like the group is telling you. The group finds its balance, and if not, you can work with it. It is like a practice-family or practice-life, you know? (…) So, we will encourage them to think before doing something: "Okay, what do you want to try? Think this as a lab." Do they want to try asking for help, setting boundaries or expressing their needs? (…) In that sense, I think the group is a great practice-place where the group itself sometimes helps you regulate yourself therapeutically" (Informant 2).

These extracts can be understood through Lave and Wenger's situated learning. The description of how the participants learn from each other through interaction and how a group of people find their place in relation to each other is a process of becoming a mutually binding community of practice.

A group can be described as a number of people gathered, located or classed together (Oxford English Dictionary, Retrieved May 10, 2021). In WT, all these three factors are present; the participants are gathered together, located in a natural environment and to a certain degree classed by the inclusion criteria to take part in the therapy. However, that does not mean the participants make up a coherent group in the beginning. Instead, the development of social cohesion over time defines a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Wenger points out that

the participants establish the community of practice through their participation in the common practice. In the community, practice constitutes the three dimensions mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. It is the learning through these dimensions that makes up the practice and tie community and practice together.

When the group "is telling you" and it "finds its balance", it is a process of mutual engagement and joint enterprise where negotiation of how the group wish to constitute itself is taking place (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). Mutual engagement is when people with different backgrounds involve themselves and are included in what matters for the specific community of practice. It is a means where the individual "is being told" but likewise "tells" the group how the practice should be. In other words, it involves having influence and creating relations with the other participants (ibid., p. 74). When the group develops a collective understanding of what the community is about, it becomes their joint enterprise (ibid., p. 229). It is a process of coordinating the different participants' wishes and differences to a shared whole that everyone can acknowledge. This can be understood as the group "finding its balance", but the accepted ways of doing and being is not static. Rather it is continuously negotiated and part of the social learning process.

At the same time, learning through observing the other group members is how legitimate peripheral learning occurs. It is a process of seeing how other participants act and solve tasks whereby one is involved in their knowledge and skills, which otherwise would take a long time to acquire single-handedly (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The therapists use this type of learning process actively:

> "(…) it is not always us who have to teach the youths, but we see if there are some of the other youths who for example have some [outdoor] skills from before so they can learn from each other. (…) so that the other youths can feel that they have some skills that they can teach others." (Informant 4)

Legitimate peripheral learning has a reciprocal effect. The one teaching something will learn while teaching meanwhile, the learner learns the skills. Using the participants to teach each other is a way to create ownership of the practice and actively engage everyone in the skill acquisition – even those who already know the content. Peripheral participation is about being located in the social world and shifting position when acquiring new knowledge, actions, skills

etc. Therefore, “changing locations and perspectives are part of actors’ learning trajectories, developing identities and forms of membership” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 36).

When Informant 2 uses the group metaphors, “practice-life” and “practice-family”, it reifies the situated learning processes. The group has a life on its own, although it is a part of the surrounding world (Wenger, 1998, p. 79). It is a social extract of the everyday world where the participants can try out actions they usually struggle with and maybe gain new perspectives. This learning emerges between the participants; therefore, if one tries asking for help from the others, it can be powerful learning to experience peers helping.

The informants also describe more direct forms of learning processes in the groups. These are often not prevailing at the beginning of the programmes but become more prominent as the group has found its balance. They can, for example, arise as situational conflicts or be direct feedback. In this sense, feedback is not just a word of affirmation like “good job”, but it can be extended conversations about how the participants experience each other in the group. Informant 4 describes those conversations which are based on their shared experiences:

> “We have had long conversations around the fire where everyone says something positive about the others, and everyone says something they think the others can continue working on. (…) sometimes these conversations have become very long, and people have gotten surprised about the resources the others have seen in them. I think they receive the feedback on what they can work on differently when it comes from the other youths than when it comes from us [therapists].” (Informant 4)

Described here is what Wenger calls negotiation of meaning. A process based on mutual engagement by the participants and participation in the practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 74). An implicit aspect of negotiation of meaning is “the mutual ability to affect and to be affected” (Wenger, 1998, p. 53). These deep conversations affect the youths and have the potential to influence how they view themselves. Informant 2 explains why: “If you have someone above you telling you what to do, you are not going to take it, as well as if it is a peer that you can relate to telling you something so, they definitely learn a lot from each other in the group.” Giving and receiving both positive and constructive feedback between peers can therefore have a more profound impact because they are relatively equally positioned in the group as legitimate peripheral participants. Furthermore, the relationships formed between the peers during the programme are more transferable to relationships in other prominent communities of practices

in the adolescents' lives, e.g., classmates, friends, sports teams. Thus, how peers view each other might easier be transferred to other social settings in life beyond the treatment.

When the feedback is projected out in the group and addressed to a peer, it reifies someone's understanding. Wenger describes reification as a certain understanding is given a congealed form that organises the conversation around it (Wenger, 1998, p. 59). The feedback becomes the centre of attention for the group while the meaning is negotiated, shaping the experience of the involved persons. In the deepest forms, reifications can change the experience of the world and the understanding of oneself in relation to it[4]. Thus, these conversations have the potential to influence the participants immensely. Through the continuous "(…) interpreting, and acting, doing and thinking, or understanding and responding" (Wenger, 1998, p. 54) in the course of a WT programme, new circumstances for further negotiation of meaning can lead the way to insight and learning.

It becomes clear that these are learning processes happening over time and that the relationships between the group members are essential for these types of learning processes to occur. When Wenger recognises the concept of community of practice as a place for social learning, he explicitly underlines that it is not a synonym to a group – it is more than that. It is created over time through the sustained pursuit of a joint enterprise and mutual engagement (Wenger, 1998, p. 45). One can argue that a three-week WT programme is too short for a group to transition into a community of practice. Yet, a community of practice can be "(…) shorter-lived but intense enough to give rise to an indigenous practice and transform the identities of those involved" (Wenger, 1998). Indigenous practice here refers to the local production of meaning and learning, and a community of practice can thus not only be defined by its temporal dimension but rather "(…) *as shared histories of learning*" (Wenger, 1998, p. 86 (italics in original)). The intensity in the programmes is a characteristic all the informants emphasise. Informant 2 gives an example: "(…) you are going through the same things as them [the participants], and it is very intense. It is very intense for you [as a partitioner] as well." Both participants and therapists experience the intensity. The shared histories of learning can be generated fast when a small group spends 24 hours a day together relatively isolated in a new and changing environment. Outdoor learning provides situations where the group members are

[4] Wenger uses the concept of gravity as an example. Its reification does not change the effect on our body but it changes our experience of the world by focusing attention in a particular way and enabling new kinds of understanding (Wenger, 1998, pp. 59-60).

dependent on each other, and external pressure gives the premise for inner solidarity. To overcome difficult situations together creates shared history and fosters individual and common responsibility (Tordsson, 2014, p. 197).

Tordsson emphasises that the small group is one of the most potent instruments for influencing and developing people (Tordsson, 2014, p. 176). When the small group, in addition, is situated in a remote natural environment, the need for cooperating, caring and being honest is even greater. The group provides a "home" (Tordsson, 2014, p. 191) where human realisation, understanding and personal close relations can evolve, thus resembling a "practice-family" where social learning and the feeling of belonging together can flourish.

8.1.1.2 Relationships as a way to belong

A shared theme in all the interviews is the importance of developing relations between the therapists and the participants and within the group of participants. This is particularly important due to the characteristics of the groups and the group-based therapeutic process they are expected to go through. The informants describe the participants:

"(…) There is often some degree of social anxiety or that type of problems. Very many have experienced difficult things (…)" (Informant 4). The difficult experiences have manifested themselves in various ways: "dropping out, using drugs, experiencing failure and low self-esteem" (Informant 1). In addition, the participants generally do not know each other before entering the WT programmes. For many of them, it is, therefore, a big decision to join a group-based therapy programme and go on multiday trips into nature. Informant 3 describes the characteristics of the groups he works with:

> "(…) we put together a group of people that we only partly know from before, who don't know each other, who don't have outdoor skills and who, on top of it, have quite severe mental health challenges. Then we are together with them two half days and two whole days, and then we go to the mountains together for a week, and I think that is pretty tough." (Informant 3)

For an unacquainted group to function as a therapy unit, the building of relationships is fundamental: "(…) in the end of the day, we are based on relationships, so there will not be change, and they will not feel secure if they don't trust you, and that trust you have to build it

little by little" (Informant 2). All the informants talk about the importance of making the group feel secure and building trust among the participants and between the therapists and participants at the initial stage. Wenger likewise emphasises establishing relationships between the participants for learning processes to take place. In a community of practice, "the interrelations arise out of engagement in practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 76), but in WT, "the most important role we have in the beginning is feeling safe. The group has to become secure. So, if the group isn't secure, then we don't get anywhere. It doesn't mean that it has to be super secure, but it has to be secure enough to function together as a group" (Informant 3). Due to the characteristics of the WT groups, full engagement in practice can first exist when the group feels safe. Once trust is accomplished, the relationships can form through engagement.

Trust is established through different approaches. Informant 1 describes what is important when building trust between him as a therapist and the participants: "I'm aware. I'm open, and I'm there. If you are having a hard time doing your tarp, I will be there. If you want to tell me you are struggling, I'm going to be there. I will be around. I will be open" (Informant 1). Essential elements which he and the other informants accentuates when gaining trust concerns being present, natural, genuine, available, honest and open towards the participants. All the therapists experience that it is easier to show these traits in nature than in the office setting due to the less formal context. In outdoor learning, it is recognised that the group leader acts as a role model – both positively and negatively (Tordsson, 2014, p. 183). What the leader wishes to encourage in the participants is thus important to show in the leader's actions and ways of being. Especially when a new group of people is living together for a period of time, the actions of the central persons can become trend-setting. The atmosphere in a new group is often reserved and expectant (ibid., p. 179), particularly in a therapy setting where social anxiety is present. If the therapists show care, openness and a sense of community, it can become the characteristics or quality character of the group (ibid., p. 179).

Trust-building between the participants has a different approach which the following statement by Informant 4 explains:

> "We try to find something so that they see they have some common interest. If they quickly feel like they have something in common, then it seems like they feel more secure, and then they also have something to talk about with the others. Then we have some activities based on trust and the development of trusting

each other. (…) and other games as well. Everything from hide-and-seek, play tag and those kinds of games. If it is a playful group, we do those types of games to make them relax a little." (Informant 4)

The therapist assists in inclusiveness and uncovering common interests between the participants through conversations. Building trust and finding common ground is done through activities and playing together. Playing is a means to engage with each other informally. In several ways, it is a contrast to sitting still and having serious therapy talks. It also challenges the social complexity that always exists in groups of people (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). The therapists underline that the WT programme "has to be fun" (Informant 1) and should "break the ice" (Informant 2), and that playing "(…) is both challenging and fun because you have to relate to the others and at the same time you can do something that makes you laugh about it and also be a little in movement" (Informant 4).

Playing together forms what Wenger calls shared repertoire. It generates common stories to refer to, which is a source of community coherence (Wenger, 1998, p. 82). In the perspective of Illeris, experiencing joy is a strong incentive to learn, and what is learned whilst playing is not merely dependent on the player. The play itself, the context, and the many possible ways to interpret oneself in relation to the other players, give the play an open outcome. Gadamer elaborates on this in his philosophical hermeneutics.

The "notion of play" is by Gadamer used to describe human understanding. Playing includes the entire context of a given situation and allows the player to fuse horizon with others and discover new understandings. Play is where old ideas can be discarded, and new roles are "tried on", which gives way to new possibilities (Kirby & Graham, 2016, p. 10). Gadamer claims that play encompasses seriousness and is based on a to-and-fro movement amongst its players (Gadamer, 2004, p. 106). The play-world becomes true to the players and is not to be interpreted as a contrast to the everyday world. Instead, the everyday world is pushed to the background whilst the players are wrapped in play, but it does not abruptly reappear and "transform things back to how they were" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 112) when the play finishes. "(…) it is play that makes this [everyday] world more intelligible. The things of the world that are usually hidden are made known to us (or brought into presence) only through the structure of play" (Kirby & Graham, 2016, p. 19 (brackets in original)). In this sense, playing in the WT practice can bring new understandings to the foreground if the players fully immerse themselves. An example of this can be when the informants describe that some participants continuously experience their

lives as difficult. But if they can run, laugh and enjoy themselves when playing, this has the potential to bring new insight in that they still can experience fun. When severely depressed, bringing laughter and creativity to the presence, can change the understanding of the participants' life-worlds[5]. This is stressed by Gadamer (2004) as the play goes beyond the players in that "the *primacy of play over the consciousness of the player* is fundamentally acknowledged" (p. 105 (italics in original)). A subjective opinion does not just form the possible meanings the play can have; the self is being reinterpreted in the light of the play even while playing (Moules et al., 2015, p. 43).

When I partook in the field, we played throughout the programmes. In the beginning, it was known games with set rules like hide-and-seek that the therapists initiated. But as the programmes progressed, our own games developed whilst participants and therapists alike interacted in the play (see field note in chapter 8.5).

8.1.1.3 Mutual accountability as a way to belong

Like playing together, calls on a to-and-fro movement between the participants, so does being in the group setting. Mutual accountability is an underlying topic when the informants talk about the group-modality. Informant 2 explain how the group is a place to recognise your patterns: "Whenever you have to make a decision if your pattern is that you leave the situation and if you then are climbing or hiking with the group and someone is leaving the group, people will be like: "Hey, where are you going?"" A situation like the one Informant 2 describes, elucidates a reaction pattern of the person, but it also shows how the created interrelatedness in the group comes with an inherent responsibility. If one person leaves, it has consequences for the rest of the group. The peers will question the participant's action, showing that the person belongs to the group. From the perspective of Wenger, leaving the group can be understood as a breach of the joint enterprise and how it holds the participants mutually accountable in practice (Wenger, 1998, p. 78). The mutual engagement in the community of practice is suddenly uncertain, and "the ways they do things" (Wenger, 1998, p. 83) in the group – the shared repertoire – is questioned. A negotiation process can occur when that happens, and a new understanding of the community of practice evolves.

[5] Life-world as Gadamer uses it, is the directly and instantly experienced world.

Many of the learning processes in WT emerge in these situations where the inherent social complexity appears through contradicting desires, interests and patterns. Heterogeneity in the groups is a theme in all interviews. For example, some tasks and activities are experienced easy for some and difficult for others: "(…) you cannot really predict the impact of these activities in the person. Maybe you think it will be a super easy challenge, and then it is really hard for someone, and then the next one is the hardest, and people do it really good and finish it fast" (Informant 2). The participants also have different preferences concerning types of nature experiences and activities they like to do: "Some wish for achievements in nature. So, they want to go to the mountain tops and climb and those kinds of activities while others much rather be in the closer. So, in creativity with nature" (Informant 3). These different opinions and aspirations reconcile in the joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998, p. 77). The enterprise is defined by the participants, in the very process of pursuing it, where everyone might not agree. It evolves through interaction with each other, with the context and by expressing personal meanings and understandings that can be negotiated in the community (ibid, p. 45). What the joint enterprise of a community of practice is and should be, is, therefore, an ongoing learning process where the participants find a way to do the WT programme together despite their differences. Informant 4 talks about this learning process:

> "(…) it is about learning to collaborate with others, I think. Because often there are different needs in a group. We saw that on the trip you were on, right? Some would like to walk far. Some would like to walk short. Some like to play, and some like to talk. Some like to do yoga, and some think it is awful. So, it is a practice in coming to mutual solutions which can work for everyone. That one must give-and-take a little." (Informant 4)

To give-and-take is both a process to negotiate the joint enterprise and the meaning. These processes are interwoven in a community of practice due to the participants' different backgrounds and horizons. Wenger points out that it is an inevitable basic character of members in a community of practice: "They are different from one another and have different personal aspirations and problems" (Wenger, 1998, p. 75). Being situated in a wilderness environment over time can bring out these personal differences, but it also teaches the participants to solve them. Tordsson explains: "In outdoor learning, we can meet socially demanding situations which seldom resolve themselves by hiding differences or to leave each other. One must work through the problems. It creates conditions for personal and social development" (Tordsson, 2014, p. 197). In outdoor learning, we often discover that disputes are solved by going to each

other and not from each other. We are mutually accountable for making the trip as good as possible for everyone. All the participants come with different horizons and problems and set individual goals, but what unites them is a wish for a change and an enhanced life, hopefully gained through the WT experience. They have all chosen to receive their therapy in this way, and most of them are expanding their boundaries just by being in a group setting. Through communication and compromises, the participants build up their social skills and find a way to live together. Thus, the diversity and similarities are the foundation of the participants' group-based learning process, which evolves through mutually accountable relationships.

8.1.2 Learning as doing

Learning in outdoor settings is often related to experiential learning and doing things (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Doing things together is likewise a central theme in the interviews with therapists.
Informant 1 and 2 describe what implications doing things have for the learning process:

> "If you are climbing on a boulder, you need to climb. You need to move. You are doing something different. When you are walking or on a slackline, you have to move as well. Kinesthetically, that is different. It is a different approach for the participants as well. They are doing actual things. They are not just thinking (…) or talking about doing." (Informant 1)

> " You are not just sitting and listening. You can touch, and you can do. We learn things by doing them. There is no way we are learning by just listening, so that is why wilderness and adventure therapy is based on experiential learning. I would say that wilderness therapy helps a lot... I would say it is the best way to foster the internal motivation to change because no one is telling you to do anything. Well, the rain is telling you to build a shelter, but it is not the field guide or the therapist. It is all the time an internal motivation to change. That is the magic of the wilderness. That is how you can provide or facilitate long-lasting changes." (Informant 2)

When the therapists and the participants form experiences together in nature, they involve their whole bodies. Focus is thus not only on the cognitive dimension of learning, e.g., thinking, talking and listening, but also the bodily and the emotional dimensions of learning, e.g. sensing and feeling. Doing things together and being in wild nature provides a different scenario that can influence the incentive to learn and change. Illeris (2012) states that the incentive to learn something can have many characteristics – both positive and negative. Still, the incentive is generated by stimuli from the surroundings, which activates prior learning and emotions related

to that learning (Illeris, 2012). One can argue that involving the whole person actively in a learning process can lead to a greater affinity towards stimuli– both negatively and positively. As Informant 1 points out, doing activities in nature is mostly a new way for the participants to receive psychological treatment. The novelty combined with not being told what to do can be a way to enhance the incentive to learn.

What is learned – the intended content – can be practical skills in climbing or more general outdoor skills, e.g., making bonfires, putting up tarps or orienteering in the mountains. But in the dealt with WT programmes, practical skills are "secondary goals" (Informant 3) or "a tool for them to learn something else" (Informant 1). Instead, the learning goals are related to personal development or a "process of change" (Informant 1), which is described as changing the participants' understanding of themselves and fostering functional behaviour and self-efficacy. This is promoted through doing different activities that challenge the participants.

8.1.2.1 Roles in the group

When the therapists leave the office and venture into nature with participants, they become outdoor leaders, group members and therapists at once. The therapists express that juggling all roles can be demanding at times. Yet, it allows them to challenge and understand the participants in ways they could not have done in the office. In both Spain and Norway, the therapists give the participants tasks. One example is to be responsible for orienteering when moving through the mountains. In Norway, the group members are asked to have different roles when hiking. One is the leader of the day; one is in charge of the orienteering; one is walking last and making sure everyone is following; and one is in charge of the first aid kit. From observing how the participants dealt with these roles on the trip, I found it an interesting learning element to explore in the interviews and what thoughts the therapists had about the approach. Informant 3 explains:

> "It is actually to make sure everyone gets different functions in the group, and it can seem strange and simple, but for some, it is difficult to having to say: "Now we need a technical break". For some, having to walk last when they are full of energy and want to show how strong they are, can be a challenge and for some it is straightforward." (Informant 3)

For the therapists, it is a way to observe the participants in different roles because if they do not rotate on the roles, the group position itself alike every day and "it is always the same person who is hanging in the back and is sweating and having a hard time" (Informant 3). At the same time, it is also a way for the participants to learn from each other. On the trip I was on, one participant had more experience with orienteering than the others. Several times, he was asked for help by the one responsible for the orienteering, and together the participants found the way and compared the map with the terrain. Without the rotation of roles, it is likely he would have been orienteering through the whole trip. Instead, he got to teach his skills to the participants who were novices how to read a map, and over the course of the trip, everyone got more involved and confident in using maps and compass. This is an example of the process of legitimate peripheral learning and how the novices slowly move towards full participation as they learn the skills of significance to the community of practice from a co-participant to mastering the skills. In addition, the group enhances cohesion by helping each other. As they hiked, the participants made up collective reference names for map symbols or terrain features so they could discuss them on the way. An example was "the x" being a lake shaped like the letter "x". Wenger explains that when a group has its own expressions or words of reference, it is an expression of shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998, p. 83) and being a community of practice. The learning content is here practical skills in reading the map and finding the way in mountain terrain, but for the therapists, these roles have further learning:

> "We have also seen sometimes that the leader shows caregiving abilities no one knew they possessed; Not the teacher. Not the parent. Maybe not even themselves, and suddenly they become caretaking for someone in the group who is having a hard time, right? By virtue of being the leader. That is fantastic to see." (Informant 3)

In taking on a new role, new sides of the participant are explored. It creates learning situations that do not occur naturally in the participants' everyday life, and it allows the participants to show affinity towards their peers. It is in this interplay between our experiences and the surrounding world that we are being shaped to be who we are. Wenger describes this through a metaphor:

> "The world as we shape it, and our experience as the world shapes it, are like the mountain and the river. They shape each other, but they have their own shape. (…) They cannot be transformed into each other, yet they transform each other. The river only carves and the mountain only guides, yet in their interaction, the carving becomes the guiding, and the guiding becomes the carving" (Wenger, 1998, p. 71).

Thus, the way the participants are guided by the surrounding world; their peers, the therapists and nature, shapes how they experience and understand themselves, which again shapes how they view the surrounding world.

8.1.3 Summary of the chapter

The participants' learning processes in the WT programmes are first and foremost situated in a group setting. From an initially reserved and insecure conduct, the participants find their place in the group through legitimate peripheral participation. They observe the other participants and therapists and experience themselves through their peers. To be able to enter deeper learning processes, an early focus is to establish a feeling of security through elucidating common ground and creating shared histories through playing. Playing breaks the formality, moves the focus from the weight of the dysfunctional everyday life and initiates the to-and-fro movement between participants. Interactions with others and nature take form, and the social, mental, emotional and physical interplay provides learning situations for the participants.

Lave and Wenger's theory explains how participants and therapists move from gathered individuals to a coherent community, sharing a co-created practice. It happens in a relatively short time due to the situatedness in remote natural environments and the intenseness of being together all hours of the day. Dependency on each other establishes mutual accountability and engagement through which the interrelations become meaningful. Being in nature where unfamiliar situations unfold oblige the group members to find solutions to problems by communicating and giving-and-taking. Meanwhile, living together in an ever-changing context provides the therapists with the opportunity to show genuine care, awareness and presence, which set the trend for the group's quality character.

As the community of practice is formed, differences and similarities among the participants initiate learning processes. The situated learning develops the participants' social skills, and through feedback to and from each other, the participants' strengths and weaknesses are negotiated. New meanings are created together based on the mutual experiences, which have the legitimacy to change the way the participants view themselves.
In the process of developing a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire, the members of the community of practice get a sense of belonging.

An essential part of WT is to do things together where the whole body is involved in new tasks. This holistic learning process can result in more profound learning. When nature is “telling” the participants what to do, instead of direct instructions from the therapists, it promotes the incentive to learn.

When the group has positioned itself in a relatively stable manner, the therapists give the participants different roles in the group and let them rotate on, for example, being responsible for orienteering or the leader. By rotating, everyone develops themselves, and the group is not locked in one way of being. The different roles let the participants discover new sides of themselves and promote legitimate peripheral learning where they learn from and with each other.

From a situated learning perspective, the individual’s activity is fundamental in knowledge or skills acquisition, but the learning always happens in relation to others. Through the support, feedback and interaction with the peers and the more experienced therapists in the community of practice, experience and learning forms.

8.2 Theme 2: Facilitation of learning in wilderness therapy

The word "facilitate" originate from the Latin word facilis which means "to make easier" (Merriam-Webster dictionary, Retrieved on July 3, 2021). Thus, the facilitator's task in WT is to ease the healing and self-development process of the participants (Peeters & Ringer, 2021, p. 19). Facilitation evolved as its own theme through the thematic analysis, although it is connected with the participants' learning processes (Theme 1). The code named "learning approach" was the largest of all in vivo codes, and it has strong relations to most of the main codes. The following section aims to analyse how the therapists facilitate learning in the WT programmes and ascribe meaning to what they do.

8.2.1 Learning through being

As presented in the previous chapter doing activities involving the body and the whole group is an essential aspect of the WT practices. Another prominent element is being present and enhancing the participants' awareness of themselves and their surroundings. This is a continuous theme throughout all the interviews, both directly articulated and as an underlying matter that influences the learning process. It relates to the type of activities the therapists choose to facilitate and how and when they present them.

8.2.1.1 "A lot happens when not a lot happens"

"In relation to the more technical content, I believe, we, in the beginning, were more focused on "doing" while now we are more focused on "being"" (Informant 4). This attention on being is described by all four informants and is thought to contrast the everyday life most of the participants live. Often, the youths who partake in the WT programmes struggle in everyday life and are exhausted:

> "(…) so many of those we work with are exhausted. They live in a hectic everyday life with major requirements: Pressure to achieve in school, to the body, to social media, to keep up. So, to create a contrast to that is valuable in itself. And when we take away all these disturbing factors, the individual is left with himself. Then the emotional system starts spinning, and then we can work with what surfaces. So, we see that a lot happens when not a lot happens" (Informant 3).

The statement "a lot happens when not a lot happens" was supported by the observations I did in the field. During the trips, it was whilst having quiet alone time, during meditations or while

hiking for longer periods that the participants experienced complicated feelings and thoughts. For some, it emerged by crying and for others by getting up and starting to run. Situations like these are what the therapists call learning situations or the "magic of the wilderness" (Informant 1 and 2), where nature's peace and quietness give rum for emotions to surface. From the therapists' experiences, emotional responses are more prominent in natural environments (this is dealt more with in section 8.4.2.2) when there are fewer predetermined requirements and more time just to be.

The code "being" is strongly related to the code "nature", whereas the code "doing" is hardly related to the "nature" code (see model 3). The relation between being and nature concerns 1) the therapists' ability to be more present and 2) how nature promote the participants' presence. 1) The therapists' descriptions of themselves in nature coveys that they feel more present and fully engaged in the participants. Two of the informants say they become better therapists when they work outside compared to inside because nature has positive impacts on them: "I feel good when I'm outside, and when I feel good, I become a better version of myself. (…) which means that I thrive a lot more in this way of working" (Informant 3). 2) Nature's impact on the participants is mainly described through the peace and quiet it brings compared to urban life and how it allows for different and more meaningful inputs than in the office: "(...) it is completely different to feel grass and leaves than feeling a chair. And it is also something completely different to listen to birds' twittering or running water than to listen to a computer or a car driving by. It gives a different feeling" (Informant 4). Through facilitating awareness of the surrounding nature, the informants believe that the participants become more present.
Where "being" is related to learning processes through interaction with nature, "doing" relates more to learning processes where the therapists provide challenges and activities. As Informant 4 described in the aforementioned quote, learning processes associated with "being" has become more prominent in their programmes.

It can seem simple to take a group of young people into nature just to be there, but when this part is considered from the context as a whole, it can lead to a different understanding. Contemporary youth grow up in what is often defined as a global knowledge society characterised by increasing competition (Illeris, 2012, p. 120). The competition has particularly influenced the education systems around the world and has led to situations where the students' motivation is under pressure. Illeris call it the "motivational problem" (ibid.) and explains:

> "It comes partly from within the individual in the shape of insecurity, concerning both what and how one should learn and whether one is good enough. And then it comes concurrently from the outside in the shape of requirements, expectations, stricter rules and more control[6]" (Illeris, 2012, p. 121).

Through his research, Illeris found that the motivational problem often affects the people who already struggle. They want to succeed but are afraid to add new failures to those they have already experienced (Illeris, 2012, p. 121). This is supported by the informants' description of their participants: "Usually, these kids are not used to succeeding. It is much more failure [they experienced]. That is the reason they go to therapy, so we try to turn that around" (Informant 1). One of the main aims of WT practice is to take away the outside requirements, expectations and control so the therapists can help the participants work on insecurity and concerns. In addition, an important focus is to make sure that the participants experience success. Often, this process is initiated by creating awareness towards themselves.

8.2.1.2 Awareness

In both Spain and Norway, they use what Informant 2 calls "feelings-checks". A simple question of, "how are you feeling now?" is asked in group settings several times during the day. Informant 4 explains why she uses this form of interaction:

> "I think that when you notice how you feel, then it is also easier to tolerate the feeling no matter if it is a difficult feeling (…). Some feel that it is equally bad all the time. That it is constantly down: "My whole life is just bad." But if you manage to ask often: "How is it now? How is it now? How is it now?" Then they can see that it actually goes up and down and that some of those bad things pass. It is possible to deal with, and it is possible to live with. And then they can start noticing that some moments it might be a little good or comfortable or another feeling there as well which they might not normally notice." (Informant 4)

Those feelings-checks are valuable information for the therapists, but they are also a simple interaction facilitated by the therapists that can promote learning. The awareness of personal and others' feelings is a learning process in itself, but being aware of feelings can furthermore be the incentive for learning in general. Illeris states that the incentive dimension's "(…) ultimate function is to secure the continuous *mental balance* of the learner and thereby it simultaneously develops a personal *sensitivity*" (Illeris, 2018, p. 4 (Italics in original text)). As informant 4 describes, she begins with letting the participants notice how they feel in different situations. When they, over time, start noticing different feelings related to different contexts,

[6] My translation from Norwegian.

they slowly open up for their awareness. Over the course of a WT programme, the therapists usually experience a development in the participants' ability to use their senses and notice feelings. Informant 4 gives an example:

> "Just as we saw on our trip now, the first days they [the participants] didn't want to take off the hot hiking boots, right? Why won't they do that? They don't perceive what would be good for them. They just think… There are no thoughts there concerning what would be good. And then, after several suggestions, we saw it was already on the second day, we got most of them to do it. (...) Not the first day but on the second day and then we saw that they took their shoes off completely voluntarily without us saying anything." (Informant 4)

This example indicates that the participants lack awareness of their bodies and personal needs at the beginning of the hiking trip. Not recognising their feelings and sensations, the therapists ascribe to the youths' overwhelming everyday lives. They have stopped sensing themselves and their surroundings and are not fully present in their own lives. Instead, "they live in the past and future" (Informant 4). Tordsson explains how the overwhelming stimuli from modern life can lead to the establishment of an inner shield, keeping what we sense away from our awareness because it is too much for us to comprehend and process (Tordsson, 2014, p. 82). Venturing into nature can be a liberation from this exhausting, constant disregard of "noise", and we can allow awareness towards senses and feelings (ibid). Gradually, during the WT trip, the participants' awareness increases and actions that respond to their needs are initiated. A little thing as putting hot feet into a cold lake during a sunny hike can be profound learning under these circumstances. It is not merely about learning to cool of the feet but rather a deeper understanding about having abilities to respond to conditions and thus improving the functionality and sensitivity of oneself (Illeris, 2012, p. 46).

Facilitation of awareness can, according to Illeris, give a new understanding of self which will change the emotional, motivational and maybe also the volitional patterns of the learner (ibid). As the participants' awareness and motivation changes over time, the therapists adjust the activities and the facilitation.

8.2.2 Progression and adaptions

WT practices manoeuvre between the individual participants and the group, and adaption is a critical element of that notion. All the informants emphasise the importance of adapting the programme, content and facilitation to the individual participant throughout the programme.

When the therapists talk about the content of the programmes and how they facilitate, it is difficult for them to say anything general. A repeated answer is: "It really depends on the programme and the participants" (Informant 1). Informant 2 describes adapting the programme to the person as the core of AT (and WT):

> "[I] focus on what I think adventure therapy is supposed to do: adapt to the person. Because if you as the participant have to adapt to the methodology, then you are going to a camp - a summer camp or similar where wilderness is a part. But if you make things adapt to the person, you are achieving the goal of adventure and wilderness therapy, I think." (Informant 2)

The informants explain their adaptions as adjusting a specific activity or giving a choice between different activities, or adjusting the temporal dimension of an activity. An example three of the therapists give is the overnight solo experience where the participants spend a night independently. Most participants have never been alone outside for a night; therefore, it is an unfamiliar situation for them. The progression leading up to the solo is described by Informant 1: "(…) the solo-situation you wouldn't do that the first day, second day, the third day. It would be a longer process, so the participants really feel they have enough resources to cope with such a situation". Resources in this context are described as practical skills like putting up the tent or tarp, cooking own food, as well as feeling comfortable enough in the natural environment. When the therapists feel like the resources are well established, they facilitate the solo challenge to the participants. An additional adaption is how they facilitate the activities:

> "If it is something we have a big belief in ourselves, we present it more like: "This is something we do", and then they rather say actively no if they DON'T want to do it. This is how I think about the solo, for example. (…) "This is something we do, but you can decide for yourself how far away from the therapist camp you want to pitch your tent. Then there might be someone who has pitched the tent five metres away because they don't dare to go further, whilst some are on the top of a mountain so far away that we almost don't see them. Then it becomes a challenge adapted to their needs, but that everyone gets the feeling: "I have actually slept alone in the tent, and I have taken care of myself for many hours, and it went well. Exactly that has often been… There I have seen that the way we have presented it has had consequences

for whether we have accomplished it because we have had therapists on the team who have been a bit more sceptical and been unsure if it is good." (Informant 4)

Illeris' incentive dimension explains how some learning demands more mental energy than other learning. This depends on the type of learning it concerns. To distinguish different learning types, Illeris builds on Jean Piaget's concepts of assimilative and accommodative learning[7]. Piaget relates to learning through the metaphor of mental schemes. This is to be understood as the way we subjectively organise learning in our brain, and a scheme consists of learning an individual classify as belonging together. In situations where we find the specific learning relevant, we are inclined to recall a whole scheme (Illeris, 2018, p. 6). Assimilative learning is a relatively easy process that links new learning to existing learning schemes (Illeris, 2012, p. 60). Accommodative learning, on the other hand, is associated with learning situations that are difficult to relate to any existing schemes. Still, if the learning seems important or interesting enough and the person is determined, the demanded learning can be acquired (ibid, p. 65). The accommodative learning process implies breaking down parts of an existing scheme and transforming it so the new situation can be associated. "This can be experienced as demanding or even painful because it is something that requires a strong supply of mental energy" (Illeris, 2018, p. 7). In the WT programmes, both types of learning are facilitated by the therapists.

The solo experience can be understood as an accommodative learning situation due to the unfamiliarity. Because the therapists are aware of how demanding such a situation can be for some participants, it is facilitated as a progression of the programmes. But if the therapists show doubt when facilitating, it can impact the participants to decline the challenge. When they instead have presented it with conviction, it has directly influenced the participants' motivation. As explained by Illeris, the content and incentive dimensions are always initiated by impulses from the interaction process and integrated into the psychological acquisition process. Thus, the way a challenge is presented and facilitated can significantly influence whether it will be accepted by the participants who must mobilise sufficient mental energy.

As part of the facilitation, the participants choose their own challenges. This didactical tool is often referred to as "challenge by choice" in English literature (Panicucci, 2007, p. 41). It is a

[7] Illeris also expands the learning typology with cumulative and transformative learning.

way to involve all participants in the activity but within their own boundaries. Tordsson describes progression as an art, where the participants feel that development happens based on their own experiences and development and not as being "taken on" continuously more demanding activities (Tordsson, 2014, p. 248). For the therapists, it means they should help develop the basic skills and seek situations where the participants experience that they succeed. The content of the activities is therefore shaped in the interaction between the participants and the therapists, which affects the incentive for entering into a demanding learning process. Nonetheless, who the therapist team consists of and what they believe in determines the content and facilitation. Another example is given by informant 3:

> "What is the right pressure? Where should we set the level of expectation for the group? And on that, we don't always agree in the therapist team. I probably belong to those who believe in showing that one expects something of a youth, is to show respect and belief that they can more than they believe themselves and if it then doesn't work, it is absolutely okay. While others will say that these are people who have been met with requirements their whole life, and they flop again and again and again. What they need is to be spared. And there is no right answer to this. It is a crossing point, and that will variate in a group depending on where people are. That is the WT programme in a nutshell." (Informant 3)

Adapting the programmes to the individuals and the group is thus explained as the nutshell and the goal of WT. Adjusting to a particular situation with all its complexity is not always easy. It demands a continuous awareness from the therapist towards the changing conditions, the atmosphere in the group, and the individual's state of mind (Tordsson, 2014, p. 247). The therapists' affinity towards the participants is an important instrument, and they use all their senses to gain information. Informant 1 gives an example "You can see how anxious they are. Not that you know what is going on in their heads, but still. "Are they really nervous?" You can feel that (...)." The information they gain is the basis for how the activities and the programme are adapted, but as Informant 3 and 4 describes, the therapists do not always agree. The therapists' beliefs, values end experiences play a central role in the content of the programmes and how it is facilitated to the participants.

From an (outdoor) learning perspective, this is a fundamental recognition. When we are facilitating experiences and living with groups in nature, our values, opinions and prior personal experiences will be reflected in our practice and, therefore, the participants (Tordsson, 2014, p. 25). The different views experienced in the team of therapists within the same situation can be explained with Aristotle's concept of phronesis. Phronesis is a personal practical judgement

related to the practice in which it takes place. It is based on a person's prior experiences, values and reflection, which combines with the understanding of a given situation and informs how the person acts (Tordsson, 2014, p. 260). Because the therapists come with distinctive experiences, they will perceive the situation differently. The phronetic facilitator will continuously make intuitive adjustments, making it challenging to say anything general about what the therapists do and exactly how the content is.

8.2.3 Facilitating meaningful experience

When the informants talk about what they hope the participants get out of the WT programmes, they all speak of meaningfulness directly and indirectly. One of the objectives is that the participants experience meaningfulness in the programme, leading to changes in their everyday lives and enhanced quality of life. 2/3 of the coded segments about meaningfulness overlap with the "learning approach" code. When reading those segments as a whole, meaningfulness stands out as important to the informants' facilitation. However, it is not a simple task to facilitate learning processes that lead to profound learning and long-term changes. In this section, I will interpret some of the elements and approaches the therapists use.

8.2.3.1 Meaning as a personal experience

Informant 1 talks about meaning directly:" What I would love to provide is something that is meaningful to him or her (…)" (Informant 1). But he also points out that as a wilderness therapist, it is impossible to know if a participant experience meaningfulness:

> "I guess you cannot put an intention on the result. It is different from the things you are doing. Of course, you provide an experience, or you put in place a programme, but then what he or she is getting out of this – the consequences, the learning, the meaning – it doesn't depend on you. You can help gain some knowledge or skills or another point of view or just look for meaning. You can help with that, but I don't think we have control of it. We guide; we can just be next to each other and be part of the path. I actually don't think that you will cure somebody doing adventure therapy or wilderness therapy. It is a process for your whole life. It really depends on how deep the impact of the experience was and if it will help you to be on the same road or change the road." (Informant 1)

The role of the therapist is to facilitate experiences and help the participants see the learning or meaning. The therapists "are part of the path" with the participants, and while being "next to each other", they negotiate the meaning of the experience. How deep the impact of the

experience will be, depends on how willing the participants are to participate with all its complexity; actions, feelings, thoughts and conversations (Wenger, 1998, p. 56). To be part of the learning process is, therefore, a choice the participants make: "(…) you can always choose to participate or not or choose how deep you want to go or not, so choices are always there" (Informant 1). In Spain and Norway, a fundamental characteristic of the WT programmes is that they are voluntary, which differs from US WT programmes. Informant 3 and 4 underlines the importance of making it an informed choice to participate:

> "(…) we have what we call a pre-conversation with the interested youths, and then we talk literally about what it is, why we work outside, what it means, how a typical day will be. (…) So, it is a good start that the participants themselves believe in the approach and would like to be outside and would like to work with their challenges in a group." (Informant 3)

Informant 4 also talks about the pre-conversations and emphasises how important it is to be honesty in those conversations. They ensure that the participants know what to expect and that it will be both fun and challenging. Based on these conversations, pictures from previous trips and sometimes outdoor pre-programmes, the participants choose to participate or not. Other treatment options are suggested if the person does not find it a suitable or meaningful way to receive psychotherapy. The voluntariness lays the premise for active participation.

8.2.3.2 Transfer of learning through reflection and metaphors

Transferring learning from WT programmes to the participants' everyday lives has been a debated theme of previous research because learning happens in a very different context. This critique is an essential inquiry for the legitimacy of therapy in a group-based outdoor setting. The informants in this project likewise point out the situatedness of what is learned and how important it is to relate insights gained in the programmes to the participants' life in general.

All the informants emphasise facilitation of reflection to create awareness about the learning process and how the learning might be implemented in life beyond the treatment. Informant 4 talks about how this is something she has become more aware of over the years:

> "It is important to have thoughts about what, both for us and the youths, it is we want to achieve with what we do and that we have some reflections along the way where one all the time thinks about how this can be used or: "How can I use what I learn about myself and others and nature in my life beyond?" To evaluate

> afterwards about "what have I gotten out of it?" and reflect. (…) This has become clearer to me: To involve ourselves and the youths in these reflections. That they understand what they are involved in and why and that they are involved in the decisions about what they are supposed to gain from it." (Informant 4)

One thing is to provide the participants with an experience in nature which "(…) has therapeutic benefits in itself just by being in nature" (Informant 2). Another thing is to create awareness towards what the participants learn through the experience. This is something the therapists facilitate throughout the programme. Through reflecting, the therapists attempt to make the participants see their strengths and accomplishments. With a continuous awareness towards learning situations, the therapists notice specific actions and utterances but also body language: "For me, the physical relates much to the mental. So; how they behave; how their posture is; how they walk, and how they interact with others. Yeah, that is beautiful information you get, and then you can work with that" (Informant 1). All the information the therapists gather from interacting with the participants in different activities and situations they use for reflections:

> "If I can, I will read the group and the individuals and then, in the processing, pull it out. One of the things we do, if we can, is to write notes. Like: "Lauren said this." "Chris had the face of feeling this." So, you notice things, and then you bring them up later in the processing." (Informant 2)

Reflection or processing is also a way of negotiating meaning in the group. Often the therapists facilitate "a round in the group", which allows for sharing how a situation was experienced, listening to each other and hearing the therapists' observations. This can add new insights and bring out differences in the experience which leads to group conversations. However, one therapist accentuates that facilitating a learning process does not equal a specific learning result even though it is reflected on: "I don't know what they [the particiapnts] learned if they don't tell it. So, if they reflect on an experience, we can help the transfer, of course. But I guess we plant a lot of seeds in them, and they will see that at some point" (Informant 1). Wenger points out that "Participation is clearly a social process, but it is also a personal experience." (Wenger, 1998, p. 70). Personal experiences thus add individuality in the learning though it is learnt through a social process. Through reflection, the learning is made explicit, and the therapists can therefore make it a subject of transfer: "How can this learning be applied in everyday life?" But according to Wenger: "Classifying knowledge as explicit or tacit runs into difficulties, however, because both aspects are always present to some degree" (Wenger, 1998, p. 69). In other words, a participant can never express everything they learnt during the programme. Some of the experience will remain personal, embodied and tacit and "they have it in a little treasure"

(Informant 1) or as a seed that might grow one day. The same is the case for the negotiation of meaning. It is a social process, but the individual will always have their apprehension of the meaningful.

One common method to make meaning of experiences is using metaphors (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). This is an approach the therapists use in their facilitation with the participants. They use metaphors in two ways: They let the participants project themselves onto nature objects, and they use it to reify the experiences and the learning. An example of the prior is given by Informant 2: "(…) [I] use a line of trees that are very different from each other to do a personal projection activity. (…) or I ask the client to go find a natural element that represents what he or she is trying to explain" (Informant 2). In projecting difficult life stories onto natural objects, it is "giving forms to our experiences" (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). It gives the participants and the therapists a new understanding, and the object becomes a point of focus to organise the talk around (Wenger, 1998, p. 59). For some people, it is easier to talk about a tree with heavy hanging branches or no roots than talking about yourself in first person. Or to project difficult feeling onto a rock and throw it into a lake. These are examples of how reification and participation create meaning during the WT trips, which the informants believe easier will transfer to life beyond the WT programme. Another way is explained by Informant 4:

> "(…) one can use those nature metaphors in a way as we do in the feedback they [the participants] get on the last day. Everything from snow melting, a new spring, up on the top of the hill, and that life goes up and down. If they understand those metaphors, then it can be easier to remember, I think than just to talk about the concrete." (Informant 4)

In the Norwegian programme, the participants get a personal letter on the last day of the programme, which is written as a metaphor. The letter expresses how the therapists have experienced the youth, some of the things they have participated in, and how they can be applied in life. In Spain, they also make sure that every participant goes home with a memory in a congealed form. Rather than being addressed by the therapists, it is co-created by the community as little personal notes from every person.

Though the WT programme in Spain and Norway often are conjunctive with other therapy, the therapists try to make the experiences meaningful and transferable to other areas of life and other communities of practices, like school and family. Wenger discusses the boundaries of a

community of practice. In some cases, it is obvious who and what belongs to a specific community of practice and sometimes these boundaries are more fluent (Wenger, 1998, p. 104). In the WT groups, the boundaries are well-defined[8]. The members are recruited based on the inclusion criteria, and the practice has a certain timeframe. In that sense, the community of practice is discontinued, but participation and reification can also be the source of continuation. "The product of reification can cross boundaries and enter different practices" (Wenger, 1998, p. 105). And in the same way, a practice can originate from one community of practice and enter another or become personal competencies used in other contexts. Whether and what the participants bring with them beyond the programmes can depend on how meaningful they experienced it. The experience is co-created in the group, supported by the therapists' facilitation, but in the end, the perceived meaningfulness is a personal matter.

8.2.4 Summary of the chapter

As a result of how exhausted the adolescents are when they enter the WT programmes, an increased focus is placed on "being" present. In Norway, they have specifically reduced "doing" activities to enhance "being" in nature with fewer expectations. The participants are so overrun by the increased competition in modern society, and continuous failures, that their sensory and emotional systems have been toned down. To push participants into challenges are thus unfavourable for learning processes and psychotherapy to take place.

The therapists focus on facilitating awareness. This is done by noticing feelings and senses through bodily, low stimuli involvement with nature. From Illeris' understanding of learning, the therapists facilitate an awareness towards the participants' altering feelings. When the awareness results in a different feeling than the usual, a mental unbalance form. This can be understood as an incentive to learn by responding to the feeling. Eventually, it increases the participants' sensitivity towards themselves and their surroundings, resulting in improved functionality. The combination of taking away the "noise" by being in nature and facilitating awareness makes difficult feelings surface, which is where the psychotherapy process unfolds.

[8] I here refer to the closed groups that I joined during my field work. There are several programmes that use open groups with continuous intake and in those circumstances the boundaries might not be as well defined.

During a WT trip, the participants' awareness and presence increase, and more challenging activities are facilitated as part of the programme progression. From Illeris theories, the distinction between different learning types can assist in understanding what learning processes demands mobilisation of more mental energy from the participants. Accommodative learning situations, for instance, the solo, calls for enhanced support and good timing of the facilitation. For the therapists, it means that they must have an affinity towards the individual and the group and pick up many different impulses from body language, atmosphere etc. and facilitate in accordance. In addition, how the activities are presented and facilitated have significant impacts on how the participants receive them. Different beliefs and values in the therapist-team can result in uncertainty that spreads to the participants.

When experienced wilderness therapists facilitate activities, they can be viewed as phronetic facilitators. Their actions are intuitively adapted to the situation based on their previous experiences. Though phronesis is oriented towards action and is context-dependent, it reflects one's values and understandings. It is therefore hard to give definite, general answers to how facilitation is carried out in WT.

One of the goals in the WT programmes is that the participants experience meaningfulness. Meaningfulness is a personal matter, but through Wenger's concept of negotiation of meaning, the therapists' facilitation can be understood as a catalyst. Voluntary participation based on informed choices promotes active involvement from the participants. While creating awareness towards the learning and reflecting together in the group can help gain additional insights. The therapists use metaphors to reify the learning process and lay the groundwork for transferring the experiences to everyday life.

8.3 Theme 3: The therapists' learning process

In this chapter, the attention shifts to the therapists' learning process through the years they have worked with WT. Initially, I focused on the learning processes the therapists facilitate, but through the coding and analysis, their learning process became its own theme. The main questions that led to dialogue around their learning were related to their original programmes, how they changed over the years, and how they started working in WT.

8.3.1 A profound value-based incentive

All the therapists interviewed for this thesis share an interesting common characteristic: They have all been scouts in their youth. During the interviews, I asked about the therapists' relationship with nature, and I noticed how emotional it was for the therapists to talk about their experiences in the scouts. It was clear that those experiences had deep impacts on their lives and still had a profound importance today. In this section, the inquiry is to understand why the therapists choose to work with WT. The following is three extracts from the informants talking about their scouting experiences:

> "I learned about myself in nature, and with the scouts, for me, it was a very transformative personal process. I was not good at school or even in the social relationships outside, but in the scouts, I was really good. I had friends and a very supportive network and safe environment, and I also felt really good about myself there, so that is why it has a special value for me. It was there I learned to develop myself as a person. If it was not for that, I would have felt like I was a crappy student and, therefore, a crappy person. There were no other areas where I could have developed what I did there outdoors, so that is why it means a lot for me." (Informant 2)

> "I was involved [in the scouts] for a long time. (…) I got an expanded experience with being in nature that I could not have gotten at home. Both in relation to sleeping out in the open, sleeping in tents, and being away several nights in a row. To be on camps, to be in a group and then I think that it has been important for my own experience of mastery because I was not a person who did well in handball and football and those activities many others in my class were good at. So, for me, it probably influenced my self-esteem and my self-confidence in the way: "I too can do and accomplish something." (pause) And then I think I got a lot of responsibility fast in relation to being the leader for others. Already after two years, I was the leader of a group. That has, in a way, influenced my security in leading others and having responsibility for others. Yeah, we got a lot of responsibility and independence in being able to go on trips without adults and experiences I would not have gotten at home." (Informant 4)

> "My scouting group was established when I was already a teenager. I guess I started when I was around 14 years old. It helped me to become who I am today. I learned important values, and I also keep good friendships and memories from that time. It helped me not to be involved in drugs though most of my friends used. It provided me with both physical and mental challenges, and it was mentored with respect. (…) Still, nature worked for me. I guess it helped me in my teenage years not to get into drugs and not to... (pause) I have a lot of friends, some of them are not here anymore, and others they are...Yeah..." (Informant 1)

These extracts covey powerful life stories and reflections about how being in the scouts changed their lives. They include descriptions like transformative personal process, self-esteem, self-confidence, responsibility, friendships, supportive network, safe environment, experience of mastery, respect, learning important values, being a leader for others, good memories, physical and mental challenges and mentoring. All these words can be applied to the purpose of their WT practices and are words the informants use throughout the interviews to describe what they do and aim for. It becomes clear where the therapists get their incentives to work in this field from. All the therapists have experienced how being part of a group and creating experiences together in nature have helped them in their youth. When reflecting on their lives, they become aware of how important these years were. Informant 1 insinuates that he could have done like some of his friends – using drugs, which for some ended in tragic events. Informant 2 says she would have felt like a crappy person, and Informant 4 found something she was good at when she did not feel accomplishment in the activities her classmates enjoyed. These feelings are comparable to the participants' feelings on the trip I was on, and one can argue that the experiences the therapists had, make them capable of understanding the horizons of their participants.

In their adulthood, the informants choose psychology and helping people who struggle as their vocation. When the therapists describe how they got into the field of WT, they explain it as finding their proper niche:

> "So, when I heard, it was while I was doing my internship in the US, I heard my colleague say something like: "Oh yeah when I was in wilderness therapy". Tin-tin (positive sound-word) "Wait! What?! Can I use these two things together? Really!?" (...) So, it was like, "Wow, this is perfect! It is my vocation psychology but also my passion for nature and outdoors and personal development through experience." That was like the perfect match." (Informant 2)

> "(…) I came across the concept of wilderness therapy by coincidence. It was like: "Wow! What is this?". So, I started studying, and I understood that there is a whole world of people out there working in this field

where one uses experiences in nature purposefully to better health, and I thought: “This, I want to try and make happen.”” (Informant 3)

As Gadamer describes, when something addresses us, it is the beginning of understanding it (Gadamer, 1960/1989 p. 299). The combination of group-based experiences in nature and structured therapy addressed the informants due to their meaningfulness from previous experiences. Discovering the field of WT was coincidental for all the informants. It was not part of their formal education, and it was not an established practice in their home countries at the time. A learning process was initiated driven by their profound incentive to gain knowledge and understanding of the field.

8.3.2 Creating programmes and adapting to the socio-cultural context

8.3.2.1 The Spanish context

Initially, the Spanish programme was mainly influenced by the US: “In the beginning, yes, of course. I didn’t know anything else” (Informant 1). In 2012, Informant 1 went to the international AT conference, which had a great impact on the development of the programme:

“Then I met a lot of nice international people. That was something I didn’t know. I thought adventure therapy was just in the US. Then I realised – in Australia! Belgium! “Wow, it is there too”. It was easier to link with the people here, which was the seed for the <name of programme> and the other projects.” (Informant 1)

In Spain, they started out using AT as their approach, which they describe as directive activities in a shorter duration of time. Often their programmes are aimed at a specific population and run a set number of weeks where they meet once or twice a week with the participants. What they learned in the US about WT programmes cannot easily be applied in the Spanish socio-cultural context mainly due to the duration of the programmes, access to wild nature and that “the health system and how we care for or treat people in Europe is different” (Informant 1). Instead, they mix the AT and WT modalities and do weekly gatherings with directive activities such as climbing and combine them with week-long hiking trips. In addition, they developed a training programme for mental health practitioners wanting to apply WT to their work.

Since I partook in the programmes in 2018, many changes have happened, and the delay of the present thesis made it possible to ask questions about the development since 2018. Informant 1 describes his development: "I have developed and no longer agree with the approach of the US model, I have seen and have reflected so much on it, that I even prefer to call it "expeditionary therapy" right now" (Informant 1). Informant 2 describes the development of their programmes since 2018:

> "(…) the population it [their programme] is aimed for is different, so we are now looking more at other models like Scandinavian, Belgium, UK, German, Australian to open up the scope and see: "Okay, that is how it is in the US, but there are other countries that are doing different things". So, we are trying to integrate more pieces into the formula." (Informant 2)

Since the original interviews, both informants have learned and developed and have become more critical of the US WT model. Since the target groups they work with are different and the socio-cultural implication are fundamentally different, they have adapted the way they do their programmes and changed what they label their modality. Informant 1 uses "expeditionary therapy" and informant 2 "therapy in nature" instead of the American term "wilderness therapy". These learning processes reflect their progression from newcomers and legitimate peripheral participants in the field of WT to a fuller position. Through legitimate peripheral participation, they have learned from experienced practitioners in the international community of practice. One can argue that the international community of WT practitioners rather is a network than a community of practice. This is accurate concerning practitioners who only meet at conferences every three years to exchange knowledge (Wenger, 1998). In the situation, with the informants, they all describe their international community as central to their learning and development. Informant 2 tells what impacted her learning:

> "I had the opportunity to work in a lot of international programmes. I worked in Scotland, Belgium, Iceland, Croatia, and Italy, so I worked with many different professionals. And I had the opportunity to be at conferences and in international projects to exchange a lot of knowledge. (…) It is essential! For me, it was opening up the scope, like opening up another book that was not in the library. (…) I was thinking: "I can maybe get this from this part and this from this country." So definitely, this exchange of knowledge, which I believe is key for the professional development of this field, has enriched me a lot." (Informant 2)

When I ask if it can be viewed as a community, she replies: "Yes, totally! It is an international learning community (Informant 2)". Social and situated learning is emphasised by the metaphor

of “opening up another book that was not in the library”. The learning processes the informant has been through could not have taken place through reading only. First-hand experiences gained by working with the other partitioners have influenced what she finds meaningful and the further development of the WT practice.

The informants’ disagreement with the US model and the search for inspiration from other countries is a sign of tension in the field of WT. There is no definite way of doing therapy in the outdoors with practices worldwide, and different natural environments, socio-cultural, educational and political contexts give rise to different possibilities and limitations (Richards et al., 2011, p. 87). From Lave’s and Wenger’s perspective, consensus and disagreement are an inherent dynamic of a community of practice and a prerequisite for development (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 116). Negotiating the meaning of what WT is, or should be, is crucial for WT to gain professional recognition and status as a health-promoting modality. Being critical of one’s own and others’ practices is essential, and the more experience the practitioners have, the more they get to influence the discourses of the field (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 108). Over the years, the informants have gained knowledge, experience and moved towards full participation in the WT field through encounters with different practices. Their engagement in the field now affects other practices and newcomers, for instance, through their training programme of professionals. They are, therefore, part of determining what the shared repertoire should be on an international level.

8.3.2.2 The Norwegian context

The Norwegian programme was inspired by the Australian programmes and American practitioners the Norwegians visited. They have taken a bit from different places and adjusted to the Norwegian context: “Quite simply because we see that there are cultural differences and differences in health policies, and there are also law differences” (Informant 3). In Norway, relatively significant changes have been made since they first began the WT programme. Informant 4 describes it as a coincidence that they started with the longer expedition-type trips because they got inspiration from the programmes they visited. Later, they expanded their programme by adding shorter day trips as an option. The first addition was an open group where youths could come and go as they please. Nearby nature and different types of activities are incorporated. Informant 4 describes that they added this option because some of the youth they work with are too poorly functioning for the longer trips:

> "Either because they couldn't be away from home for so long or that they physically were too poorly to be able to move with a backpack over long distances in the mountains. So, therefore I requested that we have an offer that fitted better with the groups I worked with. Especially the ones who don't manage to participate in school or other activities like work training." (Informant 4)

To meet the needs of the youths, they added a programme during the daytime which is flexible in attendance and content. Since 2018 the therapists have likewise added even shorter sessions in nature and options like having one night in a tent. In that way, the participants "can become secure here in the near nature and secure in being in a group and secure in cooking food and move around so that they gradually can endure a longer trip" (Informant 4).

Informant 3 gives an account of how their more extended WT programme has developed over the years:

> "It is a much shorter programme now than it was before and it is more intensive. The days come a lot closer. We started out doing a programme over 3-4-5 months where we met every other week. Now we have compressed it to three weeks where we meet every other day and sometimes every day because we see that when we meet often, then vi manage to get momentum in the group. Then it isn't new every time. That is a big difference." (Informant 3)

When I ask if he prefers the shorter programmes, he answers:

> "It is hard to say. We have to respond to our framework, which relates both to school absence and the economy. It is apparent that if we are too expensive, we will price ourselves out, but of course, I often thought I would have liked to have had the youths for a week more. But at the same time, it creates an intensity and a dynamic when you know you only have a limited amount of time. We become very conscious to drive the process forward." (Informant 3)

The compacted programme has resulted in a more intense and vigorous agenda, contributing to a higher momentum and continuity in the group. Though it seems to be a positive development, Informant 3 also shows his engagement in the participants by wishing to have more time with them. The limitations he experiences within the framework exemplify how the wider situatedness influences a learning situation. Illeris calls it the double character of the learning situation (Illeris, 2012, p. 125). The situatedness is not limited to the direct situation the learning

takes place in; it also includes the wider societal situation. The societal context provides norms, rules, economy etc., and therefore impacts directly on the learning situation (ibid.).

With Wenger's phrasings, changes applied to the programme structure express how a community of practice cannot be considered in isolation of the world. "Because the world is in flux and conditions always change, any practice must constantly be reinvented, even as it remains "the same practice"" (Wenger, 1998, p. 94). Demands from the surrounding world – experienced as more time-efficient therapy programmes – thus directly influence the conditions for a community of practice and the associated learning processes. To have a limited amount of time demands more of the therapists. They must be continuously aware of the participants' learning process, which in turn have influenced their own learning process.

The most significant change the learning has brought is a simplification:

> "(…) we have changed in the way that the content of the programme today is very simplified in comparison to how it was before. Before we had a quite tight programme. We had to get through very many different things in a day. We had an A4 sheet with a programme, and it was like: We meet at 9 o'clock. 9:15: Departure. 9:45: Hot drink and so on. All that we have put away because we don't think it worked very well, and then it is related to our own confidence as therapists. (…) We have maybe built up a better intuition for "what does the group needs now". And then we see that being out in nature and not having predefined duties has a much higher value for the participants than we probably understood in the beginning." (Informant 3)

This shift from a very tight and timed schedule to hardly any planning is based on experiences gained with the participants. From Lave and Wenger's perspective, the therapists are a part of the group and the situated learning process. The participants learn from the therapists, who are the experts in the community of practice during the WT programme, yet the learning is a reciprocal action (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 116). Newcomers, who are the participants in this case, influence the practice and help develop the practice and the therapists. "Since activity and the participation of individuals involved in it, their knowledge, and their perspectives are mutually constitutive, change is a fundamental property of communities of practice and their activities" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 117). For every group the therapists facilitate, they gain new understandings. Thus, their learning process is likewise legitimately peripheral in some respect.

Informant 3's understanding is that the therapists have built up a better intuition for the group's needs. Learning to be intuitive is conditioned by working with groups. Therefore, the process of designing and redesigning the programmes has been both part of and based on the therapist's learning process. They have been able to test out different approaches, contents, and structures and find out what works better for them as individuals and for the participants. And at the same time, they have become more confident in their practice. Going from planning in detail to more open planning and in situ awareness of the group's needs can be considered a sign of learning.

8.3.2.3 Situational learning: "To throw the plan on the fire when it is needed"

That the therapists have gained confidence over time shows when the dialogue touches the manuals or programmes plans. In both Spain and Norway, they have worked out plans for the programmes with activities and aims, but they are much more detailed than what actually takes place during the programmes. All the informants mention how they do not follow the manual in detail.

Informant 2 talks about the planning of time: "So, we have a schedule. I don't know; for some reason, we have times on it, but we don't even look at the watch most of the time. Sometimes it is like: "Hey, shall we...?"" Informant 1 explains the planning concerning the aims of the programme: "It is written, but you are aware of the goals during the whole process. It is not that you work with goal number two in session number two, but you have them in mind. I guess it is kind of phenomenological. Magic will appear, so you have to trust the process." Informant 3 talks about the manual in relation to the content: "It is more specific than what we did on this trip. But we see that the guidelines work – like the volume of the programme – but it must be rewritten. We are even more ad hoc. Like, we walk in that direction [the informant points randomly out into the air]". And Informant 4 talks about the plan in relation to the development of the planning overall:

> "We probably had more content and more activities and things we wanted to get through and predetermined thoughts about what we should talk about in the different group conversations. We still have a plan like that, but we are more flexible in relation to throwing the plan on the fire when it is necessary." (Informant 4)

Informant 2 explains further that they do the detailed planning because then it is easier to change activities around. It gives them an idea and a direction, but at the same time, the therapists have to trust the process and take things as they come. The unpredictability of nature is a theme three of the informants bring up. You never know what the weather will do, and you never know what will happen in the group. Working with people likewise brings unforeseen situations, so being flexible and adjusting to the situation is necessary. Informant 1 states: "if you plan, it is not experiential". When I ask him to elaborate what he means, he replies: "I mean, you have to have a plan, of course, but in the sense of being open for what happens, that is the experiential part. If you stick to your plan, you can do so much wrong. You have to adapt to the conditions and to how the group feels" (Informant 1).

From the learning perspective of Tordsson, improvisation is often mistakenly thought of as opposed to planning (Tordsson, 2014, p. 272). Instead, planning for trips in the outdoors is about picturing the possible situations one can be faced with in advance. Tordsson explains it as a form of mental training that anticipates what can happen and, therefore, provides the facilitator with preparedness for various actions (ibid., p. 272). Being prepared and having a plan gives more freedom and confidence in practice, as Informant 2 explains. The same applies to experience. The inexperienced facilitator tends to stick to rigid and constrained ways of facilitating and limit the situation to the preplanned (ibid., p. 270). The result can be that the facilitator fails to see different ways to handle a situation and pay no attention to the group's state. Informant 1, therefore, have a point in adapting to the conditions and the group and thereby using one's phronetic knowledge in the facilitation, but it does not mean that planning hinders improvisation – rather the opposite.

In both programmes, the plan mainly concerned the content of the programme and logistics around the trip. In Norway, there were no predetermined plans on where to hike. Instead, the area was chosen, and the participants and therapists took one day at a time and let the group decide on where to have camp. We had to stay in the same place for three nights on the Spanish trip due to thunderstorms and no other way to go than up over the mountains. From an outdoor learning perspective, important preplanning is to consider: "If this or this happens, there or there – what alternatives do we have?" (Tordsson, 2014, p. 247). It does not mean that planning has to be followed in detail, but it gives freedom to improvise because there is a prepared alternative.

8.3.3 Summary of the chapter

All the informants have been scouts in their youth, and the personal experiences gained can be viewed as their incentive to work with WT. Experiences in nature and group learning processes have provided values and skills that they bring into their professional lives.

Initially, the therapists entered the field of WT as eager novices and learned with international practitioners through legitimate peripheral participation. Their global network can be viewed as a community of practice for the interviewed psychologists. Through their learning process in the international community of practice and from their own practice, they have gained knowledge and new understandings and are now influencing the discourse of WT.

In Spain, the informants were initially inspired by the US WT model, and in Norway, they got inspiration from both the Australian and US model. Through developing, testing and gaining experience, they have adjusted their programmes in both countries. In the Spanish programmes, adjustments were primarily based on socio-cultural differences and working with other target groups. The programmes in Norway have developed various programmes with different temporal dimensions and simplified content. In that way, both countries have moved away from the US WT model.

Through the years of doing WT and AT programmes, the informants have developed and gained confidence. Their experience allows them to adjust to the group's conditions and use their built-up phronetic knowledge. From an outdoor learning perspective, it can be argued that preplanning should include a trip plan with alternative routes. Meanwhile, planning should not be seen as a distinction from experiential learning, improvising or grasping and seeking out learning situations. Experiential and situational learning rather depends on planning and preparation.

8.4 Theme 4: Nature's role in wilderness therapy

On one of the field trips, I encountered a situation that brought about questions of curiousness in the interviews. The group had gone on a little hike away from the camp to a beautiful viewpoint. We stood on the edge of a mountain, looking into a deep valley with a big lake. First, we gathered in a circle to do some breathing exercises. Next, we were asked to turn around and focus outwards and "connect with nature", and then turn back into the circle when we felt ready. When standing facing outwards looking at the landscape, I was wondering what I was supposed to do. Connecting with nature is, for me, not a process of looking at nature. This personal experience made me curious about the role of nature in WT and what implications different nature views have for WT practices and learning processes. The following chapter analyses nature in WT based on the informants' meanings conveyed in the interviews.

8.4.1 The situatedness of nature's role

All the interviewed therapists talk about nature as humans' natural environment and how being in nature is therapeutic in itself. Some of them use the word "restorative" while others use expressions as "healing". Nevertheless, there is consensus that being in natural environments are good for us and health-promoting. To understand how central nature is in the WT practice, I asked the therapists how they view the relationship between themselves and nature in their practice:

> "It [nature] is a therapist in itself, but I think the fact that we also are present makes a difference. (…) So, in that way, I can say that it is an independent part of the therapy, but it is also in relation to us, so in that respect, a co-therapist. In the same way, as it would have been if you had a conversation indoors with two therapists. Both parts are important." (Informant 4)

> "The mountains they speak for themselves. They are there. But if the mountains are there, and there is somebody with an intention as well, not in the sense of changing you, but somebody that wants to help you in the process, that is even better. That is the call. I don't know what is first. I guess they are hand in hand - one with the other. If you bring into the field what nature is and then also a therapist, then that is amazing." (Informant 1)

From these two extracts, nature can be understood as equal to the therapists. They are just as important, and both parts can stand alone. Bringing nature and therapists together is what makes

up WT, and none of them could be left out in the learning processes occurring in WT. Informant 2 has a different approach. She explains nature's role and her role as dynamic, dependent on the participants. If the participants have no prior relation to nature, "(…) I use nature as a context, and that is it, and it is where we are. And other times, I use it as an element." If the participants already "love" being in nature, she implements it more in the therapy. This dynamic approach to integrating nature is based on her experience. If she, as a therapist, conveys too much devotion to nature, the participants can go in opposition and show resistance. Yet, she believes in "the healing powers of nature (…) like what happens in your body when you are in nature even if you don't want to be there" (Informant 2)

From the informants' perspective, nature can therefore be understood as both an active independent facilitator and a didactical tool used by the therapists. This double character shows when the informants use somewhat contradictive descriptions as: "We have nature as our scene." (Informant 3). "It gives a better arena" (Informant 4). "To use nature in your favour as a learning tool." (Informant 2). Sometimes nature is the background, sometimes it is the learning tool, and sometimes the co-therapists. Different situations give rise to varying levels of interaction with nature. At times nature takes a dominant focus; for example, when the sun comes out after a rainfall; a river has to be crossed; wildlife appears, or the stars become evident at dusk. Other times nature falls in the background; for instance, when a conflict arises in the group; the therapists ask a difficult question; the participants are tired, hungry or the backpack weighs a ton[9]. Though the natural environment, the therapist and the group take different positions in awareness at different times, they are all continuously present and interwoven in WT.

Illeris accentuates that interaction with the surrounding world always includes the context as a whole. Illeris remarks: "One cannot separate the interaction with the material world from the interaction with the social world – it is included psychologically and therefore also learning-wise in an entirety which is always passed on socially[10]" (Illeris, 2012, p. 127). In the WT setting, the material world can be understood as the natural environment. While the group, therapists and wider society is the social world. And, according to Illeris, these two worlds cannot be separated. How the participants experience nature is socially conveyed. For example, facilitated alone-time in WT is meaningful by being in a group to step away from and being in

[9] These are all examples from the field trips and the interviews.
[10] My translation from Norwegian.

a context where other people and civilisation are absent in the direct experience. Another example of how nature (the material world) is passed on socially is the type of nature experiences the situatedness in a specific time and place allows for.

8.4.1.1 Nature context in Spain and Norway

The code context with a subcode named culture strongly connects to the codes nature and learning approach (see Model 3). When interpreting these codes as a whole, the socio-cultural difference in Norway and Spain shows the peculiarity in nature experiences one can provide in the two programmes.

In Norway, we have the right to roam freely on uncultivated land by law. We can hike in national parks and wilderness areas and pitch our tents where we find a place we like to stay (Hofmann et al., 2018). Outdoor learning is implemented in kindergartens and schools, and the majority of the population goes for hikes in nature (ibid.). The right to roam is actively used in the Norwegian programme, which is described by Informant 3:

> "So, when we started walking, we didn't know where we were going to end up or where we were going to have our camps. (…) then we are on a trip as a group. So, we are on the tramp together in beautiful terrain. We make the decisions as a group and, for me at least, I'll get a bit more of a feeling of adventure. So: "We will see. None of us has been here before. We will find a good place that the group thinks are okay. When we are tired, we will set up camp, or we will have lunch." (Informant 3)

In Spain, national parks are often not accessible for people. Informant 2 explains why: "Because of the laws to protect the land. Because that is how we think here, unfortunately, the way to protect it is not to educate people but to forbid people to go and use it. It is really a shame." Informant 1 accounts for how the Spanish laws to protect the land has implicated the cultural relationship with nature:

> "We are not that connected to nature in Spain. I mean, we are, but it is a USE of nature we do here. (…) That is how it works in Spain. Our tradition of how we relate to nature. In Spain, we USE nature: we consume nature; we buy activities, and we buy time outdoors. In comparison with Scandinavia, you have an ethical relationship with nature; it belongs to your tradition. In Spain, we have lost this connection." (Informant 1)

The Spanish relation to nature, as described by the informants, influences how their programmes are formed. Permits are needed for taking groups on multiday hiking trips, and the laws differ depending on the region you are in and whether the land is private or public. Informant 2 explains that it can be a somewhat opaque process and that the application process for permits can be extended. Naturally, going on longer hikes and sleeping in nature are not common activities in Spain. In addition, the cultural connection to nature is described as a place one goes to have fun which hinders a

Naturally, the two different socio-cultural traditions impact the types of nature experiences one can provide and how a concept like WT is received in the countries. "Being on the tramp together in a beautiful terrain" is mainly a privilege of the Scandinavian countries, and it supports Illeris' argument of the socially passed on material world (Illeris, 2012, p. 127). Differences in the therapists' learning approach likewise relate to situatedness. In Norway, the participants can be given more influence, and they co-create the hike with the therapists. In Spain, a greater emphasis is put on making the participants like being outdoors and introducing various activities (this is dealt with in the next section). It also explains the dynamic role nature has in the Spanish WT and AT programmes since most youths might not have much prior experience with being in nature.

8.4.1.2 Nature view – a place for equilibrium or disequilibrium

When we talk about nature and wilderness, what we think of and the meaning we ascribe is a personal and situated matter. It resides in our tradition and horizon of understanding. When interviewing the therapists, they pointed out differences in understanding nature they had encountered in WT. From a learning perspective, these understandings and assigned meanings influence the learning because it is part of the learning context. This section will include WT programmes in the US, in which I did not partake in any programmes. Yet, it became a subject of conversation in the interviews due to two of the informants' working experiences in the US. I chose to include this because it brings out some interesting contrasts, and sometimes it becomes clearer what a phenomenon is when it is held up against something it is not.

The therapists who had worked in WT programmes in the US talked about the approach there. In the excerpt below, Informant 2 describes the objective of the programmes and natures' role:

> "Yeah, so I guess, somehow wilderness therapy, as it is in the US, somehow, the call is to break them [the participants] down and start over. (…) So, the good thing is that you, as a person, don't break them down; nature breaks them down, and you are right next to them to build them up." (Informant 2)

Here nature is viewed as a hostile element intentionally used to bring uncomfortableness and initially breaking the participants down to build them up from new. Many of the participants in the US programmes, which the informant is referring to, are: "extreme cases, and that is why you need to break them or help them break their patterns – kind of breaking them apart and then building the pieces together" (Informant 2). Nature is made accountable for the unease the participants feel and is experienced as a counterpart to the practitioners. Interaction with nature is thus informed by its disruptive forces – at least until the reconstruction of the person can commence. When the participants become more amenable due to the unfamiliar environment, the interaction with nature is characterised by overcoming the experienced hardships.

Nature's role in these types of programmes is to create disequilibrium in the participants so that a different and more functional equilibrium can be reached through the course of the programme. It is a time-demanding process that gives reason to the extended duration of the WT programmes in the US, which often amounts to 2-3 months.

In the Norwegian and Spanish context, nature has a contrasting role where interaction with nature is informed by relatedness. Informant 3 describes his experience of the differences:

> "(…) What might be important is the thought about having to interact with nature instead of defeating it. That we have little of the idea that nature is an element to conquer. We go into nature and team up with nature. (…) One of the goals of being in nature is to create equilibrium. So, balance. In ourselves. To use a cliché: "To come home", right? So, we go into an environment where we actually belong, while, if you look to other places internationally, they use nature to promote disequilibrium. So, they use experiences in nature to create discomfort. (…) Yeah, so that is at least one thing that has become more and more evident to us and the way we work; we should feel a kind of peace because we venture into an environment that is natural to us." (Informant 3)

Here nature is described as the environment humans belong to and a source of equilibrium. Interaction with nature is accordingly thought to restore balance in the participants and bringing calmness. Implicit in this view is an understanding of the participants being in disequilibrium when entering the WT programme. As described earlier, most of them are exhausted, anxious and worried about the future; thus being in and interacting with nature is a contrast to the hectic

everyday life in urban areas. The Spanish Informant 1 likewise explains how we as humans still are animals and belong to nature. With that, he shares the view of Norwegian Informant 3. These two opposing nature views, along with often forced participation in the US and the volunteered participation in Spain and Norway, can influence the learning. Informant 2 recounts about the learning result in the US programme:

> "I think some of them... A lot of them are city boys. I remember this kid; he had not seen the stars in his life. He had seen two stars in his whole life. You know, obviously coming from that to the dessert... He was from Hollywood, actually. He had seen more stars in the ground than in the sky. That is why it is so hard, but some of them do... If they end up... If, at some point, they ended up recognising the healing power of nature. How much good the programme did for them, they would for sure get some sort of connection with nature, but that doesn't mean that they end up after the programme: "Oh, I love nature!" Actually, it is a little bit like PTSD: "Oh, I'm never going to come back here because I struggled so much here. Everything was so hard." (Informant 2)

Bringing city boys inexperienced in the wilderness to the desert for extended stays is depicted as a hard encounter with the unknown. From the understanding of the informant: If the participants end up experiencing a good outcome from the programme, they will end up with some sort of connection to nature. However, what seems more confident in the statement, is that the participants will not have an affectionate relationship with nature due to the struggles they experienced. Instead, it will resemble a posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), resulting in dissociation to (wild) nature as a learning outcome.

From a learning perspective, this type of experience will influence the incentive for learning. One can argue that the approach and nature view as described in the US programme will to some degree, promote incentives related to necessity and survival. When the interaction with the context is forced, the acquisition process will be affected, and so will the learning outcome. The participants might choose how they deal with the challenges experienced in nature, but they are transported and kept in the wilderness involuntarily[11].

I asked the same informant if the programmes in Spain are aimed at the participants seeking into nature by themselves. She replied:

> "(pause) Yeah, it is. It is in both the wilderness therapy and adventure therapy. We try to give a lot of variety. We try to go to nature areas that are nearby so they [the participants] can use it later, and we have

[11] Recently published critical research shows that approximately half the participants in the United States' WT programmes are attending involuntarily and about 65% is transported by services specialized in uncooperative youths leading to traumatic experiences (Dobud, 2021; N. J. Harper, Magnuson, & Dobud, 2021).

> noticed that participants ask: "Can you send us the coordinates for here in google maps so that we can come back?" or, "Is there a bus stop nearby so we can come back?" Or that they start using bicycles or going climbing or hiking after we do it in the programme. I think it is one of the outcomes that could be a great key indicator of this being useful because it gives them a resource for later." (Interview 2)

A post WT goal in Spain is that the participants continue seeking into nature. To promote this goal, many different activities and easily accessible nature areas are chosen for the programmes. As presented earlier, the groups encompass varieties of aspirations and boundaries. Therefore, the therapists attempt to meet these differences in introducing the participants to diverse ways of being in nature and different nature types. Informant 2 understands the participants' continued interest in nature-based activities as an implication of successful programming. That the participants want to come back to the places the programmes are situated and continue, e.g., climbing indicates an incentive driven by volition and experience of enjoyment. It also suggests that the participants have established a relationship with nature, which provides them with a resource to seek to post-treatment.

Informant 3 states clearly that the primary goal in the Norwegian WT programmes is increasing mental health but seeking into nature post-treatment is a secondary goal which he describes in the following extract:

> "(…) If one can use nature actively in self-regulation: "Now I'm struggling so I go into nature to feel like this and this" or "Now I feel good, so I go into nature to feel like this and this." Then nature certainly is a fantastic resource which we have access to in the Nordic countries. And it is obvious that if youth conclude our programme and see that one of the great coping strategies they have in their lives is the relationship with nature, then that, of course, is fantastic." (Informant 3)

In Norway, nature is likewise viewed as a "fantastic resource" that can promote different feelings in a person. The relationship created with nature can be a coping strategy for the participants post-programme which Informant 3 hopes for as an outcome.

Interpreting the therapists' understandings of nature views in the US, Spain and Norway from Illeris' perspective brings out the differences in the interaction process with nature. Suppose nature is viewed as a hostile environment where people with no prior outdoor skills will struggle and be forced to submit themselves to the learning process. In that case, it will have consequences for the learning outcome (Illeris, 2012, p. 123). Illeris points out that the emotions associated with the acquisition process will infer on the character of the learning result:

> "(…) the content of the learning is always emotionally "invested", there is always tied incentive nuances and imprints to the content and the developed understandings. And generally, it is so, that the stronger feelings and motivations present in the learning situation the stronger will this investment be (…)."[12] (Illeris, 2012, p. 110)

In addition, the positively motivated learner will be more inclined to remember the learnt and apply it in all kinds of relevant situations. In comparison, the learner driven by fear or necessity will be more likely to avoid situations where the learning is needed, not recognise it or be incapable of transferring the learning overall (Illeris, 2012, p. 109). The transfer value is thereby reduced (ibid.). The informants' observations support this when the participants in the involuntary WT programmes relate to nature with PTSD like emotions.

When the therapists in the Norwegian and Spanish context view nature as the place humans belong and a place where we can restore ourselves, it likewise has implications on the learning process and outcome. The volition-based participation lay the ground for a fundamental positive incentive. It does not mean that the participants do not experience hardship. But the individual participant can always decide to go home if they want to, something the therapists explain happens occasionally. On the trip I participated in, no one chose to go home during the longer hiking trip in the mountains, but two participants decided not to go on the trip at all. They concluded that they would rather receive their therapy treatment differently, which supports the belief that WT is not the best treatment option for every person since every person differs. This subject is supported by the informants' statements in present empirical data and previous research (N. J. Harper, 2010). The aim of the programmes is that the participants should feel at peace and build a relationship with nature. It is encouraged by interacting with nature, having an influence on the programme and experiencing different ways of being in nature. Something that can lead to positive emotions and motivation for entering a learning process. The learning outcome will, according to Illeris, be of a more substantial character, and the learner will be able to transfer the learning into other situations than the learning situation (Illeris, 2012). Meanwhile, the learner will also be more willing to seek situations and contexts where the learning result can be used (ibid.). This idea is strengthened by the fact that the participants continue the different activities and seek back to the nature places the programmes are situated.

[12] My translation from Norwegian.

8.4.2 Nature as contrast and contrasts in nature

Being in nature is talked about as a contrast to the participants' everyday life in the interviews, but what exactly is meant by a contrast? A general way of talking about nature in literature conveys a dichotomy between civilisation and nature. Still, it can seem too simple to legitimise therapy in nature with the "contrast"-explanation. An inquiry of this thesis is to dig deeper into what nature adds to the therapy.

8.4.2.1 Freedom and responsibility

Freedom is a concept that stands out when nature is the subject of conversation. Only informant 1 uses the word "freedom" directly, but the other informants talk indirectly about freedom in nature through being free, experiencing voluntariness and having no expectations. An example is: "We don't have a script or rules for how to act in the wilderness, so it promotes people to develop themselves more genuinely and authentically. People can be who they really want to be because there are no previous expectations" (Informant 2). This line of thinking complies with the goals some of the participants set when entering the programme: "(…) they were several who had the goals of daring to be more themselves, show more of their vulnerable sides and (…) get to know oneself and know who one wants to be in the future" (Informant 4).

Nature is viewed as a type of sanctuary from the established practice and norms of society. One has more freedom compared to civilisation, but when the therapy takes place in a group setting, some expectations will still apply. A participant cannot act entirely freely in a group because the mutual accountability and negotiated norms and expectations will be affected. Instead, Informant 1 argues freedom comes with certain conditions: "It depends on how much freedom we can give." As well as how much freedom the group and the nature situation provide. The goal is to give the participants as much freedom as possible.

When the informants discuss freedom and voluntariness, it repeatedly appears in relation to responsibility. Nature is viewed as a context promoting responsibility in the participants through the "natural challenges that nature brings" (Informant 2). The natural challenges are explained as in the following excerpt:

> "They will face other challenges. They will arise. It is not something you prepare. You might have prepared some activities or just walking in nature, and then there comes a steep road or a thunderstorm. That is just something that happens. It is not that you have to bring in something challenging all the time. Space will provide some challenges as well" (Informant 1)

When in nature the challenges will arise in one way or the other. The therapists do not plan these challenges. They can, of course, do that by choosing a challenging route, but mostly it occurs through weather changes and steep terrain. The natural challenges are by all informants viewed as a positive element to the learning process. Informant 4 elaborates on this:

> "At the same time, I think a lot of the more uncomfortable or challenging also is a part of nature's restoring effects. To tolerate the cold and to be able to dress and to tolerate wind and wet shoes. To get through a trip and learn that you can manage more than you think. That is also an important part of being able to master nature's fickle forces. We normally say: "In nature, there are neither rewards nor punishment; there are only natural consequences." So, if you don't dress well enough then you will get cold." (Informant 4)

The natural challenges the participants and therapists face are essential to the learning process because it calls on taking responsibility. The learning occurs both when one experiences not being able to meet the challenge and when one adjusts to natures' changes – and sometimes the greatest learning resides in experiencing both situations sequentially. Illeris learning theory can explain this as a process that increases the incentive dimension. The stimuli from the surroundings will work in on the participant's incentive to try and meet the demands. If one has experienced being cold one day, the motivation to dress appropriately the next day can be more significant. It is "(…) a way to learn to control what you can control and let go of what you can't control. You always have a choice, which is to decide how you want to react to things that happen to you" (Informant 2). Therefore, the learning is in how one chooses to respond to the challenge and interact with nature. When the participants can handle these encounters with nature in all its demanding diversity, they will develop their functionality in these situations (Illeris, 2012, p. 45).

8.4.2.2 Feelings in nature

While nature provides natural challenges, which demands certain adjustments and actions, nature also affects emotions and feelings. When the informants talk about feelings related to extended stays in nature, contrasts are likewise a keyword.

As presented earlier, relationships between the participants and participants and therapists are an essential aspect of WT. All the informants describe being together over time as an essential factor in developing relations. To better understand what nature adds, I asked whether going on a charter holiday with one's therapist could result in the same relations. Informant 3 replied:

> "Nooo, well it is… Well, you would have gained something from that as well because you are together over time. Over time, you will be yourself, but it is obvious that if you are together over time in nature or a type of wilderness, then we know that the swings usually become bigger – the mood swings, right? That the psyche fluctuates more. It is dark. It is warm. It is cold. You are hungry. You are tired. You become satisfied. All this which leads to things becoming more pronounced and that we become more raw[13] towards each other than I believe you might be on a charter holiday and all-inclusive." (Informant 3).

Though my question might be a little provoking, the therapist's answer brings forth an essential understanding concerning nature's role in WT. Being in nature over a longer time generates a range of emotions due to the altering conditions. This differs greatly from being in an office or even on holiday with your therapist. In its deepest meaning, when interpreting this statement in relation to the whole concept of WT, most Western world people live lives where these conditions rarely become pronounced: If we are cold, we turn up the heat; if we are hungry, we open the fridge and grab something; if it is dark, we turn the light on. From the outdoor learning perspective, Tordsson describes the contrasts:

> "The modern life lacks the sensual abundance of qualities which natural environments can give. The senses are impoverished if they only have to relate to smooth surfaces, straight angles, constant temperature, uniform body movements, materials where the traces of biological life is exterminated." (Tordsson, 2014, p. 80)

Venturing into nature is a great contrast to our everyday lives due to the innate contrasts nature holds. Through those contrasts and perceptible wealth, we can learn new things about ourselves and often we must let go of our emotional pretence. This difference is likewise pronounced by all the therapists themselves when they talk about how they change as therapists when working in natural environments: "(…) they get to see me over a longer time and in different situations. So, they will probably see more of my weaker sides and my challenges, not just my resources which might be more prominent if you are together with someone for an hour and are inside"

[13] This is my translation of the Norwegian word "hudløse". In its direct translation it means "skin-less". "Authentic" can be another way to translate it to English.

(Informant 4). The participants and the therapists become more genuine and authentic in their relation in (wild) nature, and the struggles of the participant most likely will surface over time in nature. Informant 4 supports this statement in that she shows more "who I am as a person and not just as a therapist" when working in nature.

Meanwhile, the spectrum of feelings is portrayed as being broader when in nature over time, another informant talks about how the feelings become intensified:

> "I also believe that nature works as a sounding board. Whatever we feel, I like to think, nature amplifies it. This amplification makes it easier and better for the participant to identify these feelings. It might be anxiety, and in nature, it might even become fear, and the therapist can use the experience to heal." (Informant 1)

A sounding board is a board placed over a pulpit or stage to reflect a speaker's voice forward (Oxford English Dictionary, Retrieved July 2, 2021). The metaphor of nature as a sounding board can be interpreted as a reflection and intensification of the participants' feelings. Both the stronger and broader range of feelings brought forth by nature, are used in the therapeutic healing processes and provide the participants with learning about themselves.

8.4.3 Summary of the chapter

The interviewed therapists all view nature as therapeutic in itself, but its role in their individual WT approach differs. Nature is integrated as a co-therapist, meaning that nature and the therapist are equally important for the participants' psychotherapeutic process. The role of nature is also depicted as a dynamic continuum where the integration of nature depends on the participants' prior relation and experience with nature.
The descriptions of nature within the interviews are ambiguous, which can be understood as nature's role differs according to the situation – sometimes it is the background for the therapy, sometimes it is used as a learning tool and sometimes it is a co-therapist.

By comparing WT in Norway and Spain to WT in the US, some differences stand out. In Norway and Spain, venturing into nature with participants is thought of as bringing equilibrium in the participants as a contrast to the disequilibrium the participants' experience in their everyday life. Relatedness, peace and belonging are keywords for nature's role in the Spanish

and Norwegian WT. Varieties in nature types and activities are presented to the participants in the hope of establishing long-term relationships with nature. In the US, the target group of WT is described as hard nuts who often enter the programmes by force. Nature is thought to bring disequilibrium in the participants to initially break them down and then build them up again from new. The relationship created with nature is referred to as traumatic.
From Illeris' learning theory, this can result in a great difference in learning outcome and whether the learning outcome in the WT programmes can be transferred to other situations.

Nature is a contrast to everyday life and has inherent contrasts. The inherent contrasts will foster freedom and responsibility in the participants through experienced freedom from society and natural challenges. Interdependence between freedom and responsibility is depicted as an essential learning process. One can argue that experiencing freedom fosters, or might even be a premise, for taking responsibility.

Being in nature brings out a greater variety of feelings due to the stronger and directly experienced needs and the perceptible wealth nature has compared to modern society. In nature, basic needs are more pronounced, and the individual has to respond to them directly.

8.5 Theme 5: "We become fellow human beings on a journey together"

During my fieldwork, I repeatedly noticed how equal the power relations between the therapists and participants felt. When I afterwards interviewed the therapists, the dialogue arrived at how the therapists view their relations with the participants. This has become a theme because it encompasses some fundamental values and characteristics of the therapists and their WT practice. The code values relates strongest to the therapists' learning approach which reveals that how the therapists view themselves in relation to the participants have implications on the learning processes. Furthermore, the subcode skills to be a WT practitioner related to both values and context. This will also be presented and interpreted in the current theme. To understand the context and include the reader in my preunderstanding before the interviews, I will start this chapter by sharing an extract from my field notes. This will be followed by one of the most essential extracts from my interviews, and together they will be interpreted.

Day three: (…) With full stomachs, we decided to play. The game evolved as we played, and the rules were made up and changed as we went. It became our unique game. We were hiding and running, chasing each other and laughing until it started to get dark. Back at our gathering spot, we made hot chocolate, and a group conversation about the day unfolded. One of the therapists reminded us about the rock we went out and collected by ourselves this morning, and we had carried with us up the hill. The rock became a metaphor for something we had carried with us in our life. Something that weighed us down, and we wanted to leave out in the mountains or on the bottom of the lake. It was up to the individual what to do with it. In the dusk, we went out separately and took some time to think about what the rock symbolized and did what felt right with it. As I was sitting by the lake and looked at the place my rock hit the water surface and put a part of me on the bottom, I noticed that one of the participants were sitting a bit away from me crying whilst looking out on the water. Before I knew of it, one of the therapists was next to the person. She put a hand on the person's shoulder and sat down. It didn't look like they were talking much. They were just there – together in the moment when difficult feelings surface. After a long time, we all ended up by our gathering spot and shared however much we wanted about our rock. The therapists shared their feelings towards the rock along with the participants and me. I noticed the delicacy it was done with. It was something they didn't like about themselves, and without going into details, they showed that this for them as well was a powerful and touching exercise. It was genuine and honest, and I feel this day has changed us as a group.

…

The following interview extract has stood out to me since I was in the interview situation. It encompasses the experience I had with the therapists and participants on the WT trip the week

before the interview. Before this extract, we talked about the different activities the therapists facilitate to the participants, how they facilitate them, and that the content depends on the team of therapists.

Researcher: (…) Do you think it has anything to say that you participate and try out new things as well?
Informant 3: Yes, I believe so. It is vital that we become individuals for each other with strengths and weaknesses and that we as therapists are willing to be fragile toward the youths and be able to say: "Today it is my turn to be tired. Can you carry my tent because I don't know if I have the energy for it today?"
Researcher: Yes. Have you ever done that? Or has it happened, maybe not you personally, but has it happened on a trip?
Informant 3: Yes. It happens. Yes! Yes! And someone might say: "I am in a way that I need my night's sleep. Now the time is 10.30 pm so now I must go to sleep. I would have loved to sit up with you, but I need sleep because that is how my head works." Or that you say: "Do you know what? Now I have to stop because now I feel that I have to eat some food." And it can be with other things as well because it is evident that some of the potency in this, to a certain degree at least, is that we stop being therapists and become fellow human beings on a journey together. And then it isn't, when we have our conversations, then it isn't necessarily that what we say is so incredibly good, but it is because it comes from us who have become a trip buddy.
Researcher: You are thinking about the therapy conversations?
Informant 3: Yes, in the group, for example, when we are on the trip, we have, for instance, experienced that the young people have said to us: "Yes, what you say, we have heard that many times before. This we have been told for years. You are paid to say that." But when you have been together on a trip for a week, and you say the same, it gets a different weight. It gets a different validity. It gets a different value. And some youths have even said: "Do you know what? I see that you are something more than a therapist, and therefore I'm willing to believe what you say or listen to what you have to say." And that is very specific. That we have been told. So, what I say is… Now you have taught me to make a latrine, but when you go to the toilet behind the same bush, then something happens with a relationship, right? That is worth quite a lot in a therapeutic alliance. That I'm not in doubt of."

In the extract, I use the words "fellow human being" to translate the Scandinavian noun "medmenneske". The Norwegian word does not have a direct translation to English, but dictionaries suggest the words "fellow human being", "co-human", or "to show human compassion". None of these seems to be a covering definition to the meaning of the informant's statement in Norwegian. I could have avoided the word by choosing not to include the quote in the thesis, but I have kept coming back to the word throughout my interpretation. When I started reading, searching and asking Scandinavian people what "medmenneske" meant to them, it became even more apparent how encompassing this word is for understanding the outdoor therapists' characteristics. Without a direct translation, a word can be described through definitions, synonyms and descriptions. One definition derives from the translation of the

psychological personality trait theory Big Five, which deals with different personality traits (Kennair, 2020). The group of personality traits named "agreeableness" in English translates to "medmennskelighet" in Norwegian which includes traits as "generosity, trust, empathy, warmth, obligingness but also the absence of social competition" (Kennair, 2020). In Danish dictionaries, synonyms as altruism, humanity and caring are suggested. Meanwhile, a Swedish doctor and professor in ethics, Stefan Einhorn, has written a bestseller book with the title "Medmenneske", where he tries to grasp the word's meaning. He writes:

> "Medmenneske" is a word put together by the two words "with" and "human being". I, myself, understand the word as you exist together with another human being. It can mean that we are in the same time, same room or same group as someone else. But it can also, in its deepest meaning, involve that we – in addition to the time and room dimensions – are mentally present and near someone else. If we should take the word quite seriously, it means that we place a part of ourselves in the relation that the other can manage and that the other person does the same towards us."[14] (Einhorn, 2011, p. 40)

These explanations, synonyms, and traits attempt to describe what it means to be a fellow human being. In many ways, it relates to Aristotle's phronesis, and to be a phronimos, a person with phronesis is similar to being a medmenneske. Phronesis guides our actions, and it also arises from them. One such action can be to genuinely give a part of yourself to another person. The therapists do this when they lower their professional barrier and show their fragility and weaknesses to the participants like Informant 3 describes in the extract. Or, when the therapists share that they too have struggles in their lives by partaking in therapeutic activities and group conversations. Asking a participant for help demands an ability to understand the situation and anticipate how such an action will gain the people involved (Tordsson, 2014, pp. 265-266). The Spanish informants talk about this as being aware of the intention with their actions: "Everything should be intentional – everything you say or do" (Informant 2). When the therapists judge a situation and act with intention, it is based on their values which through interviews material is interpreted as respect, equality, empathy and absence of social competition.

Interpreting my observations and the meaning conveyed by Informant 3 in relation to the therapy context it, discloses the core of WT treatment; the relationship between the therapist and the participant becomes as close to equal as possible in a therapeutic setting when living

[14] My translation

together in nature. Being together over time in nature fosters situations where the therapists can show the participants who they are through being "fellow human beings", what they believe in, and act according to their phronetic knowledge. It minimizes the power-relation, which usually is prevailing in an office-based therapy setting, and empowers the meaning of the dialogue because it goes beyond the problems of the participant or client.

The subtle balance between being professional, personal and private as a practitioner in WT is practical wisdom – phronesis. There are no universal rules for how much or how little you share about yourself and how you do it or do not do it. In Aristotelian understanding, it takes time and experience to develop phronesis (Tordsson, 2014) and the therapists have to be aware of their professionalism while "they place part of themselves in the relation" with the participants (Einhorn, 2011, p. 40). For each moral situation experienced, the premise for further understanding the virtues-self is formed. Informant 1 talks about how his experience has taught him to read the groups and act accordingly:

> "I also think I'm very phenomenological. So, what comes or what I can read from the group, I'm very intuitive on that. I can read the group and the individuals very well. "Okay, let us wait here and have a moment of silence." Or I see when the energy is getting lower or when there is a conflict arising. I guess I have a good read of that since I have been working with groups for a long time." (Informant 1)

Informants 1 and 2 uses "phenomenological" to describe their own characteristics towards the groups. When they elaborate on what they mean, it relates to being present, aware and using their perception to take in how the participants feel. They then act in accordance with the gained insights. Informant 3 supports this understanding and includes how he, as the therapist, is part of the situation:

> "(…) it is again different from group to group. Where the group is. What the group can take. What should be dealt with individually? What can be dealt with in the group setting? So, quite a few of those types of choices, and that is a lot about intuition, right? About human awareness and understanding of oneself in the situation." (Informant 3)

The understanding the therapists have of themselves in a particular situation is decisive of the following actions. In that, informant 3 underlines that the therapist is not er person standing outside of a situation and deciding what to do from observations. The therapists are an integral part of the situation, and their prior experiences determine how they choose to act. Aristotle

states that phronesis will continually build on a person's prior understandings, but every situation is unique. It is the combination of generality and specificity that guides phronesis (P. Stonehouse, P. Allison, & D. Carr, 2010). In that sense, human awareness is the premise for picking up the impulses from the participants, thus using oneself as a means to understand a situation and act accordingly more or less intuitively.

In addition to having phronetic knowledge and being a fellow human being, certain formal skills are also needed to be a wilderness therapist. The next two section will deal with what it encompasses and the differences and similarities the informants express in that matter.

8.5.1 The skills needed to be a wilderness therapist

A subject that conveys different opinions among the informants is the formal background of the practitioners in the programmes. Informant 1 describes the different roles and responsibilities applied in Spain and several other countries:

> "Usually, there are three roles. The therapist, depending on the country, need to have certain degrees. The therapist is in charge of the therapy and process decision making. The educator is sometimes called "field guide" or "the second" in the field. Their role is more of a mentorship and sometimes being in charge of the psychoeducational group sessions at night. And then the mountain guide, who is the technician in charge of moving the group from one side to the other, logistics, safety, communications with the base camp and so on." (Informant 1)

In Spain, they work with those three roles; clinical psychologists, educators and technical outdoor staff. The latter is hired into the specific programme to organize the different outdoor activities. Thus, the practitioners divide the responsibility into different areas based on their formal backgrounds. In that sense, the roles and responsibilities are clearly divided. In Norway, the practitioners share the responsibility more equally:

> "We are normally a therapist team of three. One of the therapists must have a considerable measure of confidence to meet all the natural challenges we can envision meeting during the trip and master them. (…) The two others don't have to be outdoor experts if we can use such an expression, but they must have skills and energy to take care of themselves in nature and still have surplus energy to see others." (Informant 3)

When I asked how they find out if the therapists have these skills, he replies: “Well, that is something the individual has to define themselves, and when we work in this way, it quickly becomes evident who enjoys it.” (Informant 1) So, in Norway, one person has the overall confidence within the outdoor learning area, but all practitioners have therapist roles. To be suited for the job is relatively self-defined, and the therapists are not generally clinical psychologists, which is a criterion in Spain. These differences must be understood in their contexts because they relate to socio-cultural differences. In Spain, psychiatrists and clinical psychologists are the only professionals with competencies for clinical mental health therapy (Rose, 2015, p. 282). In Norway, there are many formal backgrounds that give access to working within mental health. Meanwhile, specific certifications within outdoor learning disciplines are not required by law. Instead, environment, health and safety plans have to be compiled in each institution, company etc. By law, the practitioners must have “required competencies” and “required qualifications”, but there are no specific certification demands (Horgen & Christoffersen, 2019, p. 141). The Norwegian socio-cultural perspective becomes evident in the following extract:

> “I’m by nature sceptical to ascribing certain educations as procedures, so, to do this, you must have this and this. I feel that I strive against, and you can quote me on that! Because it goes a little that way that it becomes such a fuss about certifications where little by little it is only half a person in each country who is certified enough to do a job, and then I think we do ourselves a disservice”. (Informant 3)

And the opposing Spanish socio-cultural perspective:

> “(…) our responsibility if something happens, it could really seriously harm the organization. We require the certifications and the papers behind the person as well. You cannot do ropes courses without a certificate. Even though you have the experience and you have climbed for 20 years, you need a degree.” (Informant 1)

These different opinions are part of an international discussion within the field of AT and WT. It is argued that the practitioners are required “to be “cross-trained” on the technical skills needed to facilitate the adventure experience and the clinical skills needed to promote therapeutic change in clients” (Norton et al., 2014, p. 53). Yet, this is rarely the situation (Berman & Davis-Berman, 2013, p. 60; Tucker & Norton, 2013, p. 339).

After interviews, I partook in a think-tank in Australia where 25 practitioners working within the AT and WT field worldwide discussed what components should be included in a formal

education to become an adventure therapist. Based on that experience and the meanings conveyed by the informants I interpret requirements for formal backgrounds as a highly socio-cultural means. Yet, certain fundamental competencies are needed.

8.5.1.1 "I would like to have some of your knowledge"

Instead of formal degrees and certifications, I explored the informants' opinions about what competencies they found necessary to be wilderness therapists or practitioners. The central skills the informants pointed out involved feeling confident in the situations. It related both to being in the unpredictable natural environment and what it might bring and in relation to the group members. A wilderness therapist must be able to improvise and see the learning in a particular situation but to handle stressful situations was the most emphasised topic. Informant 4 explains some of those:

> "(…) people who have anxiety attacks underway, who starts to shiver and hyperventilate and those kinds of things. And we have had people with us who dissociate and are unreachable for half an hour where you don't get contact with them. Then, I think it is important that it is therapists that are present, who know what it is and how to handle it and who keeps calm." (Informant 4)

Tordsson accentuates that within outdoor learning, we first and foremost work with people (Tordsson, 2014). When working with groups in the outdoors, a practitioner needs to consider if the group is in accordance with one's competencies (ibid.). Situations like the ones Informant 4 describes are clearly within the therapists' scope of practice and not the outdoor educators'. Three informants therefore point out how important it is to always have a therapist present in the programmes. Meanwhile it is also emphasised that outdoor education can contribute with important knowledge:

> **Informant 3:** "(…) with that said, I would like some of your [outdoor education] knowledge."
> **Researcher:** "Yes, the same to you."
> **Informant 3:** "Yeah, but I mean it! Because now I have survived in nature in many years and done many strange things so I must do something right, but it is obvious that things can be done a lot more effective and a lot more pedagogical than what we do. That is obvious."

The therapist's utterance can be interpreted as a request for more skills within the field of outdoor learning. It expresses how experience in the outdoor activities are fundamental but states that formal education can contribute with valuable knowledge and pedagogical skills.

8.5.2 Summary of the chapter

A rather long description is provided to explain what being a "fellow human being" means. This is done because it sums up the experience, I had of the relationship formed between the therapists and participants during my fieldwork. A relationship that is essential for the learning process.

The therapists and participants become fellow human beings during the WT programme. It encompasses sharing part of oneself with the other – a process that typically only goes one way in traditional therapy. The therapists use their phronetic knowledge in the judgement of how to do it. They share just enough to make it meaningful and genuine while keeping their professional barrier. Meanwhile, they allow their actions to show their weaknesses and are honest about how they feel. If they are tired, they ask for help. If they make mistakes, they admit it. By acting honest they allow the participants to be fellow human beings towards the therapists and practice their phronetic knowledge.

The therapists participate in group activities instead of standing on the outside and observing. If they take-a-round in the group they share their thought, experiences and feeling in a like manner as the participants. The equality is a close as it can become in a therapeutic relationship which makes the participants willing to test out new things, listen to what the therapists have to say and enter learning processes they normally would not.

Through Tordsson's perspective the therapists' action can be interpreted as phronetic facilitation. The prior experiences and values the therapists holds merge with their understanding of the particular situation and guide their actions. It demands that the therapists have awareness towards the situation, anticipate what their actions will result in and combine it with what learning they what the participants to take out of the specific situation.

When it comes to formal backgrounds needed to work within WT the informants have different opinions due to different traditions and laws in Spain and Norway. Being comfortable in nature,

improvising and handling stressful situations are emphasised as important competencies. The need for the therapists' competencies within mental health are evident in both the interview material and my experiences from the fieldwork. At the same time, the skills and knowledge from formal outdoor education is requested by the informants.

9 In dialogue with the literature

The interpretation of the interview material brought out many insights relevant to dig into. Due to the limited space, I have chosen to elaborate and discuss the difference and similarities between "doing" activities and "being" in nature in relation to literature. But first, I will present two subjects that connects all five themes and therefore can be understood as essential to the WT practices. Lastly, I will discuss the link between outdoor learning and psychology.

9.1 To overall themes: Relations and situatedness

Two overall themes are prevailing throughout the interpretation of the five themes: 1) The situatedness of the learning, and 2) the relationship between the learning and its contextual factors.

Situatedness

Through the interpretation it became clear that the immediate situation e.g., the group, the natural environment and the therapist team is of decisive influence for the learning processes in the practice. Moreover, the wider context has consequence for what types of learning and practices can be implemented. The WT group consists of peers and therapists who co-create the learning through social, bodily, emotional and mental interaction. With Lave and Wenger's theories we see that the people in the group will create a unique learning situation where the members learn from each other with each other. Through legitimate peripheral participation the participants experience themselves through their peers and take part in each other's experience and skills. Two different groups will therefore never result in the exact same learning.

Tordsson's concept of the phronetic facilitator points out that the facilitator's experience, values and beliefs are decisive for what the learning will encompass and weather it will be facilitated in a way that connects the participants to the situation. The facilitator is also crucial in creating meaningful learning situations, for example, by letting the group members have different roles in the group. The learning likewise depends on the facilitators ability to bring out the learning, for instance, by initiating reflections and asking good questions.

The natural environment is an implicit part of the learning process. It affects both the therapists' and participants' ways of being. Nature is described as a place the therapists and participants

lay themselves more open thus the therapists lower their professional barrier and the participants let their emotions surface. Both have implications on the learning process.

Situatedness in the wider context include the norms, laws and economy etc. of the socio-cultural situation. Illeris learning theory shows how the wider context give overall guidelines for the learning situation for example by explaining why the participants are exhausted from their everyday lives or how shorter and time efficient programmes are related to organisational economy. It also shows how traditions and laws in different countries limits and enable certain learning situations. In Norway, the participants can have greater influence on the hiking trip and let the path be made while walking due to the right to roam freely in nature. The situatedness of the programme likewise influence what formal educations the practitioners need and which responsibilities the practitioners can take on. In Spain for example the therapists must be clinical psychologists and the areas of responsibilities are divided between the practitioners according to their formal backgrounds.

Relations

The relations between the participants, therapists, and natural environment are a throughgoing theme significant for the learning processes. Initially, the participants generally struggle with creating relations because they are exhausted from their demanding everyday life or suffer from social anxiety. The main focus is therefore to establish a trusting and safe environment in the group. This is done by creating common ground and shared histories to relate to. Playig together is used as an informal way to relate to each other and be present. As the relationship starts to form, the participants engage themselves more and influence on the practice which is a means to learn.

With Lave and Wenger's theories the common engagement can be understood as community of practice where the relations between the members is part of the learning. The relations are continuously evolving through negotiation of the members different meanings. When the members engage in solving tasks, supporting each other, giving feedback and making decisions the relations foster a sense of belonging. Belonging together enables more demanding learning processes which is facilitated by the therapists as progression of the programme.

An essential factor to create relations is time. By spending consecutive days together in nature where the group members are dependent on each other, the relationships form authentically and

fast. Being in nature generates situations where the therapist genuinely can show they care about the participants and the learning processes become more meaningful.

Relationship with nature is created through a holistic interaction where awareness towards the surroundings fosters awareness towards oneself. Nature teaches the participants to be present and let a broader and more significant spectre of feelings surface.

9.2 Doing and being in nature

The analysis depicts "doing" activities in nature as an active approach and as a contrast to "being" in nature. In literature, "doing" and "being" in nature are likewise often portrayed as a dichotomy (Nicholls & Gray, 2006, p. 26). In this section, I anticipate discussing this construction through a Norwegian outdoor learning perspective and experiential facilitation in general.

Learning through doing with a subsequent reflection is generally associated with experiential learning (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). When doing activities in nature learning happens through experience, and the present analysis shows it involves the bodily interaction with the environment and other group members.

"Being", as it is represented in the analysis, focuses on creating presence in the therapists and participants. It is mostly depicted as an inherent consequence of being in nature and having a break from the hectic urban life with overwhelming stimuli and expectations. When "being" is facilitated by the therapists, they bring awareness to inner psychological processes by sensing nature. If we explore "being in natural environments" as a concept and therefore go more into the relationship between self and the surrounding nature, the Norwegian "friluftsliv"[15] practice can be a useful perspective. The Norwegian friluftsliv practice is by no means to be understood as a singular way of being outdoors, but I will here shed light on one branch of Norwegian friluftsliv which have been called "slow friluftsliv" (Abelsen, 2021, p. 61; Mytting & Bischoff, 2018, p. 178). It focuses on encountering nature and facilitating connection and awareness towards the diversity, ecology and atmosphere. It has its roots in Norwegian philosopher Arne

[15] I choose to use the Norwegian word because it seems to be a rather established word in English literature at this point (Hofmann et al., 2018). Friluftsliv can be described as a tradition of outdoor life/learning that emphasizes environmental awareness and joy of nature

Næss' (1912-2009) ecophilosophy in which a fundamental understanding is that we as humans are nature. Using expressions as "going into nature" therefore becomes contradictory when this perspective is applied, and a better understanding is that we "merge" or "come home" as informant 3 describes. With this understanding as a starting point, we can think of awareness towards nature as awareness towards ourselves. When we encounter nature, we encounter ourselves. Encountering nature in slow friluftsliv means slowing down the tempo and using the outdoor activities as a means to access experiences where nature-joy can develop, the nature awareness links us to the natural environment and the nature experience emerges through the learning process (Mytting & Bischoff, 2018, p. 180). In Scandinavian languages, we use the word "nærvær" in combination with nature, which translates to "presence" in English. But if we translate it literally, it means "near-being". Nature near-being is the goal of slow friluftsliv. To be near the surrounding nature – so near that we use the peace in the forest to find peace in ourselves. As the facilitator it means that one should give time and space for the participants to dwell in the experiences and use their senses. It is argued that when we slow down, more senses are activated and we become attentive to what we feel and our emotions (Mytting & Bischoff, 2018, p. 180). Arne Næss reasons that it is our emotions that put life in motion and that emotions and relationships "emerge from an encounter between ourselves-and-the-world[16]. (...) In a broad sense, those thoughts, emotions, and relationships with which we identify are, in other words, a part of ourselves." (Naess & Haukeland, 2002, p. 15). When applied to WT practice, it means that a part of the learning process should focus on encountering nature in a way that can bring about emotions of a different kind than everyday life does and establish a relationship between the participants and the surrounding nature. If successful, it can result in positive emotions and that the relationship with nature become an enduring part within the participant. But is "being in natural environments" passive experiences, and a contrast to actively doing activities?

The practice and learning processes related to slow friluftsliv introduces activities where awareness is created through interaction with nature. It can be listening to the life of the creek, tasting it, smelling it and paying attention to how the currents of water and who lives there. It can be to follow the creek to the place it originates thus letting the creek slowly guide the group through the natural environment. These are just some examples, and slow friluftsliv is not thought of as a compensation for activities, the social group aspects or gaining outdoor skills.

[16] Næss uses hyphens as a reminder that a sharp distinction between ourselves and the world cannot be made.

It is rather a didactical method explained as: "Didactics for slow friluftsliv concerns how one can adapt to a type of *activeness*, which means a near-being in nature that emphasizes sensing, nature knowledge[17], nature experience and the individual's relation to nature[18]" (Abelsen, 2021, pp. 61-62 (italics in original)). To consider "doing" as something active and "being" present in nature as contrasts might therefore not be helpful. Rather, "being" can be the most active state a person can be in. Næss in Naess & Haukeland (2002) gives an important understanding of the difference:

> "(…) closeness to Nature has unveiled a marked difference between being active in Nature through play and sport on the one hand and, on the other, experiencing Nature in a way that engages us completely as human beings. The latter attitude may well be consistent with physical activity, but more characteristically it is associated with lingering in silence— perhaps without so much as moving a little finger. A word or two, perhaps even a whole stream of thought might occur to one, but it is the pauses and the internal silence that are the hallmarks of this kind of relationship with Nature. From the outside one might not seem to be active, but as a person, one is completely absorbed. One's whole being is in reality activated in such circumstances, but outsiders do not necessarily perceive one to be in a state of activeness. The more usual state, activity, is concerned with that which is external, and we can be involved in all kinds of activity without being in a state of activeness." (Naess & Haukeland, 2002, p. 2)

This quotation supports what Informant 3 describes as "a lot happens when nothing happens," but instead of thinking of it as nothing happens, which relates to physical activity, we might consider it as activeness. Activeness relates to what happens internally in the person, and is a fundamental part of the therapy process in WT. Activity concerns the outer observational world, what the person is doing. Both can occur without the other, but they can also happen at the same time. If we separate "doing activities in nature" from "being in nature" it resembles a dualistic view: The body does, and the mind is. Instead, one can argue that WT, AT and outdoor learning practices in general should consider both "being" and "doing" as active embodied interactions with the environment, where the activeness can take different levels. This will be further debated in relation to experiential learning in the following section.

Australian outdoor education researcher Mike Brown (2009) suggests that embedded in experiential learning in outdoor practices are two problematic binaries, that work to quiet the connection between the individual and the natural places the learning is taking place and the

[17] Abelsen uses the word "naturkjennskap" It is not the exact same as nature knowledge. I interpret it as a personal, emotional knowledge that is felt and bring a feeling of knowing nature and belonging there.
[18] My translation from Norwegian.

ongoing engagement in communities of practices: 1) abstraction of meaning from the experience and 2) the learner from the situation in which the learning occurred (Brown, 2009, p. 6). He argues that the experiential learning cycles e.g., Kolb's (1984), have a "tendency to reinforce Cartesian mind-body split (reflection separated from concrete experience)" (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p. 47). Reflection or processing are often facilitated after an activity as a way to abstract (or extract) the meaning of the experience (Brown, 2009, p. 6). Because reflection is something deemed to occur inside the head, we tend to think of it as an internal psychological and cognitive process but that view contribute to "ignore the situational and embodied experience that give reflection its very character" (Wattchow & Brown, 2011, p. 47). Humans do not stop doing and reflect in vacuum nor do we stop reflecting when we are doing. In a recently published book on outdoor therapies, Peeters and Ringer (2020) writes about experiential facilitation outdoors in which they advocate for a shift towards a process-oriented framework. Such an approach aims at taking away the focus on completing certain tasks because it can hinder the participants from being in the here-and-now (Peeters & Ringer, 2021, p. 21). They specifically point out that prevailing literature on the more physical active outdoor therapy practices like WT an AT, aims mainly towards challenge, risk-taking, enduring and conquering and have overseen aspects like immersion and wondering (ibid., p. 24). Their description of facilitating nature immersion and wondering resembles the didactics of slow friluftsliv. The process-oriented practice place focus on noticing emotions and the body while doing an activity where the participant sets individual goals. Peeters and Ringer thus put emphasis on the facilitator's active engagement in every phase of the outdoor (therapy) programme by for example asking a participant to stop an action and turning attention inwards towards recurring thoughts, bodily sensations and feelings (ibid., p. 23). They explain the role of the facilitator in experiential learning:

> "In experiential facilitation, we are not non-directive, nor are we product-directive. We do no [sic] direct participants toward certain outcomes, but rather direct them where and how to place their attention. We avoid telling them what to see, we tell them where to look, and then we ask what they see" (Peeters & Ringer, 2021, p. 23).

The metaphor encompasses that all participants will "see" something different based on their preunderstandings and prior experiences. If we hike the same path as a group, all members will have a personal experience. It is not our job as facilitators to tell the participants what they experience but it is our job to provide manifold ways of being in and encountering nature and

allowing the participants to make meaning from them (Mytting & Bischoff, 2018, p. 180). “To a great degree we experience what we have learnt to experience, think what we have learnt to think and even feel what we have learnt to feel” (Tordsson, 2014, p. 33). If we only experience “doing” physical activity and overcoming challenges in nature, we might not notice the place next to the creek screaming silently for us to take a break and put our hot feet in the refreshing water. We might not look at the creek and wonder curiously where it comes from or where it leads to, rather, it may be seen a challenge we have to get over without getting wet feet. Both views can be learning processes and both approaches should be present in outdoor programmes. In the current project, both “being” and “doing” were facilitated to the participants and the therapists had many thoughts about why and how to facilitate those experiences. It was clear that “being” for many participants were a challenge in itself because it gave time and space for emotions and feelings to surface which were relatively suppressed while doing physical active activities. Doing activities together in the group, likewise, opened for new ways to experience oneself in relation to others. Both approaches facilitated great learning processes for the participants. To develop the learning approaches further, a combination of the two methods is suggested as an addition. In that sense, the activities should involve a greater interaction with nature and acknowledge the ongoing reflective state of the participants. The findings in this project thus supports Peeters and Ringer’s advocacy for a greater emphasis on nature immersive activities within WT and AT. It is also argued that the current articulation of “doing” as an active state and “being” as a rather inactive state should be reconsidered for the immersive activities to gain further recognition within the field of outdoor learning and therapy in the outdoors.

9.3 Linking outdoor education and wilderness therapy

As presented in the introduction, the UK Institute of Outdoor Learning published a Statement of Good Practice for therapeutic interventions in nature. They argue that WT demands formal competencies within both psychotherapy and outdoor learning (Richards et al., 2020). Previous literature within the field of WT and AT have argued that to be a practitioner, the individual should have education within both psychotherapy and outdoor education (Crisp, 1998) or as a minimum be cross-trained (Berman & Davis-Berman, 2013; Norton et al., 2014). This question is referred to as an eagerly debated topic in the field (Fernee, Gabrielsen, & Andersen, 2015). As the present analysis shows, this is not the belief in neither Spain nor Norway. The informants

convey that the therapists must feel comfortable in nature and have skills enough to attend to the participants and ensure safety and learning. Yet, a wish for more pedagogical knowledge is expressed and that practitioners handling the outdoor safety is hired in externally.

Instead of expecting each individual WT practitioner to be able to manage every part of the programme, the WT field might benefit from interdisciplinary cooperation between psychologists, outdoor educators, social workers etc. Literature dealing with interdisciplinary cooperation provides the understanding that different disciplines have different priorities, different thinking styles, and different values (Kim, 1995, p. 304). When different disciplines cooperate towards a collected whole it can result in a synergetic effect. In WT practice the therapists are indispensable due to the severity of the participants' mental health issues which goes beyond the scope of formal outdoor education. That said, the current research finds many well facilitated and thought through outdoor learning activities but also certain areas where the practice could be enhanced by professional outdoor learning competencies. Examples are thorough planning to allow for pre-considered improvisation or intentional use of activities to promote relationship and awareness towards nature or to encourage certain emotional responses in the individual. The UK Institute of Outdoor Learning (2020) argue the use of professional psychotherapeutic and outdoor learning expertise in WT practice. Whilst they recommend that providers of mental health interventions using the outdoors utilise a team approach or holding a broad set of skills (p. 4).

A suggestion for future development is close cooperation between psychotherapeutic and outdoor learning professionals in developing and carrying out WT programmes in Europe. Letting the different fields of practice go beyond "meeting" and instead overlapping, have the potential to create a synergetic effect. Interdisciplinary cooperation increases the scope of competencies and can enable both improved mental health and provide the participants with deep lasting relationship with nature that can become an individual mastery strategy after the WT programmes.

10 Evaluation of theory and discussion of method

10.1 Evaluation of theory

The theories used to analyse the empirical data was selected based on the major themes and sub-themes created from the thematic coding. In the following chapter, I will shed light on what they could show and their limitations.

10.1.1 Illeris' comprehensive learning theory

Illeris' theory explains how the different learning situations can initiate incentives of different characters in the participants. It brings awareness to the participant's emotional state in the learning situation because it will influence the learning content and whether or how it will be recalled in other situations. Illeris' incorporation of Piaget's learning types provides a useful analytical tool for understanding how much energy a learning situation demands of the participants. It also elucidates the progression of activities in the WT programmes and how all aspects of the environment dimension provide stimuli and impact the incentive. If a demanding learning activity is facilitated with doubt, it will not be accepted.

The participants' sensitivity towards their surroundings and connecting the perceived stimuli to the inner motivational, emotional and volitional patterns seems to be a relatively unavailable process at the beginning of the programmes. To help the participants open up towards the surroundings and their emotions, the therapists teach them to be present and perceive. This is a learning process in itself, but a better description of the incentive dimension would be needed to go deeper into how the different learning situations promote different incentive responses. Illeris does not distinguish motivation, volition and emotion responses in his descriptions. To implement another theory, for example, self-determination theory would have been a helpful perspective to describe how different situations and facilitation techniques provoke different responses.

In addition, interpretation of the empirical data showed that the learning processes in WT take time. One of the powerful aspects of the treatment is that the therapists and participants are together over time. The temporal dimension of the learning situation is not included in Illeris' theory. It is also not clear if the three dimensions can be interpreted as a continuous process where the participants move back and forth in the interaction and acquisition processes, e.g.

that new stimuli can change the initial incentive response; or, if one can use an expression as "profound incentive" to explain a long-standing and continuous learning process as I do in the present thesis.

Illeris theory explains the fundamental structures of the learning processes in WT, but to interpret concrete learning situations, an additional theory seems necessary. Therefore, Lave and Wenger's theories were included.

10.1.2 Lave and Wenger's situated learning theories

Lave and Wenger's situated learning theories are analytical tools to understand social learning processes. They have received criticism for not including the cognitive dimension of learning from other theorists (Illeris, 2012, p. 141). But, in the current thesis, where the therapists' descriptions and meanings make up the empirical data, the theories provided good concepts to interpret the learning processes.

The theories explain how the WT group moves from reserved individuals to a coherent community sharing a co-created practice. It shows how mutual accountability and a sense of belonging are created through shared histories of learning and how the participants' differences are key to the learning process. Negotiation of meaning is likewise a useful concept to understand how the therapists facilitate reflections and use metaphors.

Concerning Wenger's concept of community of practice, it has a somewhat unclear definition. It can therefore be discussed whether a WT group is considered a community of practice. Since other researchers have applied the theory to outdoor education groups (Brown, 2009) I found it legitimate to use in this research.

Lave and Wenger's situated learning theories do not include the physical world – except for tools and artefacts – which is a shortage when dealing with learning in the natural environment. To respond to this scarcity, I included Björn Tordsson's perspective on outdoor learning.

10.1.3 Björn Tordsson's immanent pedagogics in outdoor learning

Tordsson writes in the introduction to his book that it should not be used as a template for research since it is not written in an academic format (Tordsson, 2014, p. 9). The book is based on theory but mainly on his many years of experience with facilitating outdoor education. Nonetheless, I have included his perspective because I believe that experience is essential when dealing with experiential learning and facilitation. Tordsson describes specific learning situations and how to facilitate and understand them, but I have chosen to call it a perspective rather than a theory.

Tordsson's phronetic facilitator emphasises essential abilities when facilitating outdoor learning and brings out some of the therapist's values. It explains what the encounter with nature can teach us and what the small group can provide the participants in WT.

In the process of interpretation, I have tested out several different theories to see what they would explain. I acknowledge that my choice of theories is dependent on my horizon of knowledge and that there very well can be other theories that could explain the themes differently and maybe better.

10.2 Discussion of the methodology

10.2.1 Role of the researcher

The hermeneutic approach to this inquiry means that I, as the author, constitute both the strengths and limitations of the study. Throughout the entire research process, I have strived after self-awareness and critical reflection towards my presumptions, background and beliefs. As an outdoor educator working with learning processes and being very fond of nature, my background could arguably influence my view and interpretation. Additionally, I have spent most of my life in the Scandinavian nature and the cultural tradition related to nature in those countries, which showed great difference to the Spanish socio-cultural relation to nature. To enhance my awareness of my understandings of the field, I have continuously written down presumptions, new insights, questions and possible interpretations. This process started before the first meeting with the interviewees and has resulted in a back-and-forth movement between newly gained and prior understandings with reflections about why this understanding emerged.

The interviews aimed to ask questions of curiosity and included questions from my horizon of understanding to investigate the informants' meaning towards them. This is in line with Gadamer's approach to understanding, in that, he claims pre-understanding have to be tested out on the case itself to find out if it is true (Gadamer, 2004, p. 305). Mostly, my views were negotiated and more or less declined but gave way to different perspectives and new understanding. In that way, my background has also been a strength in the interpretation process and has brought out perspectives I could not have gained without my presumptions and background. The prolonged iterative process likewise made it possible to ask additional clarifying questions to the informants when new understandings arose.

Overall, this body of research has been co-created between the informants, the participants and me. I acknowledge that the findings, in line with the philosophical hermeneutics, have a subjective character. Another researcher would probably have noted different aspects of the fieldwork and empirical data and asked other questions. Yet, I view this as one way of understanding the learning processes in European WT practice. It puts forward a perspective and contributes to possible ways of understanding the learning processes in WT. It is thereby not the intention to generalise the finding to all other WT programmes.

10.2.2 Time

When I entered the WT field and did my observations of the context and the following interviews in 2018, the thesis was never intended to be delayed. It is definitely a critique of present research because outdoor mental health interventions have seen exponential growth over recent years (Richards et al., 2020, p. 1) and a vast development in research. Since 2018 two key books partly dealing with the inquiry of this thesis have been published.

10.2.3 Sample size

The present thesis is based on context-specific dialogues with four informants. A larger sample size could possibly have included more perspectives. As stated by Fernee et al., the qualitative studies in the field of WT "are commonly based on small purposive sample sizes that cannot necessarily be generalised beyond the actual programs and its participants [or therapists]" (Fernee et al., 2017, p. 127) which is also the case for the current study. I prioritised in-depth interviews and partaking in the field over doing only interviews with a larger sample size. Looking back from my current understanding, I believe this was the right choice, but I would have liked to include a programme from one more European country in the research.

11 Conclusion

The thesis' objective was to understand WT in a European context from a learning perspective. This was found relevant due to the limited amount of research literature dealing in-depth with learning processes in WT. A substantial part of existing literature concerns the psychological outcome of programmes situated in America.

The hermeneutic approach emphasises the relationship between the context and the meanings conveyed in the interviews. Participating in the field with the informants before interviewing them allowed me to experience the WT programmes, feel the atmosphere and notice interesting learning situations, which were then elaborated on in the interviews. This has been vital for my understanding of the field and the interpretation. After the first interpretation of the empirical data, additional insights and understandings were gained when I was reinterviewing two of the informants.

From my fieldwork experiences and the interpretation of the interview material, two main themes stand out as fundamental for the learning processes – the situatedness and the relations formed over time.

The uniqueness of the WT practice compared to traditional indoor psychotherapy is the relationship the client and therapist form. Being together day and night in nature for a week provides a potential for genuinely getting to know each other. The therapist gets to experience the participant's strengths and struggles first-hand instead of the participant talking about them in an office setting. When situations where complicated feelings, strengths, conflicts etc., occur, the therapists can assist the participant in the situation they appear in and thereby provide learning situations.

At the same time, the participant can get to know the therapist as a person instead of a professional. The interpretation demonstrations the importance of creating as equal a relation as possible in the therapy setting. This relationship is essential for the participants to enter demanding learning processes and challenging activities facilitated by the therapist.

The interpretation shows that creating a sense of belonging in the group is essential for the learning process. Being in remote nature is a catalyst for this process because it obliges the

group members to solve problems through communicating and cooperating. This dependency on each other establishes mutual accountability where the participants engage themselves and develop caring relationships.

Being situated in a group of peers shows that the participants are learning resources for each other. Their holistic interplay provides opportunities to experience themselves through peers. This is done by having different roles in the group, negotiating the meaning of the shared experiences and giving each other feedback and support.

The therapists also learn from being situated in a group of participants and co-therapists. Their programmes have developed based on the experiences they have gained from prior participants. For every WT group they facilitate, new experience, insight and knowledge is gained. An essential part of their competencies can be described as phronetic knowledge, where they anticipate the possible outcomes of a situation and act intuitively based on their experience.

In addition, the interpretation shows that there is important learning in the encounter with nature. At the beginning of the programmes, the participants are relatively shut down towards their surroundings and themselves. Therefore, an important learning process is to create basic awareness of nature through the senses, which develop both their internal and external sensitivity. Nature's simplicity and peace, compared to urban life, provides broader and stronger feelings. The greatest challenge for most participants is to just be present in the peace. This finding contrasts most WT and AT literature depicting overcoming challenging outdoor activities as the primary learning.

The informants' practice-based experiences have placed a greater emphasis on "being" rather than "doing" in their programmes. This project suggests a merge of "doing" and "being" through which outdoor activities are used as a means to access experiences where nature awareness links the participants to the natural environment.

Facilitation in WT aims at easing the learning and healing processes for the participants. It manoeuvres between the individual participants and the group as a whole and is a constant ponderation of the situation. The therapists provide different activities as the programme progresses, which are interpreted as a progression where more demanding learning processes are introduced gradually.

From the meanings conveyed by the four informants, WT programmes in the US are substantially different from European WT. It is especially pronounced concerning nature's role in the therapy where nature is thought to create disequilibrium in the participants. In the two European programmes, humans are viewed as part of nature, therefore providing the WT participants with equilibrium as a contrast from urban life. However, the Spanish and Norwegian WT programmes are also distinct in some respects. Mainly in areas related to socio-cultural traditions and laws, which suggests that Norway has more lenient regulations and a cultural history allowing closer relation to nature. The socio-cultural differences questions whether it is legitimate to refer to WT in Europe as one collected concept. There are more similarities than differences, but the differences are necessary and developed in accordance with the mental health needs, norms and nature in the respective countries.

WT appears to be a potent treatment modality for adolescents suffering from various mental health problems, provided that they choose to participate voluntarily. For most of the participants, it is a demanding process to partake in group therapy. When the treatment, in addition, takes place in remote nature, a fundamental incentive is a prerequisite to engage in the learning processes actively.

A suggested future perspective based on the findings in this thesis and recently published recommendations from the UK Outdoor Learning Institute is to merge the professional fields of psychotherapy and outdoor learning further. The two areas seem to benefit positively from interdisciplinary cooperation, potentially enhancing both the therapy and learning processes in WT.

12 Literature

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13 Annexes

Annex 1: Ethical approval from NSD

Annette Bischoff

3800 BØ I TELEMARK

Vår dato: 05.07.2018 Vår ref: 60841 / 3 / HJT Deres dato: Deres ref:

Vurdering fra NSD Personvernombudet for forskning § 31

Personvernombudet for forskning viser til meldeskjema mottatt 22.05.2018 for prosjektet:

60841	*En kvalitativ undersøkelse av pedgogiske perspektiver i Wilderness Therapy*
Behandlingsansvarlig	*Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge, ved institusjonens øverste leder*
Daglig ansvarlig	*Annette Bischoff*
Student	*Sophia Hjorth*

Vurdering

Etter gjennomgang av opplysningene i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon finner vi at prosjektet er meldepliktig og at personopplysningene som blir samlet inn i dette prosjektet er regulert av personopplysningsloven § 31. På den neste siden er vår vurdering av prosjektopplegget slik det er meldt til oss. Du kan nå gå i gang med å behandle personopplysninger.

Vilkår for vår anbefaling

Vår anbefaling forutsetter at du gjennomfører prosjektet i tråd med:

- opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon
- vår prosjektvurdering, se side 2
- eventuell korrespondanse med oss

Vi forutsetter at du ikke innhenter sensitive personopplysninger.

Meld fra hvis du gjør vesentlige endringer i prosjektet

Dersom prosjektet endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å sende inn endringsmelding. På våre nettsider finner du svar på hvilke endringer du må melde, samt endringsskjema.

Opplysninger om prosjektet blir lagt ut på våre nettsider og i Meldingsarkivet

Vi har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet på nettsidene våre. Alle våre institusjoner har også tilgang til egne prosjekter i Meldingsarkivet.

Vi tar kontakt om status for behandling av personopplysninger ved prosjektslutt

Ved prosjektslutt 01.01.2019 vil vi ta kontakt for å avklare status for behandlingen av

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS Harald Hårfagres gate 29 Tel: +47-55 58 21 17 nsd@nsd.no Org.nr. 985 321 884
NSD – Norwegian Centre for Research Data NO-5007 Bergen, NORWAY Faks: +47-55 58 96 50 www.nsd.no

personopplysninger.

Se våre nettsider eller ta kontakt dersom du har spørsmål. Vi ønsker lykke til med prosjektet!

Dag Kiberg

Håkon Jørgen Tranvåg

Kontaktperson: Håkon Jørgen Tranvåg tlf: 55 58 20 43 / Hakon.Tranvag@nsd.no

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering
Kopi: Sophia Hjorth, sophiahjorth@gmail.com

Personvernombudet for forskning

Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 60841

Du har opplyst i meldeskjema at utvalget vil motta skriftlig og muntlig informasjon om prosjektet, og samtykke skriftlig til å delta. Vår vurdering er at informasjonsskrivet til utvalget er godt utformet.

Personvernombudet forutsetter at du behandler alle data i tråd med Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge sine retningslinjer for datahåndtering og informasjonssikkerhet. Vi legger til grunn at bruk av mobil lagringsenhet er i samsvar med institusjonens retningslinjer.

Du har opplyst i meldeskjema at personopplysninger publiseres. Personvernombudet har lagt til grunn at du innhenter samtykke fra den enkelte informanten til publiseringen. Vi anbefaler at hver enkelt informant får anledning til å lese og godkjenne sine opplysninger før publisering.

Prosjektslutt er oppgitt til 01.01.2019. Det fremgår av meldeskjema og informasjonsskriv at du vil anonymisere datamaterialet ved prosjektslutt.
Anonymisering innebærer vanligvis å:
- slette direkte identifiserbare opplysninger som navn, fødselsnummer, koblingsnøkkel
- slette eller omskrive/gruppere indirekte identifiserbare opplysninger som bosted/arbeidssted, alder, kjønn
- slette lydopptak

For en utdypende beskrivelse av anonymisering av personopplysninger, se Datatilsynets veileder:
https://www.datatilsynet.no/globalassets/global/regelverk-skjema/veiledere/anonymisering-veileder-041115.pdf

Annex 2: Information letter to informants

Request for participation in research project

"A qualitative study of pedagogical perspectives in Wilderness therapy"

Background and Purpose

Wilderness therapy is a widespread and growing treatment modality that has progressed over several decades. This group-based therapeutic model combines the restorative qualities of nature with structured and intentional therapeutic work. Wilderness therapy includes learning of basic outdoor recreation skills and nature activities.

According to the research studies, there seems to be a limited knowledge of what actually takes place in the wilderness therapy practice and what characterizes the therapist's pedagogical work. Meanwhile, previous research within the field has expressed a request for further investigation on the wilderness therapy content and how it is facilitated.

The purpose of this study is to understand and explain what wilderness therapy involves from a pedagogical perspective. The study investigates wilderness therapy in general based on literature and through concrete examples from a Norwegian and a Spanish practice. The object of interest is the therapists, their pedagogics and reflections about their work.

The study is a master's thesis research project on the master's programme in Outdoor Studies at the University of South-Eastern Norway.

The sample of persons requested to participate are therapists at established wilderness therapy programmes in Norway and Spain respectively.

What does participation in the project imply?

Participation in this study involves a qualitative interview. The questions will concern your pedagogical work in the wilderness therapy programme. The questions will be based on a literature study and a participating observation as a preliminary study. The intention of the preliminary study is to give the researcher an understanding of the field and a foundation for the interview questions.

The manner in which the data will be collected is audio recordings on a dictaphone. The recordings will later be transcribed.

What will happen to the information about you?

All personal data will be treated confidentially. Only the student and supervisor will have access to personal data. The recordings will be stored on a secured computer without names and recognizable data.

The participants will not be recognizable in the publication but, if agreed to, the researcher would like to use the name of the wilderness therapy programmes the therapists work at.

The project is scheduled for completion by January 2019. By project completion the data will be made anonymous and the recordings will be deleted.

Voluntary participation

It is voluntary to participate in the project, and you can at any time choose to withdraw your consent without stating any reason. If you decide to withdraw, all your personal data will be made anonymous.

If you would like to participate or if you have any questions concerning the project, please contact project leader/student Sophia Hjorth or supervisor Annette Bischoff

The study has been notified to the Data Protection Official for Research, NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data.

Consent for participation in the study

I have received information about the project and am willing to participate

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(Signed by participant, date)