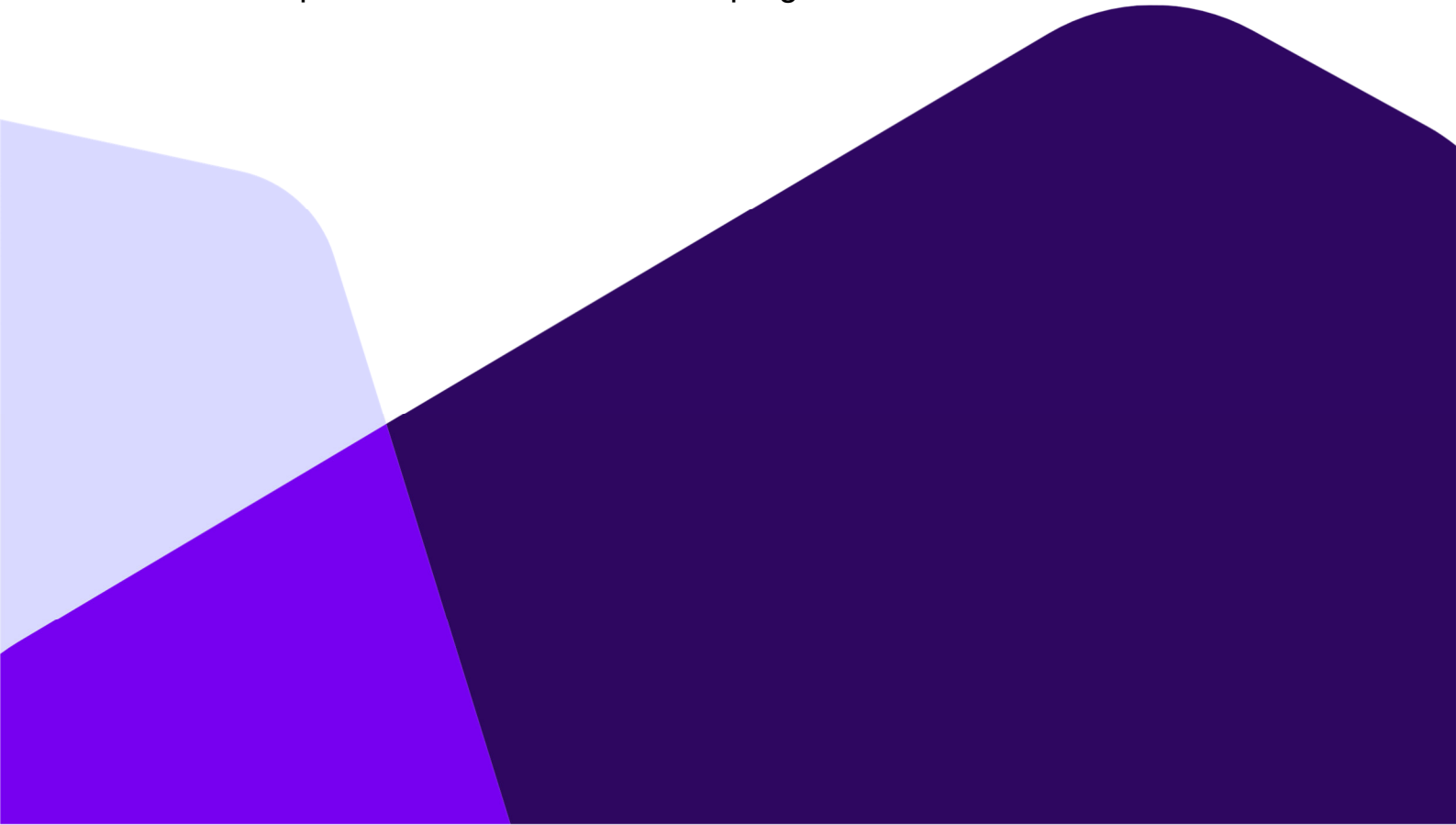


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Pupils and their Places

A phenomenological case study exploring pupils' experience of place within a place-based outdoor school program.



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This thesis is worth 30 study points.

Summary

In an age characterized by industrialization, globalization and accelerated travel, the importance of our immediate surroundings often goes unnoticed. The local environment in which we live and with which we interact on a daily basis is often only perceived as a backdrop to our activities and not as an important part of our lives. Place-based education (PBE) addresses this by emphasizing the importance of connecting students to their local environment in order to develop active, environmentally aware and engaged citizens who care about both their social and natural world. However, PBE sometimes overlooks the subjective nature of 'place', which is experienced uniquely by each individual. This master's thesis narrows the gap between a holistic understanding of place and the practical application of PBE by examining the experiences of students in a place-based outdoor school program. The research aims to provide detailed descriptions of the elements that make up these place experiences and their contribution to PBE. To achieve this, four focus group interviews and observations of two outdoor school days were conducted. The data was analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). The results show that students engage with place through exploration and play, experiencing moments of risk, fascination and discomfort. These experiences foster familiarity and a deeper understanding of their place. The following themes for PBE programs can be derived from the results: Promote engagement, assessing risk, supporting fascination, managing discomfort, promoting familiarity and meeting needs.

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Cornelius Fabian Richter

1 Introduction

The term “Anthropocene” refers to our current age and emphasizes the significant impact that humanity has had on the earth. Our construction, travel and economic activities have reshaped the planet and disconnected us from natural influences. We rely on fossil fuels for heating and air travel, yet the increasing frequency of natural disasters shows that our control is only an illusion. Greenhouse gas emissions are rising rapidly, contributing to rising global temperatures and sea levels. At the same time, modern society is facing ever greater health and social challenges. Researchers such as van den Bosch et al. (2018) argue that these problems are due to a culturally induced disconnect between nature and humans. This disconnection is at the heart of our environmental crisis. Jickling (2004) points to the problematic dichotomy between nature and society, and Kareiva (2008) says that our increasing detachment from nature may be the greatest environmental threat we face. Given these circumstances, the question arises: how can we effectively address this disconnection? Balmford and Cowling (2006) argue that without a direct connection to nature, the public is unlikely to participate meaningfully in sustainability efforts. Therefore, it is important to reconnect people with nature. I see great potential in our education system. Schools don’t just reflect society, they shape it. We need to start redefining our relationship with nature at the educational system level in order to reach and shape an entire generation. Sobel (2004) argues for a place-based approach to education that “helps students develop stronger ties to their community, enhances students’ appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens” (p. 7). However, the concept of ‘place’ in place-based education (PBE) can be problematic. Van Eijck and Roth (2010) note that the term ‘the natural world’ overlooks the fact that place cannot be viewed objectively but must always be considered in the context of individual, social and cultural background. As each person experiences the world in a unique way, a deeper understanding of ‘place’ and how it is experienced is crucial to the promotion of place-based education. This thesis explores students’ experiences of place within an outdoor place-based program, applying a phenomenological perspective to examine the complex concept of place and explore students’ world. Furthermore, this thesis aims to highlight potential issues and suggestions for place-based education in order to improve its practical application. In the following section, I will discuss my personal motivation for this thesis and explain my background. Furthermore, the research topic and context will be explained, and the structure of the thesis will be described.

Personal motivation

As this work uses an interpretative phenomenological approach, this section not only sets out my personal motivation, but also introduces me as a researcher. I have written this thesis and am therefore also a part of it. In order to understand and interpret the results of this study, it is important to know who the person who wrote it was. When I think back to my childhood, I realize that although I don't consider my parents to be nature-loving people, they showed me from the beginning how beautiful it is to be in nature. I don't consider them outdoor people because we never participated in advanced and probably riskier outdoor sports. But we just enjoyed being outside, hiking in Switzerland, fishing in Norway or roasting marshmallows over the fire in our own backyard. Growing up at a time when digital media was becoming increasingly popular, my mother always sent us outside to play and limited the use of devices such as TV, Game Boy or Playstation. But in hindsight, I understand and appreciate this, as I have fond memories of forays into the nearby woods, collecting chestnuts and building tree houses with friends. In my teenage years, there was a shift from outdoor play to the comforts of home. Although I enjoyed sports and played many different sports, at this time I had no exposure to outdoor sports that I would have liked to do. But I spent a lot of my time in my youth organization. There I organized weekly group lessons for younger children and also helped organize summer camps. I particularly enjoyed my time at the camps, despite the long days, lots of responsibility and stress, it was a great time. Sleeping in tents, showering in the nearby river, enjoying the sun and working with children. At that time, I already knew that I wanted to become a teacher but didn't see the possibility of combining these two favorite activities, outdoor and teaching. I then studied physics and sport in Freiburg (Germany) to become a teacher. Through my sports studies, I came into contact with many outdoor enthusiasts and sometimes took part in bouldering or overnight hikes. I also found people in physics who shared my fascination for bike tours. So, I slowly but surely came more and more into contact with different ways of being in nature, but still didn't think about making this my profession. That changed when I found out about this Master's program during my Erasmus stay in Stockholm. I heard from friends that there were several outdoor programs for Erasmus students in Norway, so I applied for it. Unfortunately, I was not accepted to the "great" outdoor programs (like in Bø or Oslo) but was assigned to Stockholm. It's no secret that this Master's program I took is very theoretical and there are hardly any actual outdoor trips. But step by step, I delved deeper into the "more-than-human world" and "deep ecology" and other concepts that I could barely grasp until then. Now I realized that my profession as a teacher and my interest in nature was not necessarily tied to

the tough outdoor sports, and the idea of becoming an outdoor educator popped into my head. Because I liked the topics, the people, and the course so much, I also took the second semester in Bø and finally got fully involved. Now I see this Master's as a big part of my journey to implement outdoor pedagogy and certainly place-based education in my profession as a teacher. It has inspired me to promote these concepts in Germany and to strengthen children's relationship with nature, themselves, and the world. In the end, it wasn't misfortune that I was sent to Stockholm, but rather luck.

Research question.

Drawing on the theory of PBE and the various concepts of place outlined in chapter 2, this thesis attempts to bridge the gap between a deep understanding of place as a multi-layered, subjective, and diverse entity and the practical realm of place-based approaches. A deeper understanding of place, and place experiences in particular, contributes to an improvement of place-based outdoor programs. In precise, this study aims to explore the elements of children's experience of place. To this end, an outdoor school program at a German high school is examined. Observations and focus group interviews are used to gain insights into the students' lifeworld in order to answer the guiding research questions:

1. What elements compose a student's experience of place within a place-based outdoor education program?
2. How can these findings contribute to place-based education programs?

To further answer these questions, detailed descriptions of the findings are provided. These findings are then contextualized by drawing on existing theories of place and relationship between humans and place to formulate questions and suggestions for more practical application in place-based programs.

Organization of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. In this chapter, I introduce the aim and research question of the study by placing it in a wider context and also explaining my personal motivation and background, which is important for the interpretative phenomenological position of the study. The second chapter presents an overview over the existing literature on

place-based education and the concept of place. In doing so, I focus on various concepts from different perspectives that exist on the subject of place and how they relate to each other in order to deepen the understanding of place as an existential part of human life. In the third chapter, I outline the conceptual framework, the general research position of phenomenology, how place is understood in this thesis, and the outdoor school program under study is explained and reviewed for its alignment with PBE principles. Chapter four provides an overview of the overarching research design and presents the methods chosen for data collection and analysis. The process of data analysis and collection, the way in which I approached my participants and ethical considerations are also explained. Chapter five highlights the themes that emerged from the interpretative phenomenological analysis and provides a detailed description of how the students experienced the place. Chapter six discusses the results and places them in the context of the theoretical background. It also discusses the limitations of this study and makes suggestions for further research. The seventh chapter summarizes the thesis by highlighting the aim of the study, giving a brief overview of the methods, and summarizing the results to answer the guiding research questions.

2 Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the existing literature and the most important concepts for this thesis. In order to understand the wider context in which this work is set, a few topics need to be addressed. Firstly, the concept of outdoor education is explained. Secondly, the concept of place-based education is discussed, where it comes from and what the most important aspects are. Finally, in order to make the actual phenomenon to be examined more concise, the term “place” is shed light on the question of what place means and what concepts exist.

Outdoor education

Outdoor Education (OE) is a multifaceted term that encompasses various images and concepts ranging from learning in the natural environment to the development of personal and social skills. Despite its broad application, establishing a definitive description of OE has proven to be a complex challenge. In the past, there have been very different definitions of OE. Ford (1981, cited in Martin, 2005) broad description, conceptualizes OE as “education in, for, and about the outdoors” (p. 28). Hanna (1991) offers a more detailed perspective, defining OE as all activities and processes which rely, at least in part, on the natural environment and which are oriented to enhancing the individual’s achievement of variety of educational objectives” (p. 4). These attempts illustrate the scope of OE but may not satisfy all practitioners and researchers. Wattchow and Brown (2011) even argue that finding a clear definition is futile. A useful metaphor to describe OE is to compare it to an umbrella, a concept further developed by Bisson (1996). In this analogy, the shaft of the umbrella stands for OE itself, while the ribs symbolize related pedagogical approaches such as environmental education, earth education, and wilderness education. These methods are summarized under the term “experiential education”, emphasizing the importance of direct experience in the learning process. Despite these similarities, the various approaches within OE pursue different goals. Originally, the focus was on personal and social development. Over time, however, the focus has shifted to promoting environmental awareness and sustainability (Lugg, 1998). This shift has fueled debate within the OE community and led to the introduction of new paradigms, such as PBE, advocated by Sobel (2004), and place-based education, introduced by Cameron (2001). Out-of-school education is a dynamic and wide-ranging field that encompasses a range of methods and theories applicable in formal,

informal, and non-formal educational settings. This paper adopts a broad definition of OE as a formal educational program that is based on experiential learning and takes place primarily outdoors. This definition emphasizes the term “outdoor” to include both natural and man-made environments and to highlight the diverse contexts in which OE can be implemented. In exploring specific approaches within OE, it is important to understand the complexity and evolving nature of its aims and methods.

Place-based education

Like the name reveals PBE highlights the place of learning as crucial. According to Yemini et al. (2023), PBE, like OE, is an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of pedagogical practices that emphasize experiential and contextualized learning and involve the community in school practice. The origin of it dates back to the 1990's where critique against the dominant form of OE practice arose (Yemini et al., 2023). Some authors questioned the current practice and argued that it would deny place and its significance. One point of criticism was the focus on adventure and risk as pedagogical practice (e.g. Martin and Priest, 1986) which promised outcomes like more self-esteem and social skills. One insinuation was that this approach always comes with imperialistic metaphors and would lead the participant to see nature as something we can conquer (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). In the sense of adventure, the place and locations are becoming just backdrops rather than places. Another critique point was the romanticized representation of nature. While the romantic movement the image of the outdoors was shifted towards as something wild and untamed or as Gill (1999) states, a placeless and universalized wild nature. This image led to the belief that nature is something totally different from human and wilderness is only achieved by the absence of humans (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). This sharp distinction of human and nature contributes to a dichotomy which in turn neglects the deep connection humans have to place. Rose (1996, cited in Wattchow & Brown, 2011) states that due to this view on nature, the settlers in Australia developed an entirely different relationship to the place as the indigenous people did. The indigenous people, lived in a reciprocal relationship with their place, where the one cares for the other.

All those critiques nourished the seed of a new approach towards a place-based way of education. Inspired by PBE many authors elaborated on the ideas and became great advocates of it (e.g. Gruenwald (2003a, 2003b), Smith (2002), Sobel (2004) and Orr (1992, 2013)). Over the years many different approaches to PBE were developed but we can find

quite some common goals they focus on. Authors like Gruenwald (2003a) and G. A. Smith and Sobel (2010) emphasized on experiential and community-based learning to achieve the goal of fostering pupil's sense of civic identity. They wanted the students to become more engaged in the community and argue therefore for a stronger cooperation of communities and schools. This emphasis on the community goes almost inevitably hand in hand with a sharp environmental focus. Thus, PBE is concerned with the environment and seeks to educate students to environmental citizens (Schild, 2016). In fact, PBE was conceived as a kind of countermovement, as the modern lifestyle has led to a detachment from the places that surround us (Nolan, 2015). This detachment can be seen in the way we treat nature, in the industrialization as well as in our educational system. Our place where we live is no longer the source of food, water and so on, and so the importance of place will be ignored by educational institutions (Orr, 1992). This is one reason why PBE advocates criticized many aspects of the formal education sector like schools and universities. Gruenewald and Smith (2008) state that formal education tends to neglect social engagement, focusing instead on meeting academic standards and preparing students for global economic competition. Also G. A. Smith and Sobel (2010, cited in Nolan, 2015) agree that the "alienation of children and youth from the real world right outside their homes and classrooms" (p.12) is an immense problem. To counteract this trend, PBE seeks to use the local community and environment to teach subjects such as math and science through real-world experiences. This approach improves academic performance, strengthens bonds with the community, increases appreciation for nature and promotes active citizenship. There are studies in the PBE literature that show the positive effects PBE can have. Powers (2004) found that students with special needs performed better in a place-based program than in the regular setting and that student motivation was generally higher. They paid more attention to the lessons, which was also reflected in their performance. Based on his study, Tanner (1980) found that childhood experiences of nature are the most important factor in the development of environmental awareness and interest. This finding was also confirmed by Palmer (1993). So PBE does well to emphasize going outdoors and argue for it. We see, PBE is a concept that makes use of the environment we live in and highlights the importance of place and community for us. But critics of PBE pointed to a lack of a sufficient definition of place. So, what is place and how can it be defined?

The concepts of place

Place is a quite vague concept, not only in our everyday language but even in the literature. That is because the concept of place has been approached from many different fields like geography (Relph, 1997), anthropology (Ingold, 2009), sociology (Gieryn, 2000) and psychology (Canter, 1997). Therefore, it is difficult if not impossible to find a common definition of place. However, the following is an overview of important contributions to the concept of the place in order to provide a better understanding and insight into the essential features of the place.

Origin of place in research

Two of the first and important authors who elaborated about the conception of place were Edward Relph (1976) and Yi-Fu Tuan (1974, 1977). They sought to conventionalize place not as a plain three-dimensional object but as an inevitable condition of human life. Through their work they created a whole new basis for place from a humanistic viewpoint searching for what place means to humans (Nolan, 2015). Their understanding of place is based on the idea that thinking about place is thinking about our world. We are embedded in place and place surrounds us. Therefore, place is an essential component of our lives and us. Those ideas and approaches are founded in the thinking of Martin Heidegger. Heidegger (1962) influenced the work of them by introducing and coining certain terms and concepts such as for *Lebenswelt* or *Dasein*. *Lebenswelt*, literally "Lifeworld", hereby describes the world of our direct lived experience before we have ever thought about it (Abram, 1996). The world is therefore prior to our perception and is before we can philosophize about it. This aspect is essential also for the understanding of place. Place in that sense is quite similar to world because it is there before we give meaning to it. *Dasein*, or in English "being there", is well described in the book of Heidegger (1962), *Being and Time*. In it, he explores the question of how we exist in our world and what it means to be. He points out that we as human beings are placed in this world and are immersed in it. One aspect of being is to be somewhere, or to be there (*Dasein*). Therefore, place is an essential part of our human life. We are shaped by place and help to shape it. Heidegger's new way of thinking not only challenged Western philosophy, i.e. the separation of mind and body, subject and object, but also influenced and established further research and concepts. To come back to Relph and Tuan: They build on Heidegger's ideas and have made an important contribution in this field. An important contribution of Tuan (1977) was the differentiation and definition of space and place. In his

view, space was the "abstraction of spatial science, whereas place is amenable to discussions of value and belonging" (Nolan, 2015, p. 24). Space and place are seen as two different things that need each other to be defined. To better understand what Tuan meant, he assigned words such as movement and action to space, while place is more synonymous with resting or being involved. So, it is not just the physical appearance that determines what is what, but the relationship between people and space/place. Tuan also pointed to our changing lifestyles where we travel so fast and don't rest long enough to engage and connect with a place. His idea was that by spending time in a place, one can develop an affective bond with it, which he called "topophilia" Edward Relph made a great contribution to the conception of place with his doctoral dissertation 1973 and some years later his book *Place and Placelessness* (Relph, 1976). Like Tuan, he defines place in contrast to space whereby space and place are seen as a spectrum. Relph deals with the question how people and place are entangled. To better describe the profound relationship between humans and place, he introduced the concept of insideness and outsideness. These words should help to understand the "particular place experiences in terms of the intensity of meaning and intention that a person and place hold for each other" (Seamon & Sowers, 2008, p. 45). With insideness Relph referred to the degree a person identifies with or feels attached to a place. If a person feels safe, enclosed, and relaxed, they feel inside a place, or insideness. In contrast outsideness is when people feel threatened, exposed, and stressed. The feeling of insideness and outsideness describes a fundamental dialectic in human life. And due to the different levels of perceived intensity of insideness or outsideness, people, whether individually or in groups, experience places completely differently and in connection with a variety of feelings and perceptions (Seamon & Sowers, 2008). Apart from geography, other fields of science have also dealt with place and its complex nature. Tim Ingold (2009), for example, who comes from the field of anthropology, has described one aspect of place very well, namely its fluid and unbounded nature.

Place within a place

When we think of everyday places, images of city parks, market squares, municipalities, or schools often come to mind. Yet, merely listing these places does little to deepen our understanding of what place truly represents. What defines a place in our world and distinguishes from other places? A schoolyard, for example, may be fenced in, but it is part of a larger whole - be it a neighborhood or a village. Conversely, the same schoolyard can be divided into smaller units: a soccer field, a playground, a garden. As Ingold (2009) noted, this

multi-layered complexity of a place can be compared to a Russian doll in which smaller and smaller units become visible. This analogy beautifully illustrates how a single place can encompass numerous smaller places that are nested within one another, ad infinitum. A place therefore has no fixed boundaries and does not need them. This perspective challenges us to view places not as isolated entities, but as interconnected spaces within a larger context. It is not enough to view a place in isolation; its meaning and significance are also shaped by its relationship to broader entities. This interconnectedness also extends to how places shape our personal identity (look at place-identity from Jorgensen and Stedman (2001). For example, when we identify with a particular place like our city, it often means that we also connect with larger places like the region or even country in which it is located (Cuba & Hummon, 1993).

Sense of place

A well-known term in place related research is the sense of place. This concept had been influenced and described by different authors and is therefore also not uniform in its definition. In general, it describes the relation between humans and their places. Similar to Relph (1976) concept of insiderness and outsiderness, sense of place tries to capture the profound relationship people have or not have to places. First attempts of capturing place-human relationships were done by Williams and Roggenbuck (1989). They created a two-dimensional conceptualization with the elements, place identity and place dependence. They used this concept to measure the attachment of tourists to a certain place and proposed that it is dependent on its resources. Place identity describes the emotional and symbolic meaning attributed to the place, while place dependency refers to the physical properties that enable the desired activities. Although, their concept made a contribution to place in a leisure context, it lacks on a broader understanding of the human-place relationship (Kyle & Chick, 2007). Low and Altman (1992) emphasized the influence of social aspects on attachment to a place, which could go beyond physical characteristics. They first established the concept of place attachment to describe a more general human-place relationship (Kyle & Chick, 2007). Important for this concept was the affective and emotional component and the rather cognitive part entailing thoughts, knowledge and beliefs. Building on this concept, Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) developed the concept of "sense of place". An important difference is that Jorgensen and Stedman used the term place attachment, but only to describe the emotional and affective part of their broader concept. Next to place attachment they had two more terms, place dependence and place identity. Those three dimensions of sense of place

would be affective (attachment), cognitive (identity) and conative (dependence). Both terms identity and dependence were adopted from leisure literature and are used in exactly the same way as by Williams and Roggenbuck (Kyle & Chick, 2007). Without diving deeper into their concept of sense of place, we notice that human-place relationships are multi-layered and complex. Influenced by many different factors and even though theories about place are improving in complexity and what they encompass, grasping the entirety of human-place relationships is a difficult endeavor. However, one that has managed to grasp the different dimensions of place or sense of place is Nicole Ardoin (2012).

Dimensions of place

Ardoin (2006) describes well four dimensions how we can perceive place. She builds on the concept of sense of place and clarifies what influences it. Important to mention is that these four aspects never occur separately. Rather, they are intermingled and interwoven, influencing each other.

1. Biophysical setting:

The obvious and already mentioned dimension, the biophysical setting, refers to the actual place where we are situated at the moment. This includes in particular the landscape, the flora and the fauna that can be found there (Stedman, 2003). Although this dimension was disregarded by many, mostly quantitative place-studies (e.g., Cuba & Hummon, 1993), it is fundamental for the concept of place. With phenomenological glasses that this thesis wears, the direct experience of the physical environment is highly important. According to Heidegger (1962), we live in the world not merely as observers, rather as active subjects. The way we interact with our surroundings influences the world and vice versa the environment influences us. The entire world is composed of the interrelations and interactions between the subjects who inhabit it. Therefore, one can argue that the biophysical dimension is the first we can experience and is the basis for the other dimensions. For instance, Pyle (1993) highlights that if we, for example, want to connect with nature it must happen somewhere. Stedman (2003) also argues that when we speak of social constructions, they originate somewhere, with the environment giving them form and setting boundaries. We are always immersed and situated within the world and places. That means all our social interaction as well as our personal identities rely and are based on our environmental context.

2. Psychological dimension:

First, humans encounter their place alone and that is why this dimension gained great interest and attention especial form the field of environmental psychology (e.g. Poshansky et al., 1976). Main subjects of those kind of studies were the relationship and interdependence of place and humans. Trying to answer questions like, how does place influence our identity or how do we develop a sense of belonging, different concepts were developed. Theories like place identity, place attachment, and place dependency (see Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001).

3. Sociocultural dimension:

Our understanding of place is influenced not only by our own perceptions but also by the cultural practices we share and the sociocultural context in which we live (Ardoin et al., 2012). Cultural practice encompasses all aspects of behavior and norms that characterize and define communities, thus making them unique. This includes practices such as art, traditions, and everyday habits that are passed down from generation to generation. This shared sociocultural background also suggests meanings of places that can help us understanding our relationship towards it (Ardoin, 2006). The significance of the sociocultural context is particularly evident for two reasons. First, the cultural practices we engage in are shaped by our natural environment (see cultural ecology, e.g. Lapka et al., 2012). Second, our social environment influences our perception of our physical environment. This is evident as this dimension was inspired by and incorporated from sociological research on community attachment (e.g. Beggs et al., 1996; Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974).

4. Political economic dimension

This dimension emphasizes the reciprocal influence of politics, economics, and place in smaller (community) and larger (county, region) scales. It also highlights that places are not static but continuously shaped and reshaped by social interactions, political decisions and are not isolated but connected to other places. Thus, this dimension helps us understanding place in a broader context of society. However, this dimension will play a rather subordinate role due to the focus of this Master's thesis.

Ardoin (2006) makes clear that we are always in places and are strongly dependent and connected to them. Not only our physical, but also our psychological and sociological aspects of being are influenced by them. But important to understand is that those dimensions of place are not separate but part of the great whole. Place reveals itself to us through, physical attributes, social practices, symbolic meanings and more. And although we live in the world and constantly experience the place and give it meaning, we cannot grasp it in its entirety.

Children and place

Most of those concepts introduced were used to describe the relationship between human and place. But with human were mainly meant grown-ups and children are often not considered. It is often said in everyday life that children see the world with different eyes. Is there something to it about how they experience place? Matthews (1992) has looked at how children understand their environment. He summarizes that there are three main approaches. The nativists believe that children are naturally predisposed to handle spatial information. The empiricists see the ability to find your way in the spatial world is the outcome of many experiences. And lastly, the constructivists combine these two things and say that the "understanding of large-scale space awaits the unfolding of different kinds of thought processes through successive stages and the active construction of space by individuals" (Matthews, 1992, p. 3). They believe that children develop their own sense of place by experiencing it, reconstructing it and giving it meaning. Children have not been as well included in the literature around sense of place and place relationships, which is surprising as school-age children use the natural environment around them the most of all age groups but are not as strongly represented in the studies on their sense of place (Chatterjee, 2005). The question therefore arises as to whether the existing concepts are suitable for describing children's experiences of places. Chatterjee (2005) suggested that the existing concepts might be too narrow and therefore developed the concept of place-friendships. She argues that a friendship, in contrast to an attachment relationship, has more and different dimensions, which also differ depending on the age of the person. The concept of place-friendship was developed by looking through environmental psychology and psychology literature. She builds on the concept of Doll (1996) about friendship definitions in childhood and the affordances theory of Gibson (1979). Doll found six elements of friendship that are consistent across the entire developmental phase of childhood: mutual affection and personal regard, shared interests and activities, commitment, loyalty, self-disclosure and mutual understanding, and horizontality. Chatterjee then translated those elements to what would it mean for place-friendships. Her results are shown in Table 1. Chatterjee (2005) provides with her concept of place-friendship a child appropriate approach to human-place relationships. She argues that merely attachment and identity are too little to fully describe children's relationship to place. By sharing activities, showing care for each other and

understand each other, places and children build a deep friendship that can be beneficial for both of them. This work looks at children from a constructivist perspective and recognizes that they construct their own world by exploring and interpreting it. In this respect, this approach goes hand in hand with the phenomenological view of this work. Children have different prerequisites than adults. We must therefore take this into account in our theoretical concepts. Chatterjee (2005) does just this, and so her concept is used to bridge the gap between children's experience of place and the practical domain of PBE.

Table 1: Table is taken verbatim from Chatterjee (2005, p. 16). She translates the criteria for friendship from Doll (1996) (left column) to what they mean for place-friendships (right column).

Criteria for friendship (Doll, 1996)	Emerging concepts
Mutual affection and personal regard	Environmental care: Children participate in caring for and maintaining places that are safe, and provide different opportunities for favorite activities, play and interests
Shared interests and activities	Place-child exchange: A place that affords the favorite activities of the child will be sharing them with the child
Commitment	Learning and Competence: Through continuous reciprocal interaction with the everyday environment children create new affordances by discovering and manipulating nested and sequential affordances of features and settings. The direct and indirect experience of place leads to environmental learning and competence (Matthews, 1992)
Loyalty	Control: Place allows creation of identifiable territories over time that can be defended
Self-disclosure and mutual understanding	Feelings and emotions: Place allows child to create secret places by manipulating its affordances and features and protects those places. This process supports sense of self by regulating feelings and emotions in and about place.

Horizontality	Freedom of expression: Place exists in a field where children do not feel inhibited in exploring and actualizing all the perceived affordances of the place at will
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3 Conceptual Framework

This chapter explains the relevant theories that helped to structure this thesis. First it will be described briefly the fundamental research position of phenomenology. Next, a summary of how the term “place” is understood in this paper is provided. It also explains the context of the outdoor education program and how it relates to place-based education.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research is a fundamental research position used primarily in the social sciences to explore and understand individuals’ subjective experiences and social phenomena. Unlike quantitative research, which seeks to quantify issues through statistical analysis, qualitative research aims to provide rich, contextual insights into and understanding of complex issues, enabling the development of theories grounded in observed data (Smith & Sparkes, 2016). This makes it clear that knowledge is not objective, but rather situated, interconnected and even intra-connected (Humberstone & Prince, 2019). We all have a certain perspective and cannot completely disengage and look at things from above. Qualitative research addresses this problem by utilizing the subjectivity of the researcher and encouraging a certain degree of researcher involvement with the data. The methods for data collection can vary from interviews, focus groups, ethnographic research, content or document analysis, and participant observations, and more. This open character of qualitative research makes it difficult to find a definition that fits everyone (Smith & Sparkes, 2016). Hence, this study is considered qualitative because it does not aim to generalize the results, but rather to provide in-depth descriptions of children’s experiences of place. It also recognizes the subjectivity of the researcher and the process of interpretation during data analysis, and finally, it takes a holistic view of place without committing to a particular concept.

Phenomenological approach

Within qualitative research there are different types, one of which is phenomenology, which aims to explore phenomena by examining their defining characteristics or ‘essences’. It approaches this phenomenon using the perspective of people who have experienced it themselves (Neubauer et al., 2019). In this thesis, a phenomenological approach is taken to

deepen the understanding what and how students experience a particular place. What actually counts as phenomenology and how should it be done is in fact a discussion that has been going on for a long time. Giorgi (1997), for example, states that phenomenology entails three steps: reduction, description and search for essence. Other authors have developed different phenomenological approaches which deviate from his, like Dahlberg et al. (2007) open lifeworld approach or van Manen (1990) lived experience human science inquiry. This thesis considers itself phenomenological since Finlay (2009) defines a study phenomenological "when it involves both rich description of the lifeworld or lived experience, and where the researcher has adopted a special, open phenomenological attitude which, at least initially, refrains from importing external frameworks and sets aside judgements about the realness of the phenomenon" (p.8). Based on this definition, no overarching theoretical framework is used to answer the first research question. Further, Phenomenology offers various methods, of which there are two main directions: the descriptive and the interpretative. In the descriptive method, which goes back to Edmund Husserl, one's own preconceptions are set aside in order to uncover the essence of a phenomenon, often through the process of "bracketing" (Finlay, 2009). The interpretive method, dating back to Martin Heidegger, assumes that interpretation is fundamental to understanding, as we interpret phenomena in order to make sense of them (Finlay, 2009). The choice between these methods depends largely on the ontological beliefs of the researcher. In this thesis, the interpretive approach is preferred, which recognizes the subjectivity of qualitative research as an essential and useful element. To make it clear, this work also depends on me as a researcher, thus on my background and my interpretations and opinions. Even if this is the case, an attempt is made to make a clear distinction between the object of research and my interpretation of it. However, phenomenology also presents challenges, most notably the lack of a structured guide. Its strength lies in its openness and its ability to reflect the ontological and epistemological orientations of the researcher, allowing for a variety of approaches (Finlay, 2009). I opted for an interpretive approach that emphasized the dynamic interaction between researcher and subject. This deep engagement fostered the potential for unexpected findings. Despite the research being rooted in subjectivity, attempts were made to make clear the distinction between the participants' contributions and my own interpretations.

Understanding of place

In this work, “place” is understood in a similar way to how Heidegger (1962) describes it as the “lifeworld” - our world experienced in everyday life. According to Heidegger’s phenomenology, we not only experience a place, but we also interpret it and give it meaning. While our initial experience is influenced by the physical aspects of place, our perception is further shaped by our social environment and cultural practices, as Ardoin (2006) notes. This combined with Ingold’s notion of places as boundless and nested contributes to our understanding of ‘place’ as a multi-layered, multi-dimensional and existential element of our ‘being in the world’. Although this study is based on phenomenology, it also recognizes the social constructivist perspective that our world is also socially constructed. As Nolan (2015) astutely notes, “humans cannot construct anything without being first in place —that place is primary to the construction of meaning and society” (p. 48). However, it is beyond the scope of this study to address all dimensions comprehensively. As Ardoin (2006) points out, while the biophysical and psychological dimensions are emphasized, social processes and cultural influences, while present, are not explicitly explored. This study focuses primarily on students’ personal experiences of place rather than analyzing these experiences through social processes and meanings.

Framework for PBE

Within this master thesis a certain school outdoor program will be investigated and therefore we have to know to what extent it can be called a place-based approach. Therefore, we have to set criteria for PBE. Smith (2002), who has worked extensively with PBE, identified five key characteristics that an outdoor program must meet to be considered place-based. Those would be place as starting point, students as creator of knowledge, co-design of the learning subject, teacher as learn guide, community-school-cooperation. In the following are these characteristics described and an answer will be given to what extent the OE program matches the points. The answer is based on two different sources. Firstly, information was obtained in advance from the school website and also from the teachers responsible. Secondly, I observed two outdoor days.

1. Place as starting point:

As the name suggests, PBE emphasizes on the very place itself. Place becomes in PBE more than just a backdrop but the subject of learning itself. It can and should be starting point so that more abstract concepts and topics can be constructed through phenomena experienced in the direct surrounding. G. A. Smith (2002) argues that children are born with an inner curiosity and interest in their direct surrounding anyways, but school often fails to nurture it. PBE addresses this inner motivation to teach for them relevant subjects. This point is fulfilled insofar as the teacher consciously chooses the place they go to depending on the topic they want to cover. They do not go to the same place every time but change from time to time to better suit the subject matter.

2. Students as creator of knowledge:

This aspect deals with the pedagogical beliefs and assumptions that are incorporated into the education. In psychology there are different theories how learning happens such as behaviorism and constructivism. While behaviorists view learning as a change in behavior that can be controlled from the outside, constructivists believe that learning depends on the learner's prior knowledge and that learning works like a construction. The learner builds his own knowledge and that can't be totally controlled from the outside. So, the way PBE views students should resemble the one of a constructivist. Since those underlying beliefs are influencing the pedagogical practice, they can be observed in the way the education is done. This point is also sufficiently fulfilled. However, this is not only the case in the OE program but also reflects the basic attitude of the teachers and the school.

3. Co-design of the learning subject:

Participation is written big in PBE, and this also counts for participation in designing the lectures and learning subjects. On basis of real-life problems in their direct surroundings the students are encouraged to actively participate and co-shape the learning. Through questions and decisions should they become more involved and thus the motivation is kept up. The OE program is based on the curriculum for biology and geography. This means that the learning content is fairly predetermined, which makes self-directed learning difficult. The lessons I observed were structured and gave the students only limited scope for active participation. However, in line with the school's and the teachers' guiding principles, they would prefer to learn in an experimental and experience-oriented way. Therefore, this point is only half fulfilled.

4. **Teacher as learn guide:**

Next to the student's role, the role of the teacher is also considered different than in many other approaches. The teacher tries to step back from the limelight and takes on the role of a guide. He becomes more of a companion and co-learner. This point almost goes hand in hand with the second. In PBE, the student is given more freedom and responsibility for their own learning, and the teacher is mainly there to guide and help. Based on my lesson observations, I had the impression that the teachers were acting in the role of teacher and not explicitly as co-teachers or instructors. However, the lessons were structured in such a way that the children were given a lot of personal responsibility and the teachers held back and were only supportive. In addition, OE lessons involve a lot of collaboration with various organizations (forest educator, teacher training college, forestry office, mushroom expert), whereby the teachers can then take on the role of guide. That is why this point is also considered to be fulfilled.

5. **Community-school-cooperation:**

As explained above, many PBE advocates argue for a stronger connection between school and community. One way to achieve this is to increase the number of collaborations between the school and various stakeholders in the community. This can happen in both directions. Students can participate in community projects or members of the community can work at the school. Many collaborations between organizations in the community (universities, forestry offices, forest educators, etc.) and the choice of locations for OE lessons show that great importance is attached here to getting to know the community itself better and intensifying the community-school relationship. This point is therefore also fulfilled.

Overall, the schools OE program can be called PBE, but with restrictions. Due to the binding school curriculum and other requirements the teacher cannot just do whatever they want. Thus, a lot of good ideas cannot be implemented. Nevertheless, shows this program that a lot is possible also within a fixed educational system.

Summary

This chapter described the theoretical foundations and methods that structure this work, focusing on the qualitative and phenomenological approach in the context of the outdoor

education program. I emphasize the use of qualitative methods to explore complex subjective experiences and use phenomenology to obtain detailed descriptions of these experiences as they are experienced by individuals. The understanding of 'place' in this thesis was clarified, drawing on Heidegger's concept of the 'lifeworld', which foregrounds personal interactions with the environment while taking into account the broader cultural influences that shape these experiences. In addition, the extent to which the program aligns with the principles of place-based education has been established, acknowledging the constraints imposed by the formal curriculum, but also recognizing the potential of this place-based approach. Overall, our framework provides a basis for examining the place experience of students in a PBE context.

4 Methodology

The choice and the reasoning of the methodology is crucial regarding all studies, but especially with a phenomenological approach one has a lot to consider, re-evaluate iteratively and keep an overview which can be challenging. Nevertheless, I chose a phenomenological inspired approach to answer the guiding questions:

1. What elements compose a student's experience of place within a place-based outdoor education program?
2. How can these findings contribute to place-based education programs?

This chapter provides an overview of the research design and methodology. It presents the methods used and explains why they were chosen. First, the overarching research design and the interpretative phenomenological approach are explained. In the next sections, the school's OE program is explained in more detail, followed by the question of how the participants were recruited. The methods used to collect and analyze the data are then explained. At the end of the chapter, the ethical considerations for data collection and management are explained.

Research design

The overarching research design of this study can be described best as a qualitative case study with a phenomenological approach. Schwandt (1997, cited in Hodge and Sharp, 2016) writes that case has to be "specific and bounded (in time and place) instance of a phenomenon selected for study" (p.62). This study refers to a particular school and more specifically to a particular OE program. Thus, the phenomenon of place is examined through the study of one program and one program only. It is therefore both place-specific and time-specific. The temporal specificity is that the study examines only the students' experiences of place within the outdoor education program. Each child brings their own prior experiences, but the interviews and observations were only conducted in a school context, which must be taken into account when interpreting the results. Using a qualitative study design especial with a phenomenological approach (see Smith, 2004) this study entails some features that have to be clarified. As the study examines the experiences of children, it relies on the children to share their findings. Thus, the study assumes that children make their own sense of their world and are able to communicate their understanding properly. I, as the researcher,

again try to capture their understanding and make sense of it. In doing so, I can't and won't avoid interpreting what they tell me. To be clear, the original phenomena will be interpreted by the children, which will then be interpreted by me as I seek to understand it (Smith & Osborn, 2021, p. 53).

Interpretative phenomenological approach

Smith's interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was chosen as the method of analysis and methodological guideline. IPA was first used in qualitative psychology to investigate peoples lived experiences and personal perceptions (Finlay, 2009). Smith's IPA not only describes a method but also comes with an underlying epistemological position. In his book *Interpretative phenomenological analysis* (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021) he and his co-author provide guidelines for doing phenomenological research with an ontological and epistemological foundation. Although it is called phenomenological IPA does strongly identify with hermeneutic, in that sense that it emphasizes the role of the researcher and denies the use of bracketing (Smith, 2004). However, three main characteristics of IPA are highlighted: idiographic, inductive, and interrogative.

Idiographic refers to an approach to science that attempts to understand the unique and individual aspects of a particular phenomenon, rather than looking for findings that can be generalized to a larger population. Like other phenomenological approaches IPA focuses on the experience on the individual level and does not try to create standardizable concepts. This feature has one big consequence for the data analysis. The detailed examination of each interview will be conducted separate and chronological in that sense, that the analysis of the first interview must be finished before starting with the second. Thus, there will be a table of themes for each interview. At the end of the analysis of all interviews, a cross-case analysis will be done which result will be an overarching table of themes for all interviews. Due to this intensive step by step procedure IPA is only suitable for a small sample of five to ten (Smith, 2004). However, this is in contradiction to my total number of participants, which is 17. The reason for this is that the number of participants is not as important as the number of interviews themselves. I do have only four focus groups which is a more reasonable amount for IPA.

Induction is not unique to IPA compared to other qualitative approaches, instead it is a big cornerstone of many. Within qualitative research it is common that we don't have a set

amount of variables that can be measured. Instead, qualitative researcher explores a topic with dynamic methods and open mind to reveal unexpected and new findings. IPA follows this tradition and is therefore not suitable to falsify a theory or deliver more evidence for it. However, studies cannot stay alone without referring to existing literature nor building up on it. Therefore, deduction and induction are always part of any study but for IPA the inductive part is highlighted.

Interrogation is a feature of IPA that can be seen at its concern with personal beliefs, attitudes, and feelings. In this method, the researcher takes on the role of an investigator or, as it is often referred to metaphorically, a gold digger. Asking questions becomes a tool to get closer to how the participant experiences their world. IPA generally aims to contribute to the (non-exclusive) psychology literature by challenging established concepts and shedding light on new concepts, which again shows us the phenomenological stance of IPA.

Those features of IPA, idiographic, inductive and interrogative, lead me to my decision in favor for it. That combined with two more aspects. As already explained, the study attempts to capture the children's understanding of their place, which means that I, as the researcher have to make sense of the children's interpretation of the phenomenon. Beside the fact that I also use my own impressions gained through the observations, the interviews are my main source. This is a two-stage interpretation, which is specifically mentioned and recognized by Smith and Osborn (2021). Second, IPA has developed from psychology and is an established method there. This fits very well with this study, as many of the concepts presented in the literature review also come from psychology, e.g. place-friendships from Chatterjee (2005). This does not mean that one cannot use a method from a different discipline. No, quite the opposite, it can be very fruitful to learn and get inspired by many fields of science. But especially in a master thesis one, who has not so much experience, might feel more convenient using a method that has already been used in that field before.

The outdoor education program

The investigated OE program is quite unique since OE is not that popular in Germany. There are concepts such as "Forest kindergarten" (German: Waldkindergarten) which are only for children up to six years, and some concepts for OE at elementary schools. For higher education (fifth grade and older) there are almost no established programs (von Au, 2016). Before I explain how a typical outdoor education day looks like I will give a brief overview

what the conditions in Germany and in the educational system are. The school is a private school located in Baden-Württemberg. Private means in that sense, that it is not run and maintained by the state but has to be approved by it. To attend a private school, one has to pay a fee whereby public schools are free of charge. That often leads to that the private ones are better equipped, and they have more freedoms to run special educational programs, like the OE program. As it happens so often, money rules the world and this also apply to the educational system. One main reason why the school can afford the OE program is because it is private. However, private schools are, like public ones, bound to the official curriculum. They have to fulfill the same requirements and the final exams are the same too. That means they have the responsibility to give the students an education that fits the curriculum and cannot just exchange subjects. The students have a set amount of hours they are supposed to spend in class and each subject should be taught a certain amount. To spend some hours for the OE program they need to take those from somewhere else. Another important aspect is the supervisory duty (German: Aufsichtspflicht). The law requires teachers to be responsible for their pupils and their safety. During lessons, breaks and a reasonable time before and after lessons, the teacher is liable if something happens to the students. Teachers have a great deal of responsibility, especially on excursions outside the school grounds. It is understandable that many teachers are therefore cautious when it comes to going out with pupils.

The outdoor program at the school has been running for over ten years and has evolved over that time. It is only for the fifth grade, which is the lowest grade level at this school. There are four fifth grade classes, and each has their outdoor day on a different day of the week. So, one class goes on Monday, the other on Tuesday and so on. Each class has two teachers who are responsible for the OE day for that class. The school pays both teachers for the whole day. Normally, only one teacher would be assigned to each class. This is a considerable additional financial outlay that the school can only afford because it is in private hands. Not all teachers are allowed to teach OE because the hours for OE are taken from three different subjects, namely geography, biology, and sport. Therefore, only geography and biology teachers are allowed to do OE. Although they take a lesson from the sports subject, a sports teacher is not allowed to teach OE. This lesson was only taken in order to have enough time to spend the whole morning outside. They justify this with the large amount of movement that is unavoidable during the OE program.

Participants

At the beginning of this thesis, I was interested in how OE might be already established in German schools and so I started researching for schools that offer such kind of program. But in Germany, unlike Norway, Denmark, Scotland or Sweden, there are neither traditions in OE nor existing structures that could facilitate this. As explained earlier, there are some barriers that make it difficult for public schools to run an OE program. Thus, I continued my search on schools in private hand. I found an article about a new OE program that is run by a private school in Baden-Württemberg, Germany. So, I contacted the school and the person who founded that particular OE program. Since I contacted the school at the beginning of this year it was probably a busy time and so they didn't reply to me, but the teacher did. He redirected me to the teacher who is currently in charge of the OE program. Because of data protection reasons (see Ethical considerations) and to ensure anonymity I will call her Susan. After a few emails, I had a video call with Susan to see if the school would be willing to let me visit and interview some students. The other goal was to see if the OE program fit my expectations and thesis concept. Both were positive.

Further contact with the school was all through her. She also forwarded all the information and consent letters¹ to the parents. Further, she helped arranging the interviews, so the location, schedule, and agreements with other teachers. One can say she became a great help and big part of this thesis too. The information and consent forms were given to the children to show to their parents and collected at school after the parents had signed them. This was done only two weeks before my visit, because Susan knew the children well enough to anticipate that they were likely to lose the forms if they were given an unclear time period. However, this also resulted in children handing in the form on the day of the interview. The approximate age of my participants was already set to ten or eleven because the OE program is for fifth grade only. Of the four fifth grade classes, Susan was the OE teacher for one of them. This fortunate circumstance prompted me to interview only her class of children. This decision to survey only her class is something that can be argued for and against. The OE lectures are very teacher dependent. This means that other teachers do it differently and therefore the children can have varying experiences. Therefore, it would have been fruitful to include children from other classes as well. The main reason against it was the tight school schedule. Susan had already managed to free up four hours of her own class

¹ Information letter and consent form can be found in the appendix.

for interviews. Including other classes would have increased the organizational work for me and especially for her. As a result, 17 of the 27 members of the class participated in my study.

Data collection

Interviews are quite popular in qualitative research if they are not THE method to decide for. The reason for this is, interviews are a flexible and dynamic method that can be used in different approaches, and they are practical to investigate people's experiences and thoughts (Smith & Sparkes, 2016). Their flexibility results from the variety of types of interviews that exist. They range from fully structured to more open narrative interviews, from interviewing one person to a larger group, or from general biographical to specific topics. With so much choice available to researchers, they have to decide and argue for the most appropriate one. In this study, semi-structured focus group interviews were chosen. The following explains what they are and why they were chosen.

Focus group interviews differ from other forms of interviews mainly in the number of participants. Instead of interviewing one person, the researcher interviews several people at the same time. As the name suggests, this type of interview is about a specific topic that is to be investigated. The main objective of focus groups is to encourage a conversation between the participants so that the interviewer can take a step back (Smith & Sparkes, 2016). The participants of this study were children about the age of 10 years. The concern was that young children, especially if they do not know the interviewer, are unlikely to share their thoughts and feelings. Therefore, having a group of pupils from the same class helps the pupils to feel comfortable and safe. Thus, they are more likely to share valuable insights. Krueger and Casey (2000) emphasized that it depends to a large extent on the person whether they can communicate their thoughts easily or whether this requires more confidence and security. In a school class, it is quite natural that not everyone can get along with everyone else. Therefore, the question of how the children would be divided into groups was important. The exact procedure and further considerations on grouping are described later in the Interviews section.

Another argument in favor for interviews in general was the choice of the data analysis method. J. A. Smith and Osborn (2021) state that for IPA a data collection instrument is required that is flexible and dynamic. They suggest using semi-structured interviews in order

to gain a deeper insight in the personal world of the interviewee. In another article from J. A. Smith (2004), he reflected on the use of focus group interviews. Although he was personally wary of them, he said that they would be suitable for IPA as long as the researcher paid attention to certain group dynamics. He also suggested "parsing" the transcripts twice, once for the regular analysis and once for the group dynamics. However, Wilkinson (2003) added that focus group interviews can sometimes encourage participants to speak even more freely. In relation to the question of whether participants were more likely to share their thoughts in a group, it is worth noting that the decision to use focus groups was inevitably linked to certain assumptions. According to Vaughn et al. (1996), there are four assumptions that focus groups bring with them. First, people are seen as a valuable source of information. Second, participants are able to articulate their thoughts and feelings accurately enough. Third, the best setting to obtain the desired opinion is a group that is moderated by the interviewer. The fourth and final assumption is that the group effects that occur improve rather than worsen the willingness to share. These assumptions correspond to both the overarching objective and the methodology of this study. However, the success of any interview relies on the skills of the interviewer, but there are some major challenges with focus groups in particular. A more detailed description of these challenges and how I dealt with them as an interviewer can be found in the Interviews section.

Interview guide

Before the interview could even start an interview guide had to be developed. Such interview guides can help with structuring the interview and so the train of thoughts (Smith & Osborn, 2021). Furthermore, they ensure that the interviewer does not go too far off script and help to steer the conversation back on track. Even in not fully structured, so-called semi-structured interviews, they can facilitate an unbiased or at least less biased way of asking questions. In the following I will expound how the interview guide was developed. After reading though the literature and having the main theories in mind I started writing the interview guide. Not knowing where to begin I used the concept of place-friendships from Chatterjee (2005) to make up questions that corresponded to her themes. The intention was rather to formulate questions that would provide a lot of qualitative information without being too direct. After this step, I put the theories and literature aside and focused on my actual research question. I thought about which questions were essential for investigating and answering my research topic. In the next step, I categorized the questions arising from the theory and my own questions into five overarching topics. These would be: Place, Doing, Learning, Relationship

and Process. Each topic could be asked about on three levels: descriptive, cognitive and emotional. The levels merely served as an aid in considering the quality and depth of the questions and which questions would be suitable for obtaining in-depth answers. The final step was to select the most appropriate questions for each topic and enter them into the interview guide. Of course, I also obtained and integrated feedback from my supervisor.

Interviews

The semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted on March 13 and 14 at the school facilities during school hours and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Holding the interviews at the school eased the organization and contributed to the well-being of the students, as they were in a familiar environment. The interviews were recorded with a Tascam DR-40 device.

Before the interviews, I met with my contact person at the school, Susan, to observe the outdoor education program. This was done with the aim of getting to know the children before I interviewed them. After the outdoor education lesson, I sat down with Susan to talk about the interview groups. Her impression of the kids and opinion about who should be in a group of 30 with whom was very helpful. It did not seem wise to just put them randomly together because of the reasons mentioned earlier. The main considerations were about how was a "loud" kid and how was rather shy. The "loud" and "quiet" ones were placed in separate groups so that the "shy" voices could also be heard. As a result, there was only one mixed-gender group and the other three consisted only of boys or only girls. In terms of group size, I preferred working with three to four children. The reason for this was the amount of information I could get out of a group. With more participants, there are more opinions and thoughts, but with too many, the quality of the information is lower. Despite my preferences, the final group had five members. As I had 17 volunteers and there wasn't enough time for five interviews, I had to leave someone out. The children had already expressed their excitement about the interview to me and as a prospective teacher, I couldn't allow a child to be disappointed. Thus, I decided for having five participants in the last group.

The interviews were conducted on March 13 and 14. The teacher who was in charge of the class at the time was aware of my project. So, I called out the names of the children in the first group and took them to the so-called "movement room", a larger room with mattresses, cushions, and some play equipment. I had already prepared a circle of cushions in the

middle of the room for them to sit on. So, I tried to create a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. At the beginning of the interview, I explained to them what was going to happen, what it was about and the purpose of the interview. I also assured them that everything they said would be treated confidentially and that the interviews would be transcribed and anonymized. To activate the children and to introduce them to the topic I showed them pictures of the place where they go most of the times during the OE lessons. Most of them already recognized the place from the first picture. Then I asked them to find that place on a digital map on my laptop. After they found it, I said that I would like to talk with them about how they feel and think about this place. The pupils were talkative and focused and seemed happy to share their opinions. The good atmosphere also allowed them to express opinions that were contrary to those of the others. After the interview ended, I took the children back to their class and gathered the next participants.

After the interviews, I reflected on them and the challenges they brought with them. My role as interviewer, was not only to guide the discussion with questions, but also to manage the dynamics among the children and ensure that both talkative and reticent pupils had their chance to speak. This required careful moderation and attention to allow quieter participants to have their say and control the flow of the conversation. In reviewing the interview transcripts, I realized that there were moments when further follow-up questions could have deepened the insights. Sometimes important comments were quickly passed over when other children spoke up, and I did not want to keep interrupting the children. So, I always considered whether it was necessary or whether I could take up the topics again later. One question that concerned me was whether individual interviews might have been more effective. Despite initial reservations, the children were very open with their thoughts. While focus groups allowed for some depth through interaction, the format also meant that some discussions remained on the surface, especially with four to five children per group.

Observations

Since the aim of this thesis is to investigate the pupils' perspective on the place and their experiences of the place, observations were done to extend the collection of data. In an interpretative paradigm (Sparkes, 1992), which asks about the construction of meaning by the participants, it is also essential to investigate how the participants are perceived from the outside. Participant observation can be a fruitful method to explore participants as they are, in a particular context and taking into account social interactions with others (Humberstone &

Prince, 2019). This is important because all these connections contribute to the development of knowledge. Concerns are often raised about whether the presence of an observer might alter students' natural behavior. However, as H. Smith (2019) notes, an observer can also enhance rather than detract from participants' experiences. To minimize interference, I interacted little with the program and the children but was open to conversation and questions, which I answered honestly. At the beginning of each observation session, I introduced myself and explained my role and goals.

The main goal of participant-observations, according to Sparkes (1992) is that the researcher can live the "slice of life" (p. 29) so he or she can better understand the world the participants live in. Unfortunately, two days of observation, as I did, is too little to really immerse myself in the students' perspective. However, it was enough to give me a better understanding of the place, the children and also the aims and objectives of the OE program and the school. As the aim of the study is to take the student perspective, my observations are not the main data collected. Rather, they should be seen as supporting data to deepen the findings and extend the analysis. Since a complete description of my observations would go beyond the scope of this paper, I will include my observations when they are relevant for understanding and deepening the results or the analysis.

The observations took place on March 12 and 13. Both times I met with the responsible teachers at 7:45 a.m. in front of the school, where the pupils also met. We then took public transport to our destination. On the 13th of March they went to the usual place, "Mühlthal", but on the 12th of March they went to another spot where they had been a few times before. It is important to mention that I was visiting different classes on these days. First, I visited Susan's class and her colleagues and on the second day I went with the parallel class with other teachers. The school day went on until about one o'clock. Afterwards, some of the children went home or stayed at school as part of the all-day care program. I documented my observations in different ways. I had a notebook with me, but it was difficult in terms of time to write down everything I observed. That's why I made a voice memo of my observations on my mobile phone straight after school. I also asked myself questions, e.g. what surprised me the most or what irritated me and recorded my answers as a voice memo after the week I visited the school. During the data analysis, I read and listened to these notes again, which was very helpful. The observations went without significant incident and provided opportunities to engage in conversation with both teachers and students, which also enriched the study.

Data analysis

The analysis of the data was done using the IPA method as described by J. A. Smith and Fieldsend (2021). The basic features of IPA were described previously, so that now a detailed description of the analysis process follows. The IPA process is iterative and reflexive in the sense that many steps have to be carried out several times and you have to be very careful and attentive to your own impressions and interpretations. I have found that six steps can be distinguished in the analysis.

1. Reading and notes

This phase was about becoming familiar with the transcript by reading it a few times. This is essential for the following phases as the entire process is dependent on the researcher's engagement "in an interpretative relationship with the transcript" (Smith & Osborn, 2021, p. 66). While reading, I made comments on the transcript. What to comment on is completely open, and there are no rules about how you comment. They can be summaries, paraphrases, associations, connections to theory, or anything else that comes to mind. Interpretations are also allowed, even if they are provisional. Since new insights can emerge each time of re-reading the transcript, I read it at least five times.

2. Looking for themes

The result of the first phase was a transcript with many comments and notes. In this phase, these comments helped in the search for theme titles. The goal was to find concise sentences that were high level enough to connect to the theory, but still based on the transcript and close enough to it. Thereby, it is normal for similar parts to repeat an already existing theme.

3. Connecting the themes

In this phase, the resulting themes were listed chronically and examined for links between them. Several themes were combined into one, others were overarching titles so that others became sub-themes. The aim was to create a coherent structure of main themes. It was important that the emerging themes were checked to see if they still match with what the participants said. It is therefore an iterative process.

4. Continue with the next interview

Only after finishing the analysis of the first interview, I started with the next one. Smith and Osborn (2021) suggest two ways to continue from here. You can either use the themes from the first analysis to guide you in the following ones, or you can blank them out and start from zero. They also say that if you have a small number of interviews, you should do the latter. Thus, I put the themes aside and started from scratch. However, it was hardly possible to completely forget my previous analysis.

5. Final superordinate themes

In that phase, the tables from the individual interviews were compared with each other. Some topics were the same, others were summarized, a few only appeared in one interview and others in two or three interviews. The aim of this step was to leave out what seemed to have too little evidence in terms of quantity and/or quality. It was therefore not only about the frequency, but also about the qualitative depth of the individual transcript sections. As IPA is an iterative method, the interviews were examined for any newly emerging themes or for themes that only appeared in two or three of the interviews. After this last step I ended up with five superordinate themes.

6. Writing Up

In IPA, the analysis does not end with the final themes. Writing up the results is seen as a crucial part of the analysis. This is because writing them down gives a narrative context to the themes, which is important for understanding. In addition, the results are strengthened by using quotes from the participants. It is important to make clear what was actually said by the participants and what is a further interpretation or an attempt at explanation. J. A. Smith and Osborn (2021) give the choice of whether one wants to concentrate on one's own results and save the link to the theory for the discussion or whether one wants to use the theory straight away and link it to the results chapter. I opted for the former.

The transcription and entire analysis were performed with the help of a computer program called MAXQDA. This program was specially designed for analyzing qualitative data in research. The book, *Analyse qualitativer Daten mit MAXQDA: Text, Audio und Video* written by the creators of MAXQDA, Rädiker and Kuckartz (2019) offers a comprehensive and detailed description of the program, its tools, functions and more. The advantages of

MAXQDA are that it allows transcribing, coding, organizing, and structuring in a single program. Since it is a digital medium, searching for words, passages on a specific topic, etc. takes no time at all.

Ethical considerations

With regard to data protection and ethical considerations, approval had to be obtained from Sikt, the Norwegian agency for shared services in education and research. The Sikt approval was submitted for review on January 15 and finally granted on January 30 (Reference number: 272836). All steps of the data collection and analysis followed the plan approved by Sikt. The data protection measures are described below. As this study also involves children, informed consent had to be obtained from both the children and their parents. Parental consent was obtained by means of information letters and consent forms distributed to the pupils by the school. This process was based on the following ethical principles formulated by Rallis and Rossman (2003, p. 276):

- Participants are as fully informed as possible about the study's purpose and audience.
- They understand what their agreement to participate entails.
- They give that consent willingly.
- They understand that they may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice.

The children were first informed about the project by the teacher when she handed them the information sheets and consent forms. Then I informed them again the day before the interview and one last time just before the interview. I followed the same ethical principles and the children's verbal consent was recorded along with the interview. To ensure data protection, all personal data (recordings of the interviews, list of participants' names) were stored in the online storage provided by the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN), which requires double authorization. The originals of the consent forms were kept in a locked safe. Only I and my supervisor from USN had access to it. The anonymized data was then further processed with MAXQDA, so no personal data was stored or processed on my private laptop. The anonymization of the data was achieved by transcribing the audio recordings and assigning false names to the participants as well as the teacher.

5 Results

To answer the research questions, I conducted four focus group interviews with pupils. This chapter presents the results of the data analysis of these interviews, which were supplemented by my observations. The transcripts of the interviews were analyzed using the IPA method and the resulting themes were collected and checked to see if they matched the original text. The themes that emerged from the analysis - exploration and play, moments (risk, fascination and discomfort), knowing, familiarity and meeting needs - are presented below.

Exploration and Play

Ben: And when you're in Mühlthal for the first time, it's all new to you. Just like when you enter a new forest or town abroad. Then it's all new too.²

For most of the students, like Ben, it was the first time they had been to the place, "Mühlthal", as part of the school's OE program. Like Ben, most of the students seemed excited and looking forward to going there. It's often said that children have this inner curiosity that drives them to explore and ask questions. From what they were telling me, I could recognize that the urge to roam, search or discover what this place has to offer was very strong. Many children talked about how nice it is to explore the place and were excited about what they had found.

Ryan: ...we found lots of mushrooms in the forest.³

The place is in that case the object of the exploration but simultaneous the subject that encourages the child to explore. I want to mention that in this thesis place is understood as an active counterpart of the child-place interaction. Although the children did not talk about the place as an active being, I was clear to see that they had a strong preference for the place that offered more possibilities to explore and play.

Nabil: I think it's better in Mühlthal because there are trees there where you can move around more, because there [other place] is mostly just fields and garden plots and not so many meadows where you can really

² Author's translation, original: Und wenn man das erste Mal im Mühlthal ist, dann ist das erst mal wieder alles neu für einen. Wie wenn man im Ausland einen neuen Wald betritt oder eine Stadt. Dann ist das ja auch alles neu.

³ Author's translation, original: ... und da haben wir sehr viele Pilze im Wald gefunden.

be on it. And that's why you can almost only stay on the path. That's why I think it's a bit better in Mühlthal because you can move around a bit more freely there.⁴

Nabil said that Mühlthal offers more space for walking. He also mentioned the trees, which appeal to him more. So, the place is not just explored by the children, it has to offer the children something that motivates them to explore. I named that theme exploration and play cause of two reasons. First, the children themselves did not really distinguish between play and exploration. They mostly played, went for walks or hikes and hardly mentioned exploring. But exploring fit best with how and what they told me. Second, I could not just call it exploring since this would be too narrow. I realized that there are two slightly different aspects of the same mode. The exploring and the playing part. I was only able to do this differentiation because of what I observed the children during the OE program. But when I realized that I found other hints in the transcript.

Exploration is characterized by the fact that the children are physically active (walking, wandering, roaming). The pupils' attention is not focused on anything in particular but wanders from one thing to another as they are generally aware of their surroundings. An example of this mode was when the teacher asked them to look for specific plants. Once they had found the plant, they took a photo or collected it and moved on to find the next plant.

Play, on the other hand, occurs when the students have found something that especially interests them. Their attention is focused on a particular object, in the situation I observed it was a ladybug, and they are so concentrated that they forget what is going on around them. The two boys who had found the ladybug were involved in such a close play with it that they had to be called several times before they reacted. I was quite amazed at how carefully they passed it from hand to hand. They were so immersed in the situation, and they even put the ladybug on their face to see if it would dare to walk on them. During the interviews, I did not notice students describing such situations, but in reading the transcript, I found that Laura mentioned a similar excitement about walking in a creek.

Laura: But on the side, it rained and then on the side there's a little river-like channel or something and you can walk in there if you have

⁴ Author's translation, original: Ich finde das im Mühlthal besser, weil dort auch Bäume stehen, wo man sich mehr bewegen kann, weil da [anderer Ort] sind zum größten Teil auch nur Acker und Schrebergärten und nicht so viele so halt Wiesen, wo man wirklich drauf darf. Und deswegen kann man halt fast nur auf "ahm, auf dem Weg bleiben. Deswegen finde ich es im Mühlthal ein bisschen besser, weil man da auch ein bisschen mehr freier bewegen kann.

waterproof shoes. It also feels kind of cool that you don't get wet and just walk in the water.⁵

So, exploration and play are not something that the children experience over and over again, but rather a mode of how children encounter a place. So instead of "what", this theme deals with the question of how children experience the place. And while the children explore and play in this way, they experience certain moments.

Moments

Some of the moments the children remembered had distinct features, and on closer inspection I realized that many of them had some elements in common. Following this thought, I managed to distinguish them and group them into three themes: Risk, Fascination and Discomfort.

Risk

Simon: But I walked across once with ice on the bridge. That was also, um, I almost fell in.⁶

In a more natural environment, it can happen that we have to deal with unforeseen conditions and sudden changes. This often comes along with a higher risk of accidents. Simon told me that he never had experienced ice on the bridge before and then when it was icy he almost slipped and fell into the water. When he told me about it there was a sense of agitation but also a little excitement in his voice. Other children experienced something similar during running, climbing or other activities. Sometimes it went wrong, and they fell into the water or on the ground (but without serious injuries). It seemed that the pupils intentionally sought the danger. They wanted to see if they could achieve whatever they set their minds to. Especially in a not controlled environment like a school or house, the children can search for such situations where they have to assess danger and take risks. And

⁵ Author's translation, original: Aber an der Seite, es hat halt geregnet und dann an der Seite ist da so eine kleine flussartige Rinne oder so und da kann man halt, wenn man wasserfeste Schuhe hat, reinlaufen. Das fühlt sich auch irgendwie cool an, dass man dann einfach nicht nass wird und einfach im Wasser läuft.

⁶ Author's translation, original: Ich bin aber einmal rübergelaufen mit Eis auf der Brücke. Das war auch, "ahm, ich wäre fast reingefallen.

sometimes risk can turn into accidents whereby the children also have to deal with the consequences.

Jonas: Pascal was, well, he flew in completely. So really, everything was wet.

Interviewer: But what do you do then?

Jonas: First sit him in front of the chimney, then call his parents and wait for him to be picked up. It's for sure ... It wasn't much fun in winter.⁷

What I found remarkable was that the children did not take the accidents as something horrible but instead, they saw it as their own responsibility and were not afraid that it could happen again.

Ben: It's a bit your own fault if you... Nabil: Fall in, yes. Ben: uh, willfully trying out things there. But I wouldn't refuse to go to Mühlthal, to a playground or anywhere else for that reason. It's very nice there.⁸

So, risk can be experienced everywhere but I see the place as a crucial factor. In this particular place, where the children generally felt safe and comfortable, they seemed very inclined to try things out and take some risks. In addition, the place has to offer the right characteristics so that one has the opportunity to take risks.

Fascination

Nina: And it was cute, because in my group, we were the first, a salamander ran across our way, it waddled along [grinning] and then fell into the bushes.⁹

The moments I grouped in the theme "Fascination" were accompanied by an expression of excitement and joy. So, it was not just what they said, but the way they said it that caught my attention. This moment of fascination was often related to animals or water. Both can be

⁷ Author's translation, original: [Jonas] Pascal war ja, ist ja mal äh komplett reingeflogen. Also wirklich, dass alles nass war. [I] Aber was macht man da? [Jonas] Erstmal vor den Kamin setzen, dann Eltern anrufen und warten, bis er abgeholt wird. Ist sicher ... im Winter war das so gar nicht lustig.

⁸ Author's translation, original: [Ben] Ein bisschen ist man ja auch selbst schuld wenn man... [Nabil] reinfällt, ja. [Ben] "ah mutwillig da irgendwelche Sachen ausprobieren. Aber ich würde deshalb auf keinen Fall nicht mehr ins Mühlthal wollen, auf einen Spielplatz oder sonst wo hin. Da ist es sehr schön.

⁹ Author's translation, original: Und es war süß, weil uns, in meiner Gruppe, wir waren die Erste, da ist ein Salamander über den Weg gelaufen, der ist dann so lang gewatschelt [Grinsen] und dann ins Gebüsch gefallen.

seen as more active counterparts in terms of the interaction between child and place, as both animals and water move of their own accord.

Mario: I also think it's cool, because with the creeks, I always call them mini waterfalls, sometimes it looks a bit like a junior waterfall.¹⁰

However, I don't believe that fascination needs an active counterpart, but rather that it is driven by personal interests and animals as well as water are very popular among children. Other example for this fascination was a thing they called "tree foam" (German: "Baumschaum").

Lena: It was really raining and then you had water running down the tree and then there was some kind of foam at the bottom. And it tasted like water and a little bit sweeter because it probably had resin in it.¹¹

The senses seem to play an important role in fascinating experiences. Not only seeing it, but also smelling it, feeling it and even tasting it can awaken interest and curiosity.

Discomfort

Lena: It depends on whether it's summer or winter. Or whether it's muddy or not. If it's winter, fall, it's raining, everything is muddy, it's wet. And then it's not so great. But if it's summer and everything is nice and dry and you can run around, then it's good.¹²

Lena's answer to my question about how they feel at the place shows how dependent her mood is on the environmental conditions. A feeling of discomfort occurred in the interviews almost exclusively in connection with natural influences. As part of the program is to go outside in all weathers, for some children it is the first time they have been outside in the rain for a longer period of time. It is therefore understandable that students are not used to cold, hot, dirty, or wet conditions, which leads to a feeling of discomfort. When this feeling arose, it often overshadowed the excitement with which the children spoke about their place. But some children, who liked the place anyway, did not care so much about the environmental

¹⁰ Author's translation, original: Ich finde es halt auch cool, weil bei den Bächen, also ich nenne es immer so Mini-Wasserfälle, da ist es manchmal ein bisschen so aus, wie so ein Junior-Wasserfall

¹¹ Author's translation, original: Es hat halt richtig geregnet und dann hat man so, da ist so Wasser den Baum so richtig runtergerinnt und dann war da unten irgendwie so Schaum. Und der hat nach Wasser geschmeckt und ein bisschen so versüßt, weil da wahrscheinlich Harz dran war.

¹² Author's translation, original: Kommt drauf an, ob es im Sommer oder Winter ist. Oder ob es matschig oder nicht ist. Wenn es so Winter ist, Herbst, es regnet, alles ist matschig, es ist nass. Und dann ist es nicht so toll. Aber wenn es im Sommer ist und alles schön trocken ist und man rumrennen kann, dann ist es gut.

conditions. It rather seemed that the pupils were not always that prepared for the corresponding environmental conditions.

Nina: That it's a bit stupid to go there because it's so wet and rainy. Because it usually rains too. Last time, the path we walked was next to a real stream. And the children who had waterproof shoes, the lucky ones, ran through it. In this creek.¹³

Here Nina mentioned that the children who were equipped with rain boots, "the lucky ones", could play in the creek. Just because she didn't have the right shoes for it, she couldn't play with the others. Bad environmental conditions do not automatically lead to discomfort, but it depends on the combination of conditions and adaptation. This means sometimes feelings of discomfort could be prevented by wearing the right clothes or doing the right things like moving to get warm or lighting a fire. I will return to this point later when I talk about how these findings might enrich the discussion on PBE.

Knowing

The last two sections were more about how and what the students experience in this place. This section is about 'knowing', in other words the fact that the students have had many experiences of the place because they have spent a lot of time there. This means that they have acquired knowledge about the place. They showed to have a good memory for what the place looks like and that they easily recognize it when you show them pictures of the place. For the first two pictures of figure 1, I purposefully chose wide-angle shots with no clearly recognizable features so that the children had no point of reference. But almost all the pupils recognized "Mühlthal" from the first picture they saw. By looking at those pictures in figure 1 the children immediately reminisce what they had experienced there. They could tell me about the plants and animals they found or about the experience they made there.

¹³ Author's translation, original: Dass es ein bisschen blöder ist dahin zu gehen, weil es so nass und regnerisch ist. Weil es meistens auch regnet. Letztes mal war der Weg den wir gelaufen sind, so ein richtiger Bach daneben. Und die Kinder die wasserfeste Schuhe hatten, die glücklichen, sind dann da drin rumgelaufen. In diesem Bach.

Figure 1: Photos of the place where the OE mainly takes place. These pictures were shown to the pupils in this order during the interview: (a) First picture (b) Second picture (c) Third picture (d) Fourth picture.



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

Peter: Mühlthal! This is by the pond where the bridge is.¹⁴

Or another example:

Nabil: This is the playground.

Jonas: Yes, that's where I fell into the water.

Ben: There was also a lake with frogspawn.¹⁵

¹⁴ Author's translation, original: Mühlthal. Das ist an dem Teich, wo die Brücke ist.

¹⁵ Author's translation, original: [Nabil] Das ist der Spielplatz.[Jonas] Ja, da bin ich ins Wasser gefahren. [Ben] Da gab es auch so einen See mit Froschlaich.

This way of "knowing" a place is very different from the knowledge you have about a place when you only see pictures, read or hear something about it. This is where I make the distinction between knowledge about a place and "knowing" a place. The children have experienced the place themselves and therefore know it for themselves. When they see pictures of it, certain memories and feelings come up that affect their mood, the way they speak and their whole body. This way of knowing a place is much more embodied and intuitive than simply "having knowledge" of it. This more embodied and experience based "knowing" can also be seen by how the children managed to find their place on a map. As mentioned in section 4.4, I gave them the task to find Mühlthal on a digital map on my computer. All four groups managed to find it, with one group needing a small clue.

Tom: Wait, this is holy mountain. Holy mountain.

Ryan: So, let's follow the train first.

*Brian: Then we drive up here to Mühlthal. Yes, Mühlstraße.
Mühlthalstraße. Then upper train station path.*

Alex: There I would say.¹⁶

Remarkable here was how they found it. They obviously didn't know where it was on the map at the beginning, but by retracing their steps and combining their prior knowledge of the region, they found it. It is interesting to see that they knew Mühlthal itself very well but had no idea where it was located in the region. And yet they managed to find it by walking from one familiar place to the next. It seems that they have created their own map in their minds.

Familiarity

So far we have talked about how children experience a place, what they experience there and that they become "knowing" about the place as a result. But beside the more cognitive aspect of getting to know a place, there are also noticeable changes in the affective component of it. There was a unique feeling that the children expressed.

Nina: But I think it's cool when you, for example, ... I actually know the place reasonably well now and I know that if we go there, we'll probably

¹⁶ Author's translation, original: [Tom] Warte, hier ist ja Heiligenberg. Heiligenberg. [Ryan] Also lass erstmal der Bahn folgen. [Brian] Tiefburg, dann fahren wir hier hoch zum Mühlthal. Ja, Mühlstraße. Mühlthalstraße. Dann oberer Bahnhofweg.[Alex] Da würde ich sagen.

*go to that place or that square. And I think it's cool when you walk somewhere and then you almost know, if there's only one place where you actually always go, that you'll go there. Or where you can take a break and I think that's cool.*¹⁷

Nina couldn't articulate it exactly, but through repeated visits she knows the place and therefore says that it feels cool to be there. This means that her feeling for the place has changed over time. I call this feeling, which the children perceived but could not name, familiarity.

*Brian: I also personally think Mühlthal is better because it also gives you... I think it gives you a cool feeling to be in the forest, because I'm often in the forest with my dog.*¹⁸

Brian gives us another example for that inexpressible feeling and also an explanation. Because he has visited this place several times beforehand, he felt already familiar with it. Thus, this feeling is dependent on previous experiences with the place or even similar places. Two children explained to me that they like Mühlthal because they like forest in general since they have a forest nearby their home. However, familiarity is something that has to grow over time. Either the children were already familiar with the place before the OE program, or they became so through it. The question remains to what extent they got the feeling of familiarity. There were certainly a few children who didn't like the place so much, partly because of their experiences with it. But the vast majority liked the place very much and seemed to be very familiar with it. Giving a detailed description of the feeling of familiarity is a difficult endeavor. The children realized that there was something different, but could not provide a detailed description of what was different.

*Lucas: I also think it's a completely different feeling when we're here in the forest, because I know the forest here much better than the Mühlthal. And it's just a different feeling when you're in a place you've been to more often.*¹⁹

¹⁷ Author's translation, original: Aber ich finde es halt cool, wenn man, zum Beispiel so ... Ich kenn jetzt den Ort eigentlich halbwegs gut und ich weiß jetzt so wenn wir dahin laufen gehen wir wahrscheinlich auf den oder auf den Platz so. Und ich finds halt dann cool wenn man irgendwo hinläuft und dann weiß man eigentlich schon so fast, wenn da nur ein Ort ist wo man eigentlich immer ist, dass man dann da hingehet. Oder wo man dann Pause machen kann gut und das finde ich dann cool.

¹⁸ Author's translation, original: Ich finde auch persönlich Mühlthal besser, weil es gibt einem auch... Ich finde, es gibt einem ein cooles Gefühl im Wald zu sein, weil ich bin auch oft im Wald mit meinem Hund.

¹⁹ Author's translation, original: Also ich finde auch, wenn wir hier jetzt im Wald sind, ist ein ganz anderes Gefühl, weil den Wald hier kenne ich auch viel besser als das Mühlthal. Und das ist halt einfach ein anderes Gefühl, wenn man einfach an der Stelle ist, wo man öfter ist.

Through their exploration and play in and around the place, they gathered so many different experiences and felt various emotions. They got to know the place so well that the feeling they have now when they are back in this place is one of intimacy accompanied by a sense of security. I also noticed this during my observations. I experienced the children on site as relieved and full of energy. According to the children, the downside of becoming familiar with a place was that it became more boring. They already knew it and their great curiosity slowly began to fade.

Mario: Well, I would also like to go somewhere else, because otherwise you always see the same thing. And that would be boring.²⁰

This increasing boredom was mentioned by several pupils, and some wished they could go somewhere else at least sometimes. I see this boredom not as a separate theme rather as a part of familiarity.

Simon: Yes, because you ... we are there ... We always go to the same places. That's why you know it. But it's still ... still great to go into the forest.²¹

We talked about how often they visit this place, and one child said it gets boring because of that. At that point, Simon had a bit of trouble finding the right words. When he told me this, I understood him to mean that he also had the feeling that not everything in the place was super nice and that it was boring, but he still liked it. So, whether boredom or the good feeling of familiarity prevails depends of course on the person.

Meeting Needs

Whether the children generally liked a place or not depended heavily on whether the place was able to fulfill their needs. The pupils mentioned various things that they missed or liked about the place.

²⁰ Author's translation, original: Also ich würde auch gerne mal woanders hingehen, weil sonst sieht man ja immer dasselbe. Und das wäre dann schon langweilig.

²¹ Author's translation, original: Ja, also weil man ... wir sind da ja ... wir gehen immer an dieselben Stellen. Deswegen kennt man es. Aber es ist trotzdem immer noch ... immer noch toll, in den Wald zu gehen.

Nina: And I also think Mühlthal is better, because if you have a drink or...

Lena: Yes, there's a proper toilet and everything.

Nina: Yes, a toilet, for example²²

Nina was just about to say something about fresh water supply when Lena interrupted her by pointing to the toilets. But later she mentioned again how nice it was that they could fill up their bottles in the house nearby. Simon also liked Mühlthal better than the other place, as they had the house to stay in.

Simon: I also think it's better in Mühlthal. We also have a hut there where we can shelter if it rains too much. If it rains too much in Nussloch, then we can only drive back or suffer in the heavy rain.²³

This might sound obvious, but the children liked the place that could meet their basic needs for toilets, fresh water, shelter and so on, more than the other place where they have been quite sometimes as well. But in addition to these clearer aspects, children also have other needs that also influence their opinion of a place. These needs can be different between individuals. For example, several children said they liked the space the place offered to move around and be active, one said the opposite and didn't like moving around so much. Others needed quiet surroundings to relax and be by themselves. Still others complained about how far Mühlthal was from the school and wished it was closer. So, some needs differ from person to person, while others are the same for everyone. However, meeting the children's needs was an important factor that led to Mühlthal being the preferred place for the children to stay.

²² Author's translation, original: [Nina] Und Mühlthal finde ich auch besser, weil wenn man was trinkt oder..[Lena] Ja, da gibt es halt auch eine richtige Toilette und so. [Nina] Ja, Toilette zum Beispiel.

²³ 2Author's translation, original: Ich finde das im Mühlthal auch besser. Da haben wir nämlich auch so eine Hütte, wo wir, wenn es zu stark regnet, uns unterstellen können. Wenn es in Nussloch zu stark regnet, dann können wir nur zurückfahren oder wir leiden dann eben im starken Regen.

6 Discussion

After presenting the result of the data analysis in the previous chapter, this one will discuss the findings by contextualizing them and drawing on the literature presented in chapter 2 and chapter 3. In doing so I will not only use one theory but will make use of different areas. This will provide me with the necessary vocabulary to shed some new light on my results and the connection to PBE.

Exploration and Play

The way children interact with a place through play and exploration is closely related to Chatterjee's (2005) dimension of place-friendship, freedom of expression. A place is an active agent that can influence us either positively or negatively. It can either restrict and limit us or encourage exploration and play. The extent to which we are inhibited or encouraged results from the interaction between us and the place, which is influenced by both parties. Chatterjee draws on Gibson (1979) theory of affordances, which states that affordances arise from the environment and are not just mental constructs. For example, the OE program place, which includes a forest, playground, and creek, provides rich opportunities for exploration. This environment actively encourages students to explore further without the usual constraints found in more controlled environments. There are no dangers like traffic, no strict limits on where they can go, and even typical school behaviors like sitting quietly are not enforced.

However, it is not enough to simply have no rules. There must be a harmonious relationship between the children and the place. Children who are used to playing in a forest, for example, are more accustomed to the opportunities in such an environment, while children who prefer urban activities such as skateboarding will see more opportunities in the city. Therefore, when implementing PBE, it is important to consider whether the environment and the students are a good fit or what adaptations are needed to improve this fit and encourage deeper engagement with the place.

Nolan (2015) found in his study on place experiences that his participants also tended to play and explore their place when they were younger. He notes that some of the participants who explored place as children continued to do so even when they called it hiking or walking. They had developed a strong emotional connection to their place by exploring it and playing

there. This gives rise to the assumption that this finding does not only apply specifically to these studies but can also be observed elsewhere. And that these modes of free roaming contribute to a deeper relationship with the place and should be addressed directly by PBE.

Risk

The children sometimes actively looked for risks they could take, such as climbing or skating on thin ice. In PBE, risk is not really addressed and is more attributed to adventure education or other directions of OE (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). PBE actually actively tries to avoid the paradox of risk seeking and safety management by not emphasizing risky activities such as rock climbing or mountain biking. OE that works with such sports has a tendency to neglect the place, which is what PBE wants to emphasize (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). My findings show that risk is nevertheless a topic for the children. By engaging with a place, it is inevitable to avoid risk. So, if it's not avoidable PBE has to consider it. I see in the way the children evaluated the risky situations and went into it offers many possibilities, like learning independence responsibility and new skills. Although I would refrain from actively demanding risky behavior, you can take it up as an option if the children push it themselves.

Fascination

Advocates of it often highlight the feature of PBE to encourage pupils to participate and nurture their motivation. What stands out is that what G. A. Smith (2002) means by saying that the students should be co-design of their learning subject goes along with the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (2012). The self-determination theory just says the opportunity to choose the learning subject on one's own and motivation to learn that subject are related. Thus, if you can choose what you want to learn you are more motivated to do it. That means taking this characteristic of PBE seriously it can get children more motivated. Of course, following Gibson (1979), it depends not only on the place but also on the exchange of place and child if they children are willingly to explore and play. But my results show that when the children explored the place, they were likely to find something that catches their attention and interest. The crucial point now is that they are interested in something and allow them to bring this into the discourse of the subject matter. The teacher must be open and flexible enough to seize such opportunities and allow them to develop. As Jickling et al. (2018) puts it in their second touchstone for outdoor educators, you have to be open to surprises in education. We must recognize that not everything is predictable, especially in the outdoors, and that the world as a whole is too complex to understand.

Discomfort

The discomfort of children participating in outdoor education programs was primarily attributed to environmental conditions such as weather or temperature. These challenges sometimes overshadowed the overall positive experiences of some participants. This reminds me of a discussion I had with a university lecturer about why the outdoor program was particularly challenging for Erasmus students. She explained to me that the program aims to teach students how to adapt to such conditions so that they feel comfortable enough to enjoy the experience, in keeping with the philosophy of “thrive, don’t survive”. Although the PBE program and the OE program of the Erasmus students studied are not directly comparable, it is clear that the discomfort caused by environmental factors can be reduced. This raises the question of whether it would be beneficial to offer training on appropriate clothing and methods of keeping warm.

In OE, harsh weather conditions such as rain are often seen as an opportunity for growth. However, North (2015) criticizes this romanticized view of the outdoors, noting that not all students see these conditions as mere challenges. He noted that some saw them as “something which reiterated their everyday discomforts” (p.295). Similarly, I observed that some students were not bothered by rain or cold, while the most were very uncomfortable. In my opinion, appropriate training in dealing with these environmental conditions could help to reduce discomfort, although it will not necessarily change individual perceptions or completely eliminate discomfort. This suggests that while educational interventions can better prepare students to deal with adverse conditions, personal experiences and reactions will still vary.

Knowing

As the children spent a lot of time in this place, they became familiar with it. Indeed, the children demonstrated significant knowledge of the place, not only in terms of spatial arrangement, but also in terms of natural elements such as soil conditions, frogspawn, and tree species - topics previously introduced by their teacher. Matthews (1992) points out that environmental learning and competence are nurtured through both direct and indirect experiences. With direct he refers to self-experiencing with own senses, and with indirect the information we can gain by speaking, or writing with other but also the consume of media (radio, television, social media, etc.) Burgess (1990) emphasizes that “indirect” does not mean secondary. The mass media have a huge influence on our perception of the world, and

children in particular are strongly influenced by them. This means that we also need to see these findings in the context of the wider social and cultural context in which children live. Before they were in a forest for the first time, they already had an image in their minds of what a forest is and what you can do there. As Ardoin et al. (2012) also show, the direct experience of a place can never be completely separated from the social or cultural component. In Chatterjee's (2005) framework, this type of learning and competence development is described by a continuous actualization of the affordances (see Gibson, 1979) of a place, facilitated by discovery or manipulation. In the context of PBE, this process manifests through an experiential approach where children learn and experience place through exploration and interaction. My findings confirm this and show that such active engagement not only enhances understanding but also fosters a deeper connection with place. This connection, reinforced by the children's ability to change their place, contributes to their identification with the place, as I will discuss further.

Familiarity

The increasing sense of familiarity among the children can not only be attributed to their growing knowledge of the place. It is not only based on cognition but rather on emotion. This feature of an increasing feeling of belonging is noticed in the literature from different concepts. Looking at the concept of "sense of place" as described by Jorgensen and Stedman (2001), with the wording familiarity, two aspects can be addressed: place identity and place attachment. On the one hand the children's got more attached to the place but also did identify themselves more with it. They had their own favorite locations within Mühlthal and wanted to defend Mühlthal against the children from the forest kindergarten that is located there.

Familiarity can also be seen as a part of insideness as described from Relph (1976) in contrast as outsidership. In that sense, the children have become insiders by spending time within the place. The characterization of insideness is that people feel rather relaxed than stressed or part of rather than alienated from the place. The children could not specify it but expressed a feeling of security, so relaxed and talk about Mühlthal as "our place", so they are a part of it. Relph (1976) distinguishes different depths of insideness:

- Vicarious insideness: Feeling of familiarity because the place is similar to already known place.

- Behavioral insiderness: Unique features of the place are known and so we can distinguish this place from other places.
- Empathetic insiderness: A emotional and empathetic relationship that acknowledge the place symbolic meaning and value.
- Existential insiderness: The feeling that this place is where you truly belong.

The children could be placed on two levels. Some were on a behavioral level others showed more emotional connection to the place and are on the empathetic level.

According to Chatterjee's (2005) concept of place-friendship, children only develop an emotional attachment to the place through active engagement with it. From this perspective, the children developed an attachment to the place by interacting with it and creating their own space within it. This engagement transformed the place from "a place" to "our place". Following this thought it is crucial in PBE to give pupils the opportunity to actively change and contribute to the place. This involvement promotes their identification with the place and strengthens their sense of familiarity. Therefore, PBE educators should look for ways to foster children's deep involvement in a place by asking how they might contribute to or change that place.

Meeting Needs

Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) concept of sense of place includes place dependence as the properties that facilitate desired activities. I would also say that not only desirable activities are meant, but also necessary activities. Indeed, my results show that children only like a place if it fulfills their basic needs, such as access to toilets and fresh water. Similarly, Williams and Roggenbuck (1989) showed that a place that provided the preferred activities was more popular with tourists. This suggests that it is not just the necessary needs, but all needs, and if a place can fulfill these, it is more likely that people will like it. According to Chatterjee's (2005) concept of place-friendships, meeting the children's needs can be viewed as a form of caring for them. In her dimension of environmental care, Chatterjee notes that care for the environment or specific places depends on whether those places can support the children's activities and interests and make them feel safe. Essentially, if places provide for the children well, the children will reciprocate this care. Given the significant role that childhood experiences in nature play in shaping environmental awareness (Palmer, 1993; Tanner, 1980), PBE should ensure positive interactions with nature. Therefore, PBE should

either select locations that already meet children's needs or actively work to adapt places to do so.

Limitations and further research

Finally, I would like to point out the limitations of this study and raise questions for possible further research. There are four points that I would like to address.

Scope of Data Collection: One limitation to the depth of the descriptions of the place experiences was the choice of focus group interviews. As explained in the previous chapter, I chose them to create a good atmosphere in which the children were willing to share their problems. It cannot be said that individual interviews could have provided more or less insight into the children's lives. Nevertheless, individual interviews also have advantages in terms of being uninfluenced by other opinions, so that further research should draw on both individual and group interviews. The creation of meaning in the world is not only individual, but also social. Furthermore, even though I have tried to create an atmosphere in which everyone feels safe, certain group dynamics that influence the participants cannot be avoided. It is therefore possible that only the most popular opinions were shared in the discussion and that interesting differences between the children did not come to light.

Subjectivity in Interpretation: In interpretative phenomenology, the researcher plays a central role within the process. The involvement of the researcher in the object of research requires the researcher to reflect on their own beliefs, thoughts, and assumptions. Although this is a great strength, it also has some pitfalls. I have often questioned my own findings as to whether I am over-interpreting the results or whether they are still appropriate. This problem could be addressed by having two or more researchers double check the transcripts. However, as this is a Master's thesis, I worked alone. What I did was to explain my findings to friends during the analysis to check if what I was saying sounded logical. In any case, the results of any study should always be viewed with caution.

Temporal Constraints: The experiences of place captured represent only a snapshot in time and are not able to capture the full dynamic change in the way people experience a place on a weekly basis. The relationship between place and children may evolve over time as more time passes. It is important to note that place in general is a dynamic concept, and this study may not have fully represented this dynamic and fluid nature. The aim of this study was not to make statements about long-term development, but it would be interesting to investigate how the students who participated in the program remember the place and whether they still feel familiar with it.

Specificity of the Place: In this study, the place where the outdoor education program took place was quite a “natural” environment. This could also influence the children’s experience of the place and contribute to a clear distinction between what is natural and what is human. However, it is important to note that such experiences are not limited to natural environments. Urban and man-made environments can also be effective contexts for PBE. However, it would be interesting to see what elements of place experience can be found in more humanized environments and whether these differ from natural environments.

7 Conclusion

This thesis examined how students experience a place within a place-based outdoor education program and how that could contribute to PBE programs. The existing literature on PBE often discusses the definitions, goals, and benefits of PBE, but rarely discusses the concept of place itself and how place is experienced by students. This paper attempts to fill, or at least narrow, this gap by providing a deeper understanding of the concept of place and its practical applications within PBE. However, the aim is not to make general recommendations for PBE, but rather to provide insights that enhance the overall framework of PBE by shedding light on how students view their environment. The study took an interpretative phenomenological approach. Data was collected through the observation of two outdoor days and four focus group interviews. The analysis was carried out using IPA (Smith, 2002). The results were presented and discussed by connecting them to the literature. Now the answers to the research questions are briefly summarized.

What elements compose a student's experience of place within a place-based outdoor education program?

My results reveal that the elements composing place experiences are diverse and multilayered. The study explored not only what the students experienced but also how they experienced the place. Two main modes of interaction were identified: exploration and play. Exploration involves shifting attention across a broader area, while play focuses on intense interaction with specific aspects of the place. Further, three distinct motives emerged in response to the students' experiences: Fascination, Risk, and Discomfort. Fascination was marked by expressions of excitement and interest. Risk was actively sought by students, as they tested their own limits. Discomfort was primarily associated with environmental conditions and often overshadowed the positive aspects of their experiences. Through their experiences, the pupils became very familiar with the place. What I call "knowledge" has significantly shaped their experiences, especially in the sense of the "familiarity" they have developed. This "familiarity" was omnipresent. While not explicitly articulated by the children, a sense of trust and security was evident from their similar statements. This shows that the time students spend in a place makes a difference to the experience as students build a strong connection to that place. Lastly, the results indicated that children often favored places that best satisfied their needs.

How can these findings contribute to place-based education programs?

The questions or suggestions for PBE can be summarized as follows:

Promote engagement: For PBE programs, it is important to ensure that the environment is a good fit for the students. This includes adapting spaces that encourage exploration and play without undue restrictions so that students can engage deeply with the place.

Risk assessment: PBE must acknowledge and manage the natural risks associated with outdoor activities. It is advisable not to actively focus lessons on risks but to address the topic and opportunities for learning when children take risks of their own accord.

Supporting fascination: According to the characteristics of PBE, the students' motivation is already promoted by the fact that they can help shape the learning object. However, practice often looks different. PBE teachers should therefore be aware of the students' interests and give them space to discover what they are interested in. This can increase motivation and encourage unexpected learning successes.

Managing discomfort: Environmental factors such as weather can cause discomfort that interferes with positive experiences. PBE programs might consider training students on how to dress and prepare for adverse conditions to mitigate discomfort, keeping in mind that these conditions are perceived differently by each individual.

Promote familiarity: Frequent and meaningful interaction with a place increases students' familiarity and emotional attachment to that place, transforming it from "a place" to "our place". PBE programs should allow students to change and contribute to these places to increase their sense of belonging and care for the environment.

Meeting needs: PBE environments should meet the basic and broader needs of children, such as safety, accessibility, and comfort. Places that successfully meet these needs also foster children's care for place and promote positive attitudes toward the environment.

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List of tables and figures

Table 1: Table is taken verbatim from Chatterjee (2005, p. 16). She translates the criteria for friendship from Doll (1996) (left column) to what they mean for place-friendships (right column). p. 20

Figure 1: Photos of the place where the OE mainly takes place. These pictures were shown to the pupils in this order during the interview: (a) First picture (b) Second picture (c) Third picture (d) Fourth picture. p. 47

Annexes

Annexes 1: Information letter and consent form (English)



Information on participation in the study

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Letter to parents

Bø, the 25. January 2024

Dear parents,

You are receiving this letter because your child is taking part or has taken part in your school's outdoor education project. Today I would like to ask you and your child to support me with my Master's thesis. I am studying the Nordic Master of Outdoor Studies in Bø, Norway, and as part of my Master's thesis I would like to learn more about the relationship between children and their environment and the importance of nature for them. In particular, I would like to find out what impact an outdoor education approach like the one your child is experiencing has on the relationship between children and nature.

What does the project entail?

To answer my question, I plan to interview the children in groups of three to five pupils. The interviews are scheduled to last around 20 to 30 minutes and will take place in consultation with the school during school hours. This means that there is no extra work for you as parents. The interviews will include questions about the pupils' opinions, thoughts and feelings about nature, the forest project and the place where it takes place. Furthermore, I will accompany the school classes on two or three days during the outdoor lessons in order to better understand the project, its aims and how it works. In the course of this study, data will be collected about you and your child. The following data will be collected if your child participates in the study: Name, contact information, date of birth and audio recordings. The audio recordings of the interviews will then be transcribed and anonymized in order to analyze them in my master's thesis.

I need your consent to collect, store and process the data. Please find attached all information on the storage, processing and deletion of data as well as the declaration of consent.

I would be very glad if your child would take part in the study. The signed forms will be collected at school. If you have any questions, you can contact me, Cornelius Richter, by telephone at +491624992080 or by e-mail at 260385@usn.no.

Best regards,

C. Richter

General information for participants

Thank you for your interest in supporting this master's thesis.

The aim of the study is to understand to what extent and in what way children build emotional and affective bonds to the place where the outdoor lessons take place through the forest project. This is of particular interest to me, as there is a strong connection between emotional attachment to places and nature and environmentally friendly behavior.

Especially today, in times of environmental pollution, forest dieback and climate change, this is more important than ever. Sound recordings are to be made during the survey for the scientifically valid evaluation of the results. These will be analyzed anonymously for Cornelius Richter's master's thesis. For the recording, storage and processing of the audio recordings, as well as personal data (name, date of birth, contact information), the permission of the (both) legal representatives of the children is required. The procedure for collecting and processing the data is described below.

Procedure of the survey

In March, Cornelius Richter will accompany the outdoor lessons in various classes for two to three days. On the one hand, this serves to get to know the forest project better and, on the other, to introduce himself to the children in advance so that he is already known to them for the planned interviews. The interviews will also take place in March. They will be held during school hours so that there is no additional work for you as parents. The interviews will be conducted in small groups of three to five children to give the children the opportunity to discuss and explore topics amongst themselves without being overly influenced by the interviewer. The aim is to understand and describe the children's thoughts and feelings.

Voluntariness and anonymity

Participation in the survey is voluntary and non-participation will not result in any disadvantages for you or your child. Furthermore, your child can terminate participation at any time and without giving reasons, without any disadvantages for him/her. You can also end your participation in the study at any time and without giving reasons, without any disadvantages for you or your child. The data and personal information collected as part of this study will be treated confidentially. Thus, anyone who has personal data through direct contact with you is subject to a duty of confidentiality. Furthermore, the results of the study will be published in anonymized form, i.e. data cannot be assigned to an individual.

Data protection & data retention periods

Recording and evaluation of the data is pseudonymized using a false name and without specifying the names of the participants. There is a coding list that links all data belonging to a person to this person. This coding list is only accessible to Cornelius Richter and Kirsten Wielandt Houe, who is responsible for the data processing of the master thesis. The non-anonymized data is stored on the password-protected USN OneDrive with an encrypted virtual hard drive. Once the anonymization of the data has been completed (by 16.05.2024 at the latest), the coding list and all non-anonymized data will be destroyed. The data collected will then be completely anonymized. This means that it is no longer possible for anyone to link the anonymized transcripts to real people. Consent to the storage and processing of non-anonymized data can be revoked at any time without any disadvantages for the participants. A deletion, correction or inspection of the non-anonymized data can be requested at any time and will be granted within 30 days. You also have the right to information about the data security measures that apply to the processing of the data. You also have the right to lodge a complaint with the Norwegian Data Protection Authority. All data related to the project will be deleted after completion or termination of Cornelius Richter's master thesis, but no later than 16.05.2024. The right to destruction, deletion or return of your data and materials does not apply if the material or data is anonymized or has already been published.

Possible advantages and disadvantages of participation

We do not expect any disadvantages or advantages from participating in the study. With the exception that the participating child may miss one or part of a school lesson because of the interview. The interview will be anonymized, i.e. no one except the interviewer and the interviewees will know who said what. Furthermore, everything that is said in the interview is confidential and will not cause any disadvantages for the participants.

Accountability

The University of Southeast Norway (USN) and the project leader Kirsten Wielandt Houe (email: Kirsten.W.Houe@usn.no) are responsible for the protection of privacy and data protection in this project. Ethical approval has been obtained from the competent Norwegian authority SIKT. More information about SIKT can be found on their website: www.sikt.no/en/about-sikt.

You can contact Cornelius Richter at any time by telephone (+491624992080) or email (260385@usn.no) if you have any questions about the content and procedure of the interviews, or about the processing and storage of data.

If you have any questions about data protection in the context of the project, you can contact the institution's data protection officer: personvernombud@usn.no

Declaration of consent for participation in the survey

We (name of participant and parent/guardian in block letters)
(Both parents/guardians must sign!)

have been informed in writing about the survey and its procedure. We agree that the data required for the survey may be collected and processed as described above. If we had any questions about the survey, they were answered in full by Mr. Cornelius Richter.

We agree that the fully anonymized data may be used for research purposes. For this purpose, they will be kept until 16.05.2024 at the latest or deleted by Cornelius Richter after completion or termination of the Master's thesis. Individual anonymized quotations from the transcripts will be used for publications.

We have had enough time to make a decision and are consenting to our participation. We are aware that participation in the survey is voluntary and that we can terminate our participation at any time without giving reasons.

Consent and signature

We have received, read, and accept the consent for participation in the survey.

Name of participant in block letters:

Place, date & signature of legal representatives:

Name of legal representatives in block letters:

For questions or other concerns:

<p><i>Ansprechpartner:</i> <i>Cornelius Richter</i> Nordic Master in Friluftsliv Studies (Outdoor Studies) Tel.: +49 1624992080 260385@usn.no</p>

Annexes 2: Information letter and consent form (German)



Informationen zur Studienteilnahme

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Department of Sports, Physical Education and Outdoor Studies
Gullbringengen 36, 3800 Bø

Cornelius Richter

Nordic Master in Friluftsliv Studies (Outdoor Studies)
Tel.: +49 1624992080
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Elternbrief

Bø, den 25. Januar 2024

Sehr geehrte Eltern,

Sie erhalten diesen Brief, da ihr Kind an dem Outdoor-Education-Projekt Ihrer Schule teilnimmt oder teilgenommen hat. Heute möchte ich Sie und ihr Kind darum bitten, mich bei meiner Masterarbeit zu unterstützen. Ich studiere den Nordic Master of Outdoor Studies in Bø in Norwegen und möchte im Rahmen meiner Masterarbeit mehr über die Beziehung zwischen Kindern und ihrer Umwelt und die Bedeutung der Natur für sie erfahren. Im Speziellen stelle ich mir die Frage, welchen Einfluss ein solcher Ansatz von Outdoor-Education, wie ihn Ihr Kind erfährt, auf die Beziehung zwischen Kindern und Natur hat.

Was beinhaltet das Projekt?

Um meine Frage zu beantworten, plane ich die Kinder in Gruppen von drei bis fünf SchülerInnen zu interviewen. Für die Interviews ist eine Dauer von etwa 20 bis 30 Minuten eingeplant und sie werden in Absprache mit der Schule während der Schulzeit in der Schule stattfinden. So fällt für Sie als Eltern kein Mehraufwand an. Die Interviews werden Fragen enthalten zu den Meinungen, Gedanken und Gefühlen der SchülerInnen über Natur, das Waldprojekt und den Ort, an dem dieses stattfindet. Des Weiteren werde ich die Schulklassen an zwei oder drei Tagen während des Outdoor-Unterrichts begleiten um das Projekt, dessen Ziele und Ablauf besser zu verstehen. Im Zuge dieser Studie werden Daten über Sie und Ihr Kind gesammelt. Die folgenden Daten werden erhoben, wenn Ihr Kind an der Studie teilnimmt: Name, Kontaktinformationen, Geburtsdatum und Audioaufnahmen. Die Audioaufnahmen der Interviews werden anschließend transkribiert und anonymisiert, um sie in meiner Masterarbeit zu analysieren.

Zur Erhebung, Speicherung und Verarbeitung der Daten benötige ich Ihr Einverständnis. Hierfür finden Sie anbei alle Informationen zur Speicherung, Verarbeitung und Löschung der Daten sowie die Einverständniserklärung.

Über eine Teilnahme Ihres Kindes an der Studie würde ich mich sehr freuen. Die unterschriebenen Formulare werden in der Schule eingesammelt. Bei Fragen können Sie sich telefonisch unter der Nummer +491624992080 oder per Mail 260385@usn.no an mich, Cornelius Richter, wenden.

Viele Grüße,

C. Richter

Allgemeine Information für Teilnehmende

Vielen Dank für Ihr Interesse, diese Masterarbeit zu unterstützen.

Ziel der Studie ist es, zu verstehen, inwieweit und auf welche Weise Kinder durch das Waldprojekt emotionale und affektive Bindungen zu dem Ort aufbauen, an welchem der Outdoor-Unterricht stattfindet. Dies ist für mich von besonderem Interesse, da ein großer Zusammenhang zwischen emotionaler Verbundenheit zu Orten, bzw. Natur und umweltfreundlichem Verhalten besteht. Besonders heute, in Zeiten von Umweltverschmutzung, Waldsterben und Klimawandel ist dies wichtiger denn je. Während der Erhebung sollen für die wissenschaftlich valide Auswertung der Ergebnisse Tonaufnahmen gemacht werden. Diese werden für die Masterarbeit von Cornelius Richter anonymisiert analysiert. Für die Aufnahme, Speicherung und Verarbeitung der Tonaufnahmen, sowie persönlicher Daten (Name, Geburtsdatum, Kontaktinformation) wird die Genehmigung der (beiden) gesetzlichen Vertreter*innen der Kinder benötigt. Im Folgenden ist der Ablauf der Erhebung und die Verarbeitung der Daten beschrieben.

Ablauf der Erhebung

Im März wird Cornelius Richter, über zwei bis drei Tage hinweg den Outdoor-Unterricht in verschiedenen Klassen begleiten. Dies dient zum einen dazu, das Waldprojekt eingehender kennenzulernen, und zum anderen, um sich den Kindern vorab vorzustellen, sodass er ihnen für die geplanten Interviews bereits bekannt ist. Die Interviews werden ebenfalls im März erfolgen. Sie werden während der Unterrichtszeit in der Schule stattfinden, so dass für Sie als Eltern kein zusätzlicher Aufwand entsteht. Die Interviews werden in kleinen Gruppen von drei bis fünf Kindern durchgeführt, um den Kindern die Möglichkeit zu geben, Themen untereinander zu diskutieren und zu erforschen, ohne dabei allzu stark vom Interviewer beeinflusst zu werden. Ziel ist es, die Gedanken und Gefühle der Kinder zu verstehen und zu beschreiben.

Freiwilligkeit und Anonymität

Die Teilnahme an der Erhebung ist freiwillig und durch eine Nichtteilnahme entstehen keine Nachteile für Sie oder Ihr Kind. Des Weiteren kann Ihr Kind die Teilnahme jederzeit und ohne Angaben von Gründen beenden, ohne dass ihm/ihr dadurch Nachteile entstehen. Auch Sie können jederzeit und ohne Angabe von Gründen die Teilnahme an der Studie beenden, ohne dass Ihnen oder Ihrem Kind daraus Nachteile entstehen. Die im Rahmen dieser Studie erhobenen Daten und persönlichen Mitteilungen werden vertraulich behandelt. So unterliegen jeder und jede, der oder die durch direkten Kontakt mit Ihnen über personenbezogene Daten verfügt, der Schweigepflicht. Des Weiteren wird die Veröffentlichung der Ergebnisse der Studie in anonymisierter Form erfolgen, d.h. ohne dass Daten einer Person zugeordnet werden können.

Datenschutz & Aufbewahrungsfristen Interviews

Aufzeichnung und Auswertung der Daten erfolgen pseudonymisiert unter Verwendung einer Nummer und ohne Angabe der Namen der Teilnehmer*innen. Es existiert eine Kodierliste, welche alle zu einer Person gehörigen Daten mit dieser verbindet. Diese Kodierliste ist nur Cornelius Richter und der Verantwortlichen für die Datenverarbeitung der Masterarbeit Kirsten Wielandt Houe zugänglich. Die nicht-anonymisierten Daten werden auf dem Passwort-geschützten USN OneDrive mit verschlüsselter virtueller Festplatte aufbewahrt. Nach Abschluss der Anonymisierung der Daten (spätestens zum 16.05.2024) werden die Kodierliste und alle nicht anonymisierten Daten vernichtet. Die erhobenen Daten sind dann vollständig anonymisiert. Damit ist es niemandem mehr möglich, die anonymisierten Transkripte mit realen Personen in Verbindung zu bringen. Das Einverständnis zur Speicherung und Verarbeitung der nicht-anonymisierten Daten kann jederzeit widerrufen werden, ohne dass den Teilnehmer*innen daraus Nachteile entstehen. Eine Löschung, Korrektur oder Einsicht der nicht-anonymisierten Daten kann jederzeit verlangt werden und wird innerhalb von 30 Tagen gewährt. Sie haben ebenfalls das Recht auf Auskunft über die Datensicherheitsmaßnahmen, die für die Verarbeitung der Daten gelten. Außerdem haben Sie das Recht, eine Beschwerde bei der norwegischen Datenschutzbehörde einzureichen. Alle zum Projekt gehörigen Daten werden nach Abschluss oder Abbruch der Masterarbeit von Cornelius Richter, spätestens aber zum 16.05.2024, gelöscht. Das Recht auf Vernichtung, Löschung oder Rückgabe Ihrer Daten und Materialien gilt nicht, wenn das Material oder die Daten anonymisiert sind oder bereits veröffentlicht wurden.

Mögliche Vor- und Nachteile einer Teilnahme

Wir erwarten keine Nachteile oder Vorteile durch die Teilnahme an der Studie. Mit Ausnahme, dass das teilnehmende Kind möglicherweise eine oder einen Teil einer Schulstunde wegen des Interviews verpasst. Das Interview wird anonymisiert, d. h. niemand außer dem Interviewer und den Befragten wird wissen, wer was gesagt hat. Darüber hinaus ist alles, was in dem Interview gesagt wird, vertraulich und wird keine Nachteile für die Teilnehmenden mit sich bringen.

Verantwortlichkeit

Die Universität von Südostnorwegen (USN) und die Projektleiterin Kirsten Wielandt Houe (Email: Kirsten.W.Houe@usn.no) sind für den Schutz der Privatsphäre und den Datenschutz in diesem Projekt verantwortlich.

Die ethische Genehmigung wurde von der zuständigen norwegischen Behörde SIKT eingeholt. Mehr Informationen zu SIKT finden Sie auf deren Webseite: www.sikt.no/en/about-sikt.

Bei Fragen zum Inhalt und Ablauf der Interviews, sowie zur Verarbeitung und Speicherung der Daten können Sie sich jederzeit telefonisch (+491624992080) oder per Mail (260385@usn.no) an Cornelius Richter wenden.

Wenn Sie Fragen zum Datenschutz im Rahmen des Projekts haben, können Sie sich an den Datenschutzbeauftragten der Einrichtung wenden: personvernombud@usn.no

Einwilligungserklärung für Teilnahme an der Erhebung

Wir (Name Teilnehmer*in und Erziehungsberechtigte*r in Druckschrift)

(Beide Erziehungsberechtigten müssen unterschreiben!)

wurden schriftlich über die Erhebung und deren Ablauf aufgeklärt. Wir willigen ein, dass die für die Erhebung notwendigen Daten, wie oben beschrieben, erhoben und verarbeitet werden dürfen. Sofern wir Fragen zur Erhebung hatten, wurden sie von Herrn Cornelius Richter vollständig beantwortet.

Wir sind einverstanden, dass die vollständig anonymisierten Daten zu Forschungszwecken weiterverwendet werden können. Dazu werden diese maximal bis zum 16.05.2024 aufbewahrt oder aber nach Abschluss oder Abbruch der Masterarbeit von Cornelius Richter gelöscht. Aus den Transkripten werden einzelne anonymisierte Zitate für Veröffentlichungen verwendet.

Wir hatten genügend Zeit für die Entscheidung und sind mit der Teilnahme einverstanden. Wir wissen, dass die Teilnahme an der Erhebung freiwillig ist und wir die Teilnahme jederzeit ohne Angaben von Gründen beenden können.

Einwilligung und Unterschrift

Wir habe die Einwilligung für die Teilnahme an der Erhebung erhalten, gelesen und akzeptieren diese.

Name Teilnehmer*in in Druckschrift:

Ort, Datum & Unterschrift gesetzliche Vertreter*innen:

Name gesetzliche Vertreter*innen in Druckschrift:

Bei Fragen oder anderen Anliegen:

<p><i>Ansprechpartner:</i> <i>Cornelius Richter</i> Nordic Master in Friluftsliv Studies (Outdoor Studies) Tel.: +49 1624992080 260385@usn.no</p>

Annexes 3: Semi-structured interview guide

Semi-structured interview guide

Date:

Interviewer:

Number:

Start Time:

End Time:

Introduction

Hello everyone, my name is and I would like to thank you for your participation and your help with my university work. We are now going to have a 20 to 30 minutes interview about your opinions and thoughts on the outdoor education program you are participating in. It is important that you know that this is not a classroom situation, and I am not a teacher, so I will not be judging or grading you. There is no right or wrong, and everything you say is important to me. Also, everything you say will be kept confidential, and I will anonymize the information so that no one but you and I know who said what.

Questions:

Place

- Descriptive
 - Can you tell me about the place where you are having these outdoor days? What does it look like?
- Evaluative
 - What do you like about the place in particular? What do you not like?
- Emotional
 - How do you feel when being in that place? How does it affect your mood?
 - What meaning does the place have for you?

Doing

- Descriptive
 - How do you spend your time in this place?
 - What kind of activities do you do at the place?
- Evaluative
 - What activities do you enjoy the most and why?
- Emotional
 - How do you feel while doing those activities?

Learning

- Descriptive
 - Is there anything you learned from the place? What is it?
- Evaluative
 - What do you think you can learn only at the place and not in a classroom?

Relationship/ reciprocity/ Care

- Descriptive
 - How would you describe your relationship to the place?
- Evaluative
 - What if the place would be a person, would you like him/her? And why/why not?
- Emotional
 - How do you help taking care about the place?
 - What does the place give you that makes you feel save/happy/relaxed?

Process

- Evaluative
 - How did the outdoor program influence your perception of the place?
 - What would help you that you feel more connected to the place?
- Emotional
 - How did the outdoor program influence your feelings about the place?

Before we end the interview, is there anything else you would like to say?

Notes:

End

Many thanks for your time and participation. I enjoyed hearing your thoughts and opinions, there were very interesting and will me help a lot with my university work.

Annexes 4: Semi-structured interview guide (German)

Semi-strukturierter Interview Guide.

Datum:

Interviewer:

Nummer:

Startzeit:

Endzeit:

Einleitung

Hallo zusammen, mein Name ist und ich möchte mich bei euch für eure Teilnahme und eure Hilfe bei meiner Uni-Arbeit bedanken. Wir werden nun ein 20- bis 30-minütiges Interview über eure Meinungen und Gedanken zu dem Draußen-Unterricht eurer Schule führen, an dem ihr gerade teilnehmt. Es ist wichtig, dass ihr wisst, dass dies keine Unterrichtssituation ist und ich kein Lehrer bin, also werde ich euch nicht beurteilen oder benoten. Es gibt kein Richtig oder Falsch, und alles, was ihr sagt, ist für mich wichtig. Außerdem werde ich nichts von dem, was ihr sagt, weitersagen. Es wird also niemand wissen was hier gesagt wurde, mit Ausnahme von uns.

Fragen:

Kategorie	Fragen	Vertiefungsfragen
Ort	Könnt ihr mir etwas über den Ort erzählen, an dem die Draußen-Tage stattfinden? Wie sieht er aus?	
	Was gefällt euch besonders an dem Ort? Was gefällt euch nicht?	Warum gefällt euch das (nicht)?
	Wie fühlt ihr euch, wenn ihr an diesem Ort seid? Wie wirkt er sich auf deine Stimmung aus?	Was an dem Ort erzeugt das Gefühl?
Aktivitäten	Wie sieht ein „normaler“ Draußen-Tag aus?	Was tut ihr an dem Ort?
	Welche Aktivitäten machen euch am meisten Spaß und warum?	Spielt der Ort für die Aktivitäten eine Rolle? Welche?
	Wie fühlt ihr euch, wenn ihr an diesem Ort seid? Wie wirkt er sich auf deine Stimmung aus?	Was an dem Ort erzeugt das Gefühl?
Lernen	Gibt es etwas, das ihr an	Hat es euch geholfen, dass ihr

	diesem Ort gelernt habt? Was ist es?	dafür an dem Ort wart? Warum?
	Gibt es was, dass ihr nur an diesem Ort lernen könnt und nicht in einem Klassenzimmer?	Habt ihr neue Fähigkeiten bekommen oder etwas gelernt?
	Wie fühlt es sich an, dort draußen zu lernen, anstatt drinnen?	Was an dem Ort erzeugt das Gefühl?
Reziprozität	Was tut ihr, um dem Ort zu helfen? (Pflege, Schutz, etc)	Wie sorgt der Ort für euch?
	Was wäre, wenn der Ort eine Person wäre, was für eine Person wäre er?	(Familie, Freund, Bekannter, Lehrer, Lehrerin) Würdet ihr ihn mögen oder nicht mögen? Und warum?
	Was bedeutet der Ort für euch?	Wie wichtig ist euch dieser Ort?
Prozess	Wie hat der Draußen-Unterricht eure Sicht auf den Ort verändert?	Denkt ihr anders über den Ort nach?
	Was würde euch helfen, dass ihr euch mit dem Ort mehr verbunden fühlt?	Gibt es etwas das der Lehrerin / die Lehrerin tun kann? Gibt es etwas, das du tun kannst? Gibt es etwas, das den Ort besser machen würde?
	Wie hat der Draußen-Unterricht eure Gefühle zu dem Ort verändert?	Fühlt ihr euch anders?

Mögliche Folgefrage:

- Was an dem Ort erzeugt das Gefühl?
- Was meint ihr damit?

Bevor wir zu Ende kommen, gibt es noch irgendetwas, das ihr mir sagen möchtet?

Notizen:

Ende

Vielen Dank für eure Zeit und eure Teilnahme. Es war sehr interessant, eure Gedanken und Meinungen zu hören, und es wird mir bei meiner Universitätsarbeit eine große Hilfe sein.

Annexes 5: Sikt approval (English)

02.05.24, 10:09

Meldeskjema for behandling av personopplysninger



Assessment of processing of personal data

Reference number
272836

Assessment type
Standard

Date
30.01.2024

Title
Pupils' sense of place as part of a place-based education program

Institution responsible for the project
Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge / Fakultet for humaniora, idrett- og utdanningsvitenskap / Institutt for friluftsliv, idrett og kroppsøving

Project leader
Kirsten W. Houe

Student
Cornelius Richter

Project period
01.01.2024 - 16.05.2024

Categories of personal data
General

Legal basis
Consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 6 nr. 1 a)

The processing of personal data is lawful, so long as it is carried out as stated in the notification form. The legal basis is valid until 16.05.2024.

[Notification Form](#)

Comment
ABOUT OUR ASSESSMENT
Data Protection Services has an agreement with the institution where you are a student or a researcher. As part of this agreement, we provide guidance so that the processing of personal data in your project is lawful and complies with data protection legislation. We have now assessed that you have legal basis to process the personal data.

PARENTAL CONSENT
The project will gain consent from the parents for the processing of personal data about the children. We remind you that even if the parents consent, participation must always be voluntary for the children as well. They should receive age-appropriate information, and give their acceptance to participate in the project themselves.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES
You must store, send and secure the collected data in accordance with your institution's guidelines. This means that you must use data processors (and the like) that your institution has an agreement with (i.e. cloud storage, online survey, and video conferencing providers).

Our assessment presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

NOTIFY CHANGES
If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project, it may be necessary to notify us. This is done by updating the information registered in the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes: <https://sikt.no/en/notify-changes-notification-form>

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT
We will follow up the progress of the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded.

Good luck with the project!

<https://meldeskjema.sikt.no/650e867e-32b4-4dff-a5b1-802cb609f0b9/vurdering>

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