Playful By Nature:

Transforming the Ecological Imagination through Play and Narrative Learning: The Case of the Swedish "Rain or Shine (I Ur Och Skur)" Pedagogy

Leslie McDonnell

Norwegian University of Life Sciences
Department of International Environmental Studies
Master Thesis 60 credits 2013

The Department of International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric, is the international gateway for the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB). Eight departments, associated research institutions and the Norwegian College of Veterinary Medicine in Oslo. Established in 1986, Noragric's contribution to international development lies in the interface between research, education (Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes) and assignments.

The Noragric Master theses are the final theses submitted by students in order to fulfill the requirements under the Noragric Master programme "International Environmental Studies," "Development Studies" and other Master programmes.

The findings in this thesis do not necessarily reflect the views of Noragric. Extracts from this publication may only be reproduced after prior consultation with the author and on condition that the source is indicated. For rights of reproduction or translation contact Noragric.

Lesliemcdonnell@gmail.com

Noragric
Department of International Environment and Development Studies
P.O. Box 5003
N-1432 Ås
Norway
Tel.: +47 64 96 52 00
Fax: +47 64 96 52 01
Internet: http://www.umb.no/noragric

Declaration

I, Leslie Anne McDonnell declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature..... Leslie McDonnell

Date..... 9 May 2013

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

I hold a deep gratitude, respect and awe for all of the help, support, guidance and friendships I have encountered throughout this thesis process.

I am grateful to my main guide, Nina Witoszek. I thank you for your genuine interest and encouragement through this whole journey in all its phases. I thank you for your guidance and assistance. I greatly appreciate your tolerance and kindness for my personal idiosyncrasies and challenges. With your uplifting encouragement, I have been greatly transformed intellectually and I will take this with me the rest of my life.

Thank you Esben Leifsen, my UMB advisor. I appreciate all your help and for your willingness to allow me do this project in my own way. I thank you for your warm and kind demeanor and for our thoughtful discussions. Thank you for all that you do at Noragric and beyond.

Thank you Dougie Daddy (Douglas McDonnell). I don't know how to express my gratitude right now, because it goes beyond words. Thank you for being you and for being my dad. I will always have an ally and friend in you in this crazy world and beyond. For that, I am more than grateful.

Thank you Kathy Fox, my beautiful, creative, playful and ever-supportive mother. Your love of life inspires me everyday to live to the fullest, give, uplift and be my best me.

I am particularly grateful for your, assistance: Bill Smull. Your gift with the English language is awe-inspiring and I am so thankful for all your help and encouragement.

Thank you Ingunn Bohmann for your friendship, understanding and assistance during my time at Noragric.

Thank you Professor William Werner. My experience as your TA reignited my enthusiasm for teaching and learning. It therefore inspired the direction of this thesis project. I thank you for the passion you put into your teaching and genuine attention and encouragement you give to your students. This is rare. I thank you for the opportunity to work with and learn from you.

A big thanks goes to "the Huldra of my Heart": Rebecka Solfrö. Thank you for all your support the beautiful love you bring to this world. And thank you for sharing your forest with me.

Thank you all the teachers, guides, and friends whose interactions uplifted this Odyssey: Hanne-Lisa Matt, Eli Ribiero, Randi Gunhildsen, Marte Sendstad, Alexa Camire, Siw Hildebrand, Vanessa Estensen, Mike Anstrell, Martin Lee Mueller, Kit-Fai Naess, Professor Sunil Ray, Professor Doug Hulmes, Chuck Larsen, Linda Karle, Lauren Fox, Finley, Patrick and Rosie Good, Dr. Holmes, Dr. Ritson and Sally-Jo and my new nephew Vadim Denisovich Leontievsky.

I am grateful to my "Norsk familie". Svein and Tove Versland; Inge and Ann-Karin Hammersmark; and Sven and Anne-Torhild Hunsbedt. Thank you for your many conversations, amazing holiday feasts and *hytta* trips. I am forever grateful for all your love and support.

A very special and deep thank you to my "main informants": Berit Koen in Volda, Norway and Siw and Marcus Linde in Lidingö, Sweden. I appreciate all the help with the coordination my fieldwork observations and interviews, the thoughtful conversations and playful walks through the forest and mountains. It was truly a joy to meet you. Thank you for what you do and for sharing your world with me.

And, of course, *thank you Skogsmulle.*

Forward:

Figure 1: Nat Farban: *Bechuanaland.* In *Family of Man* (1955:120)

"Often the essence of teaching comes down to the ability to tell a good story."
– Johan Huizinga 1969

Abstract

This thesis explores the potential of play and narrative as transformative learning approaches through a case study of the Swedish Rain or Shine (*I Ur Och Skur*) early-childhood outdoor pedagogy. Ur Och Skur utilizes a narrative learning method. Fantasy nature creatures introduce children in their formative years to Scandinavian environmental values. This study has had many theoretical inspirations, but it is largely based on philosophical hermeneutics, a theory, which in turn employs Hans-Georg Gadamer's *ontology of play* and a *fusion of horizons*. These are the foundations of a discussion of the transformative qualities of narrative learning and its application in childhood education. This is done with a view to global initiatives to transform education to include a vital ecological element—in particular, the UN's worldwide initiative: Education for Sustainable Development. This theoretical exploration provides a framework to present how the Rain or Shine pedagogy utilizes narrative learning methods outdoors in order to help cultivate a love, wonder and respect for the more-than-human nature. I sought insights into the effectiveness of this narrative learning method through a series of interviews with teachers and participation in and observations of three Rain or Shine kindergartens in Norway and Sweden. My study culminated in a series of interviews with former students of this pedagogy, now adults, who were asked if, and how, this affected how they perceived the more-than-human nature (their ecological imagination) as a child, and influenced how they view and experience nature today. Their responses indicated that these nature creatures did influence the way they perceived nature at the time. They did not single out direct measurable effects of this pedagogy on their adult behaviors. However, their experiences do bring up possible connections and linkages, which demand further studies.

List of Figures

Prequel: The Wonderer

Once upon a time, Planet Earth was sick. It had a fever, rashes, wounds, and toxins coursing through its body. Its immune system had been greatly compromised by the thoughtlessness, greed and insensitivity of the newly arrived, highly creative Two-leggeds with their powerful inventions. It seemed most of these newcomers had forgotten Earth was their only home, the irreplaceable provider of their own livelihood. Many did not respect Earth and did not love the natural world in which they had evolved. Many never ventured beyond their crowded, smoggy cities and artificial, mono-cultured fields. Earth and its life forms–the trees, whales, tigers, elephants, bees, polar bears and finally, even most of the Two-leggeds–were suffering greatly and mourned the loss of life, their kin, even entire species. They lived with anxious feelings of hopelessness and helplessness.

Some of the more optimistic Two-leggeds, though, thought the fever could be broken. They realized their imaginations had been outrunning them–that the new freedoms created by their inventions had separated them from the innate rhythms of Earth's creative unfolding. But they understood as well that applying that same imaginative creative potential might heal the damage wrought by their unbridled creativity. They saw that no individual Two-legged had all power or all-encompassing solutions–this overwhelming multitude of ills called for multiple, varied and creative solutions. Gradually, more and more Two-leggeds began to promote the potential of using their vast creativity for the good of the Earth.

As this realization began to dawn in far-flung corners of Earth, it found a foothold among the merry ski-footed Two-Leggeds who lived in a peaceful northern land of majestic ancient mountains, fjord-lined seas, low-lighted snowscapes and deep enchanting forests. These Northlanders began to share with others their ideas of living in harmony with the world. One such idea was the pragmatic concept of sustainability. At the time this idea matured, it was manifested in the consciousness of one caring, playful and creative Two-legged. He imagined into being a loveable forest creature that could help the children of this land acquire essential wisdom of who they are–playful, creative, and loving Earthlings. He shared his imagination and children of this land were told of a mysterious, magical creature named Skogsmulle who was seldom seen, but who watched over all living things. He had a deep wisdom of how to live with their enchanting and sustaining forests through practical survival, respect, and joyfulness. Although the elders themselves had never encountered this entity, they put their hope into it, that the creature might be able to help their children. So they sent their children into the woods to learn what they could of Skogsmulle's teachings. As they played, Skogsmulle also helped the children understand the creativity and wonder inherent in their own vibrant imaginations.

Over time, more and more children of the Northland began to learn from this magical forest creature, but the Earth's fever was not subsiding. Observing this, many Two-legged "experts" claimed solutions such as the lessons of Skogsmulle were not effective. But others have softly upheld the relevance Skogsmulle can have for the youngest Two-leggeds and continue to ask us not to disregard the many ways available to help Earth's illness.

Other Two-leggeds in the world did not know what had become of these Children of Skogsmulle, or whether their time with Skogsmulle had been meaningful, profound, or simply forgotten. That is, they did not know until one merry ski-footed Two-legged, called The Wonderer– who had grown up far, far away in a land of mossy temperate rainforests, salmon-swimming rivers and snow-capped volcanoes–returned to the homeland of much of her kin to learn more about Earth's fever, and what she could do to help it. What she found was the story and legacy of the Children of Skogsmulle. Here is her story. (McDonnell 2013)

Chapter One: Introduction

In the collective evolutionary experience of humankind, major and minor transformations continually occur, collectively and individually, in the imaginations and actions of Man. Widely held wisdom tells us: "The only thing constant in life is change" and "Change is the Norm!" Within these wider cultural transformations there often occurs a reevaluation of ourselves and the very essence of our human nature. This engagement in collective introspection is often instigated by new discoveries of and insights into the wider "nature of reality"—our place as human beings in the wider earthly, even cosmic experience (Huizinga 1935). This can lead one to reorient their previous horizon of understanding, interpretation, perspective and worldview, or even render prior assumptions obsolete. There are multiple signs that we live in a fundamentally transformative era for both the biosphere and the human species. Rapid changes in life style are occurring across the planet and new scientific discoveries challenge previous collective understanding

Realigning our worldview with the gush of new information from all our pursuits and explorations demands that we also reevaluate the essence of our humanity. Are we solely *Homo Economicus*, as many of our modern pursuits and theories suggest? Are we rational, self-serving actors who seek maximum utility with consumption and maximum profit with production? This definition of man restricts our species from potentially wider objectives that the human species sometimes exhibits. For instance, humanity as a whole aspires to live up to its self-given name Man the Wise (*Homo Sapiens*). It often exhibits properties of: Man the Playful (*Homo Ludens*), Man the Cooperating Partner (*Homo Recipricus*), Man the Storyteller (*Homo Narrans)* and Man the Creative/Creator (*Homo Creativus*) among many others. But when looking at the wider collective actions of modern humanity, it seems *Homo Economicus* dominates. This limited and destructive perspective on human identity has been responsible for much of the social and ecological suffering that encompasses the planet (Orr 2004:16ff.).

The progressive thinkers and pragmatic movements of our time recognize the realities of being a human being upon a finite, living planet Earth. This requires us, especially those within the richest and most consumptive nations, to scale our consumer activity down to levels that can sustain a thriving evolutionary story for our planet. Norwegian thinkers historically have been

prominent in a global dialogue supporting lives intentionally lived through simple means. The late eco-philosopher Arne Naess advocates a deliberate scaling down of Western conspicuous consumption, not by eliminating rich ends, but rather through authentic, wholesome relationships, simplicity and "deep" experiences (Naess 1987). Former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Bruntland promoted a new maxim for responsible human action through "sustainability," "sustainable," and "Sustainable Development," defined as "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UN 1987). Both of these Norwegians' ideals are expressions of a wider cultural-historical consciousness of the Norwegian people, in which the human is seen *as nature* and recognized as never having left it (Witoszek 2011).

This is contrary to the Western European mindset that for a variety of factors has viewed Man as separate and above the more-than-human[1] world. The Norwegian mentality, which reflects a humble and pragmatic Scandinavian cultural history, has been a significant part of the "Green" sustainability movement over the last 40 years. One indirect result is the United Nations worldwide campaign to promote Education for Sustainable Development [ESD]. This campaign promotes a thorough reevaluation and transformation of educational methods and content if there is to be any transformation to an ecologically and socially thriving future. Structural political and economic forces always will play an overwhelming role in transitioning to sustainability. Still, scholars point to the important role cultural innovations, such as education, play alongside in social shifts of mentality and action. However, as David Orr warns, "It is not education, but education of a certain kind, that will save us." (2004:8)

For Jerome Bruner, education is a reflection of a culture's current interpretation of what it means to be human (1996). The institution of education transmits knowledge and its application for *what life is and how we are to live it* to the younger generation, who in turn transmit this to their young, and so on. But other events occur with each iteration. Transmitted knowledge is combined with the ever changing and evolving human and planetary experience, so over time it is transformed by the learning generation to fit its direct contextual experience. Therefore, education creates culture, and culture creates education (Bruner 1996). What we "know" and how that influences our interpretation of experience is very much culturally influenced. Our

[1] This thesis replaces the concept of "Nature" with: more-than-human. Please refer to 1.6 Key Concepts under term: Nature (Page 13) for a clarification.

cultural expressions and personal experiences are founded upon the accumulated stories, knowledge and wisdom passed down to us by our ancestors (Bruner 1990). However, the worldview passed along by our most recent European ancestors is incomplete. The shortcoming is not in Western or scientific knowledge per se, but in how it is taught, synthesized and applied. The Western knowledge tradition lacks understanding of the intricacies of sustaining the natural world in which we are embedded and upon which we depend for our livelihood. Orr points out that our educational institutions present knowledge, especially knowledge of the natural world, in a highly abstract manner. He elaborates, "Towards the natural world [education] emphasizes theories, not values; abstraction rather than consciousness; neat answers rather than questions; and technical efficiency over conscience." (2004:8) However, education has not always been this way: Ancient Greeks aspired to the holistic goal of *Paideia*—mastery as a whole individual through diverse exposure to the arena of subjects, not individual mastery over a singular subject. In short, the concept of education is interpreted depending on the current culture's worldview. The dominant worldview today does not unfold the full potential of the human being. Failing in this, we are perpetuating the destructive mentalities that drive the actions, which do violence to earthly life.

1.1 Personal Motivation and Objective

My interests, within the degree field of International Environmental Studies, lie within the heart of cognition, perception and the heart of learning. My discoveries and contemplation on the topic aligns with the interpretation that the environmental issues of our day are fundamentally an issue of cognition, where our varied perceptions of the world are colored by the complex interplay of cultural learning and direct experiences that guide our actions. Among the early questions that inspired this project was this: Is what and how we currently teach our youth about *what it means to be human* the whole story? Secondly, how do we really learn, integrate and deeply understand something? Modern applications of standardized tests, memorization, transmission lectures, dull PowerPoints, flashcards and other such practices deprive students—in whole or in part—of *Paideia*. Education does not have to yield such outcomes.

There is a contrasting educational approach called *Friluftliv Barnehage,* which I sought out for research. These are Norwegian outdoor "open-air" kindergartens that instruct through child-led discovery play in all types of weather—even during frigid arctic winters. This

suggested an alternative to abstract indoor learning, a process that takes place during the earliest formative years of the human experience. Could learning through play, by self-direction, within the raw experience of the growing, cycling, and sensory-rich more-than-human nature be a significant, lasting and possibly *transformative* learning experience? If it were to prove significant, how might this knowledge, and the potentials of these alternative methods, be applied to the collective efforts for transforming education and thus society towards a sustainable future, specifically within the UN's initiative Education for Sustainability[2]?

Educators were contacted at *Hjellbakkene Barnehage* in Volda, on the isolated, fjord-lined, mountainous mid-West coast of Norway. It is hailed as "The oldest open air kindergarten in Norway." It utilizes a Swedish early childhood pedagogy called *I Ur Och Skur,* translated as "Rain or Shine." Besides its outdoor element, this pedagogy uses intriguing narrative learning methods with an underlying philosophy of discovery play. The narrative method proved to be the more compelling element. It is called the *Skogsmulle Concept,* one which employs fantasy creatures to teach children to love and respect nature.

Therefore, the objective of this thesis explores the potential of narrative learning—as a form of play—to be a transformative method for communicating wisdom and knowledge of the more-than-human world. The aim is to inquire whether narrative and play have a potential to transform how our imaginations conceive of the more-than-human world. Research results were gathered through theoretical exploration and through an experiential case study with Rain or Shine Kindergartens. The theoretical exploration describes play and narrative and why these can aid in deeper learning of the more-than-human world during early childhood. The contextual case of the Rain or Shine kindergartens illustrates how this narrative method is applied. This is followed up through interviews with *Hjellbakkene* alumni, now 26-31 years of age. They were asked whether this type of experience in early childhood had a transformative effect on how they imagined and experienced nature as a child. These interviews also sought insights into whether their experience with the Rain or Shine pedagogy has had an effect lasting into adulthood.

1.2 Education for Sustainable Development: A Rationale

[2] Online reference to the main UN Education for Sustainable Development webpage: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-sustainable-development/

A body of scholars, educators, civil societies and policymakers has addressed the critical and central role of education in their collective desire to shift the world toward planetary sustainability. The United Nations took an active role when it declared *The UNESCO Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD)* from 2005 to 2014. The objectives of this global campaign are to understand why current and past educational methods transmit values that continue social and environmental destruction; why education plays such a large role in the global transition to a green society; and to find educational solutions that will be effective in making the transition. The UN tasked scholars, educators and governmental policymakers to find effective solutions and instigate methods that will better prepare our youth for an unknown and challenging future.

There is no precise universal definition of ESD, because education will be tailored to each culture's vision of a sustainable society. In general terms, ESD can be seen as education to "enable citizens around the globe to deal with the complexities, controversies and inequities arising out of issues relevant to environment, natural heritage, culture, society and economy" (UNESCO 2012:12). It is not a superficial attempt to satisfy cultural pressures or fads, but to update education to fit the demands and issues of a rapidly changing planet. It promotes worldwide cultural shifts and reevaluation of the core values that underlie our actions (UNESCO 2012:12). The executive summary report states, "As the DESD progresses, there appears to be increased awareness that ESD must move beyond transmission modes of ESD towards transformative modes" (UNESCO 2012:22). Its research suggests the effectiveness of ESD lies in the transformation of *how* we educate our societies, rather than just adding sustainability-centered issues to the current standard curriculums (UNESCO 2012:29).

Many current pedagogic methods fail to cultivate environmental values or change behaviors that ESD advocates (UNESCO 2012). Transmission modes often compartmentalize thinking, stress memorization and emphasize homogeneity of thought. This type of teaching occurs mainly in a sedentary indoor environment, isolated from the natural and cultural world that it attempts to describe (Orr 1992). The DESD 2012 Summary Report characterizes these well-intentioned methods—hierarchical teacher-based transmission of knowledge, compartmentalized into traditional disciplinary curricula, conceptually abstract and separate from the real world—as increasingly counterproductive to the goals of ESD (UNESCO 2012: 25-29).

Research from the DESD suggests we ought to use the wisdom of effective pedagogies and expand upon them. Among these are the transformative methods identified in the UN 2012 Summary Report. It notes that "the transformation oriented learning and capacity-building ESD relies more on participation, self-determination, autonomous thinking and knowledge co-creation." (UNESCO 2012:22) In the 2012 Summary Report of the DESD, these specialists list the human qualities of adaptability, divergent thinking, critical thinking, and systems-based holistic understanding as crucial to an ecological consciousness (UNESCO 2012:25-29). The document calls for inter-disciplinarily, student-centered participatory learning (experiential), and engaging the whole community, from early childhood to elders, in the learning process.

The report notes that teaching sustainability is no easy task, requiring most of the global citizenry to make a huge shift in values, worldview and subsequent action. This can pose a threat to those who consciously or subconsciously see the human being as separate from and elevated over the rest of more-than-human life. Creation of a sustainable society and its ongoing support by the citizens of that society will not be accomplished through scare tactics (Orr 1999), by force, by dogma, or by economic incentives. Such a society will require a focus on that most complex and elusive aspect of behavioral change—our values, our perspectives, our worldviews. The global crisis we face today is a crisis of worldview that stems from our answers (how we live) to the question: *What does it mean to be human?* We are being asked collectively to reevaluate how we fundamentally relate to the life in which we are embedded. Therefore, we urgently need to ask and transform what, how and why we "educate." Orr states:

> As a large conversation, we would restore to the subject of education the importance that every great philosopher from Plato, through Rousseau, to John Dewey and Alfred North Whitehead has assigned to it. Education, as they knew, had to do with the timeless question of how we are to live. And in our time the great question is how will we live in light of the ecological fact that we are bound together in the community of life, one and indivisible. (2005:xi)

How shall I live my life? According to Orr, transformative Education for Sustainable Development must address this question in relationship to our ecologically bound reality, while still offering the choice to truly answer for ourselves how we shall live our lives. A big question for ESD is how can we introduce students to the importance and need for collective sustainable lifestyles, while allowing them autonomy to imagine their own answers and interpretations.

1.3 Theoretical and Methodological Inspirations

The existing literature and fieldwork provide compelling evidence that both play and narrative help children provide their own answers to "How shall I live my life?" The literature provides support for the view that narrative learning is transformative by nature. In the case of the Rain or Shine pedagogy, narrative learning methods are employed within a philosophy of play.

It has been said that once upon a time: Humankind *played* and all of his creations, insights and advances arose in, of and out of *play* (Huizinga 1950). This thesis employs philosophical hermeneutics as the qualitative social science research methodology. The focus is on hermeneutics as the art of interpretation as transformation, and its underlying ontology of play. The 20th century philosophical hermeneutics philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer helped to establish the primary role of play in the process of understanding. This discussion focuses on dialogical encounters of play between two or more entities and the potential for a widening of understanding that arrives through a *fusion of horizons.* Horizons are limited perspectives, formed culturally and experientially. Playful interactions create the possibility of expanding one's horizon through fusing with, or being open to learning from, another's perspectives. This further expands one's own horizon and their imagination.

The research methodology aligns with the theme of hermeneutic play as essential to transformative learning. The field research, interviews, interpretations, and written presentation are inspired by the hermeneutics tradition, which acknowledges the "rich and messy domain of the social world." This world is never value or perspective-free, but can be rich in insights through seeking thick contextual descriptions (Bruner 1990; Geertz 1973). This thesis uses narrative hermeneutics to interpret the data. Application of narrative hermeneutics involves examining the data as expressions of various stories and interpreting these stories in light of a continually growing contextual understanding. The context for this thesis incorporates two years of study, various relevant experiences, alumni and educator interviews, and the parallel literature review. This is presented and expanded in Chapter Two: Interpretation as Transformation.

1.3.1 Narrative Learning

Chapter 3: The Ecology of Enchantment is a link from Chapter Two to narrative as a form of play that is both a favorite pastime and our inherent method of communication. This elucidates its potential as a transformative learning tool in childhood. Scholars suggest that stories are a form of cognitive play and therefore have transformative potential in a hermeneutic sense (Boyd

2010, Bruner 1986, Huizinga 1950). Narrative play also is described as essential to our early imagination, and sense of wonder, which can be uplifted by the diversity and creativity of the natural world.

Narrative methods operate in both the transmission and transformative modes of knowledge creation. Transmission from teacher to student is essential. How, what and why we transmit knowledge and wisdom comprise both the problem and the potential remedy (Connery et al. 2010). Humans have used Storytelling effectively for thousands of years to transmit practical wisdom of place, cosmological insights, and moral codes of conduct (Boyd 2010; Bruner 1991; Kane 1998; Strauss 1995). Over millennia the sages, philosophers, teachers, parents and children of indigenous cultures have used parables, myths and folklore to share insights, morals, values and practical ecological wisdom. Effective storytelling has potential to be applied in the same way to meet the challenge of Education for Sustainable Development.

It should be noted that narrative learning encompasses more than the art and craft of storytelling. The transformative learning suggested in the ESD report—participatory, student-led knowledge co-creation—can be seen as integral to narrative learning. These methods engage the students to become actors and characters in their own stories, encouraging them to find their own way in exploring the diversities and complexities of life. Research on childhood free play shows that through play, the child builds the capacity to make sense through stories and come into the cultural "world of stories" (Boyd 2010; Bruner 1986; Cobb 1977). Expanding that horizon to play in nature, children are asked to make sense, and make their own stories, using their senses within more-than-human nature. Researchers suggest this helps cultivate essential elements of the human being—creativity, wonder, compassion, reason, and kinesthetic embodiment (Chawla 2002; Cobb 1977). So we arrive at this question: Does the combination of play and stories within the more-than-human nature help cultivate an integral, more-than-*Homo Economicus* human being?

1.4 The Case of *I Ur Och Skur* and the Skogsmulle Concept

The Swedish early-childhood holistic outdoor pedagogy *I Ur Och Skur,* for clarity's sake referred to by its English translation: "Rain or Shine," uses a narrative learning approach along alternative holistic methods that fit the definition of ESD. This pedagogy utilizes many of the "transformative" methods ESD advocates, such as child-led discovery learning, systems-based

learning, creativity/imagination, participatory/collaborative learning, and critical thinking while outdoors immersed in local milieu (UNESCO 2012: 27). The main goal of this pedagogy is to instill in its students an early love, enjoyment, wonder and respect for nature. Siw Linde, the creator of the concept, reasons that "If you teach a child to love and respect nature, they will take care of it, because you take care of what you love." (Linde 2008:4) Their pedagogic methods take on the synergistic forms of narrative learning, "connective" or "systems-based" (Hammond 2003) learning through teaching webs of interconnections; embodiment through songs, rhythms, and multisensory engagement in nature; child-led discovery and play; and a unique narrative method called the *Skogsmulle Concept.*

Skogsmulle is a fictional guardian and caretaker of the Scandinavian forest. This character and its stories are inspired by traditional Scandinavian folklore and the local cultural, historical and ecological context. The children meet Skogsmulle in the forest twice a year where it plays with them and teaches them values of reverence and awe for their forest while also having fun in it. The character has friends: Laxe, the guardian of lakes, rivers and the ocean; Fjellfina, the caretaker of the Scandinavian high alpine ecosystems; and Nova, an extraterrestrial from an uncontaminated planet who travels to Earth to warn of the dangers of polluting actions. Lessons vary among the kindergartens. Children may meet these characters occasionally, or hear about them while exploring these specific ecosystems while on field trips. They regularly hear stories about Skogsmulle and its friends' adventures from four published storybooks. Other tales spring from the teachers' inventive minds. Skogsmulle was born in the children's bedtime stories told by the late Swedish nature-park director and father Gösta Frohm. It evolved into engaging narrative-learning weekend activities to introduce suburban Stockholm children to nature. From these came weekend parent-and-children nature groups all over Sweden, later formalized as the Rain or Shine pedagogy now used in 220 schools across Sweden. The Skogsmulle Concept has been internationally recognized and now is practiced in 17 nations.

This thesis explores a contextual collective case study of how *Ur Och Skur* pre-schools in Norway and Sweden use narrative learning methods with goals of cultivating an ecological consciousness in children's formative years. Fieldwork was conducted at three pre-schools referred to as *barnehage* in Norwegian and Swedish, all which have embraced this pedagogy for at least 25 years—the founding pre-school Mulleborg *Barnehage* in Lidingö, Sweden, and Trollsletta *Barnehage* and Hjellbakkene *Barnehage*, both in Volda, Norway. To gain insight into

wider cultural contexts, another field visit was conducted at a conventional *barnehage* in Oslo, Norway. Teachers and main pedagogues from each *barnehage* were interviewed to gain insights into the pedagogy and how it is used. Separate action interviews were arranged with the two creators of the pedagogy, Siw Linde of Mulleborg and Berit Koen of Hjellbakkene. This involved "narrative-pedagogic walks" and hikes in the Swedish forest and Norwegian mountains with explanations of how the pedagogy works. Background was accumulated from pamphlets, books, old newspaper articles and other written resources provided by the pedagogues. Several alumni of *Hjellbakkene Barnehage*, who are now 26 to 31 years old, also were interviewed. The objective was to develop insights into how, if at all, their time with Skogsmulle transformed how they perceived and imagined the natural world as children. Simultaneously, they were asked to evaluate how those childhood experiences affect their current relationship to the natural world and ecological consciousness.

1.5 Discussion of Main Research Questions through a Presentation of Chapters

This thesis has two major components: 1) *Theory*—a theoretical exploration of why play and narrative learning are potential transformative learning methods that fit within ESD, and 2) *Praxis*—a contextual case study of the Rain or Shine pedagogy that explores how their narrative learning methods based within a philosophy of play are utilized to introduce children to a reverence and respect for the natural world. Through theory and praxis I explore the main question:

Has the concept of narrative learning through play, as applied to the Rain or Shine pedagogy, shown promise in cultivating the ecologically transformative learning ideals as highlighted by ESD in such a way as to be transformative in how participating children perceive nature, even years later as adults?

I center on this question through a synthesis of theoretical literature on the topic in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. This provides the framework for how I address this question through my fieldwork observations and interviews. Furthermore, each chapter has a guiding sub-question that links to my main guiding questions. Here I present an outline of my thesis chapters with their subsequent guiding questions:

In **Chapter Two** I state my methodological position as a researcher through a discussion of Philosophical Hermeneutics in the tradition of philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer. I present his *ontology of play* and his *fusion of horizons* as the foundation of a hermeneutic process of understanding through interpretation. To set up my exploration of narrative learning as a viable transformative learning approach, this chapter is guided by the question: **How might interpretation be transformative to our understanding?** As this chapter's intention is twofold, I also give the reader details of how I carried out my fieldwork through this hermeneutic tradition and describe the basis of my interpretations.

Chapter Three's question provides reasoning for why narrative-learning approaches might be able to aid in a transform our relationship with the natural world: **How might narrative learning approaches aid a transformation of our relationship with the natural world through our imaginations?** To discuss this question, I call upon the theoretical discussion in chapter 2 of Gadamer's ontology of play and his *fusion of horizons* to buttress this exploration. I explore our history as a storytelling creature. This builds a basis for the elements of stories, specifically their interpretive language, which are able to spark imaginative processes in the listener and aid in empathetic and intellectual expansion of our horizons of understanding. I also explore the sensuous element of storytelling and storied play when enhanced by an outdoors setting. These elements include the diversity of nature, stories of place and inculcating a sense of wonder that help build a grounded ecological imagination. This chapter provides the theoretical framework for how I interpret and present the Rain or Shine pedagogy's application of narrative learning.

Chapter Four explores the contextual background of the geographical, cultural, and folkloric histories, which have influenced the Rain or Shine pedagogy and its main character Skogsmulle. To provide a thick description of my case study and to gain insights into these contextual eco-cultural-historical influences of the narrative learning methods, I asked: **How has Scandinavian geography and cultural history shaped the Rain or Shine pedagogy and its character Skogsmulle?**

Chapter Five presents the results of fieldwork participant observations, action interviews, and semi-structured interviews with pedagogues at the three Rain or Shine kindergartens Hjellbakkene *Barnehage*, Trollsletta *Barnehage*, and Mulleborg *Barnehage*. These

yield two main themes of how this pedagogy employs narrative learning methods: 1) Cultivating a local sense of place and ecological understanding within the local rhythms and cycles of their bioregion and 2) A love and wonder for the world inspired through the character Skogsmulle, a protagonist who promotes discovery play and the art of questioning.

Chapter Six explores the effectiveness of the narrative learning methods applied by the Rain or Shine pedagogy through interviews with previous students, now ages 26-31, of *Hjellbakkene Barnehage* in Volda, Norway. The analysis was framed with two questions: **In which ways, if any, do the alumni speak of their childhood experience with Skogsmulle at Hjellbakkene that would indicate that the Skogsmulle story transformed how they, as children, perceived and experienced the natural world?** To assess whether any such transformations persisted, I asked: **Do the interviews offer evidence that this experience at Hjellbakkene continues to play a role in how they now, as adults, experience, frame, and value nature?** This chapter presents and discusses the results of narrative interviews from Hjellbakkene *Barnehage* alumni as a collective synthesis of the their many articulated stories. These stories are presented as: Characters, Setting, Plot, and Outcomes.

The Conclusion, **Chapter Seven**, analyzes and summarizes the results through contextual background and the theoretical underpinnings previously described.

1.6 Key Concepts

Animate:

> The word "animate" stems from the Latin word indicating "soul" or "breath". Edith Cobb adds, "among its many meanings are "to give spirit to" or "to put in motion or operation" or synonymously, "to energize" (Webster)" (1977:39-40).

Barnehage:

> This is the Norwegian term for early childhood educational institutions with formal pedagogies for early childhood, which usually enrolls children from the ages 1 through 6. This term translates to "children's garden" and is a derivation of the commonly used German term *kindergarten*. The North American English equivalent is pre-school. For consistency and clarity, kindergarten replaces *barnehage* in most instances.

Child/Children:

It is recognized that child, children, and childhood are socially constructed terms whose meanings vary across cultures and through time. Edith Cobb's definition is used: "A child is a human being, whose development is regulated by the meanings of nature imparted to him by the culture of his particular period in history, the particular way in which he is taught to see and know himself in time and space." (1977:51)

Friluftsliv:

This Norwegian word roughly translates to "free-air life" or "open-air life" and refers to a lifestyle based on experiences of the freedom in nature and a philosophical or spiritual connectedness with an immersion in "nature" (Gelter 2000). It is a deeply held value and experiential activity of the Norwegian culture. Gelter comments: "*Friluftsliv* is about love and respect for Nature…features that can only be learned through experience" (Gelter 2000:83). Commercialization and technological influences have lessened spiritual/contemplative elements of the concept and created more of a "sporty" mainstream definition (Beery 2011). In the realm of pedagogy it means outdoor education including outdoor survival skills, skiing technique, local ecological knowledge and spiritual/contemplative elements of a connection with wild nature.

Imagination:

Imagination is fundamental to childhood development, the learning process and the evolution of knowledge. Children develop their imaginations through fantasy play such as pretend-play and role-playing narratives. This is commonly referred to as the "fantasy-play-stage" of childhood development, which begins around age 2 and blossoms in ages 3-5. Imagination is vital to the expansive process of understanding. Scientific ventures commonly depend upon "imagining" novel ideas, theories and hypotheses and then testing them through the scientific method. Imagination also is associated with contriving abstract fantasies and is related to creative and divergent thinking. Its medical definition is found in the most recent English dictionary Merriam-Webster of Encyclopedia Britannica:

> An act or process of forming a conscious idea or mental image of something never before wholly perceived in reality by the one forming the images; also: the ability or gift of forming such conscious ideas or mental images especially for the purposes of artistic or intellectual creation. (Merriam-Webster 2012)

Narrative:

Scholars use various definitions of narrative. For clarity and brevity narrative is considered to be "A spoken or written account of connected events; a story." (Oxford Dictionaries 2012) This thesis uses the term synonymously with story. Relying on Bruner (1986; 1991), it also focuses on the connective element of narrative and refers more broadly to associations, and connections as within the "narrative mode" of reality construction. This contrasts with the "paradigmatic mode" of separation and

compartmentalization. Following Bruner's folk psychology, narrative also refers to the typical process through which a group of people constructs common cultural meaning.

Nature:

Environmental scholars differ on the precise meanings of "nature," "natural," "wilderness," "the great outdoors," "wild nature" and similar terms because of connotations of separation between human culture and the rest of the living Earth. Nature had been manipulated by humans for millennia, but not to the extent of the modern Industrial Age. For the purpose of this thesis, "nature" is "the elements of earth, water air and growing things that exist independent of human creation, although they may be shaped into forms of human design." (Chawla 2002:200) I also refer to nature as the all-encompassing home, the planet Earth, in which the human species and other earthly life dwells. I replace nature with "**more-than-human"** in the sense inspired by Philosopher David Abram (1999) to de-emphasize Western anthropocentrism with respect to the wider earthly matrix of interconnected life forms, independent of the human hand. When reference is made to **wild** versus built spaces, it includes not only "untouched" wilderness, but nature that is less touched by the human hand or machine in the sense that it grows and flows as more-than-human nature does. This excludes gardens, mono-cropped timber plantations and city parks because they are generally heavily manipulated to grow in a certain way.

Pedagogy:

A formal term defined as the art, science and profession of teaching. It includes instructional methods, curriculum. Where pedagogue is used, it refers to a teacher or instructor of children—one whose occupation is to teach the young.

Chapter Two: The Art of Interpretation as Transformation

> *As time went on The Wonderer came to know a few Merry Ski-footed Northlanders who were allies of Skogsmulle and helped the creature with its teachings in the forest. They told her the creature and its allies used stories, along with discovery through play, to introduce the young Two-leggeds to the wonders of their forest. Immediately The Wonderer started to speculate about the role of play within the living realm of Earth, in cultivating an ecological imagination. She began to join her new merry-ski footed friends as they played in their forest and mountains. After further research and discovery of play, she found there was more to play than meets the eyes. Therefore she decided there was solid justification in playing her way to understanding. (McDonnell 2013)*

This chapter outlines my twofold overarching application of philosophical hermeneutics. It is both my theoretical and my methodological approach. This presentation also buttresses my discussion on narrative, as a form of play, as a transformative learning method, within Chapter Three. The quantitative method, with its static measurements and claims of objectivity, clashes with the "rich and messy domain" (Bruner 1986) of the social world I have researched. Philosophical hermeneutics, within the interpretational tradition of the social sciences, aligns better with the Skogsmulle narrative found in Scandinavian outdoor preschools. I asked whether adult "alumni" recalled having had a transformative experience as children and whether it affected how they have come to experience and connect with nature as adults. I sought to understand the stories of this contextual phenomenon [my fieldwork] through my own perspective, opening myself to hearing their childhood memories. This requires unstructured encounters rather a rigid set of predetermined questions, and has the potential of transforming the researcher's preconceived notions. This written thesis of my experience is an interpretation, no more, no less. The challenge is to make the most honest interpretation possible.

I begin with transformation, and how it relates to the ontological underpinnings of hermeneutics: "the art of interpretation as transformation" (Kinsella 2006). Ontology has to do with the study of the essence, or nature of reality. I explore an ontology of "play" as the foundation of interpretation inspired by Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (2004). This leads to a discussion of the hermeneutic process of understanding through dialogical play, and the role of culture in shaping our lenses of perception. The chapter ends with how conversation, as my method of inquiry, helped me reach my current understanding. In addition to describing my practical methodology of how I have interpreted and carried out my fieldwork, this chapter also constructs a bridge to my discussion in Chapter Three on narrative as a transformative educational method for Educational for Sustainable Development.

What is transformation?

This is an extraordinarily transformative moment in history. Our collective decisions can transform human-induced climate change—or we can face the consequences. This is why the United Nations is calling for a transformation in education to meet the urgent goals of sustainable development. The UN-organized experts on Education for Sustainable Development urge a metamorphosis of education from "transmission" methods to "transformative" methods. They give no point-by point description of these "transformational methods," instead citing some examples within different cultures. The purpose of this thesis is to explore Rain or Shine Scandinavian ecological kindergartens as "transformative learning methods," and whether play and storytelling might uplift their potential. This may help inspire researchers, policy makers and pedagogues to consider building creative transformative pedagogies suited to their particular contexts.

What exactly is "transformation"? And what is the "transmission" that the UN suggests we should replace? Merriam-Webster (2012b) defines transform as, "to make a marked change in the form, nature, or appearance of," while the definition of transmit is "to send or convey from one person to another, to convey by or as if by inheritance or heredity: hand down." (Merriam-Webster 2012c) These are vastly different concepts. To transform is the act of dynamic change and flux. Transmit, on the other hand, connotes the passing down of something inert or fixed, an ultimate truth or fact to be directly transferred. Any movement is linear, fixed, and predictable. So what would a "transformational" method look like in education? Before discussing that question in Chapter 3, some elaboration of this concept is in order.

Interpretation as transformation (Kinsella 2006) is more widely referred to as interpretivism and qualitative methods, often without clarification of their ontological foundations (Kinsella 2006). Kinsella adds, "In these post-positivistic times, the need to make explicit the art of interpretation, and the transformative possibilities within, has never been more urgent." (2006)

2.1 Hermeneutics: The Art of Interpretation

The concept of hermeneutics, derives from a Latinized version of the Greek verb *hermeneuein,* translated as 'to interpret' or 'to understand'. Martin Heidegger relates it to the personality of the

Greek god Hermes, a "playful thinking that is more compelling than the rigor of science." (1971:29)

Crossing the boundaries of the divine, mortal and under worlds, Hermes was a divine interpreter of messages between ontological thresholds (Palmer 1980). The concept of ontology is applicable here because it relates to the essence, or nature, of being. Gods and mortals were essentially different but lived in connected ontological realms, communicating through alternative means. For example, the gods might have used emotional telepathic communication rather than the linguistic method of mortals. A mediator like Hermes was needed.

Another is the translation and interpretation of Holy Scripture. In Medieval and Renaissance Europe, monks played a role similar to that of Hermes (Palmer 1980). Those trained in the art of hermeneutics could cross the threshold of the ordinary and had access to the divine realm through the deciphering of sacred texts so that laymen could understand and integrate those messages into their lives (Palmer 1980). In the Judeo-Christian tradition, hermeneutics, also referred to as biblical exegesis, became a strict set of objective principles and procedures for accurate translation and interpretation of holy texts or of faithfully interpreting the law of God for varying situations and contexts of human culture (Abulad 2007:14).

In the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries hermeneutics branched out to translation of ancient secular texts from their Greek, Hebrew or Latin origins to modern European languages. Again, Palmer (1980) links this role of the interpreter with that of the boundary-breaching Hermes. The interpreter cannot but feel that "he has access to a body of knowledge from elsewhere, is a bridge to somewhere else, he is a mediator between a mysterious other world and the clean, well-lighted intelligible world in which we live and move and 'have our being'" (Palmer 1980).

Through the work of 20th-Century German philosophers Martin Heidegger and his student Hans-George Gadamer, hermeneutics expanded its scope to a broader philosophical concept. Its deeply conflicting ontological implications, was a direct challenge to scientific positivism (Vilhauer 2010). "The art of interpretation as transformation" stands in stark contrast to the positivistic theory of knowledge as "contemplation of eternal essences unalterable by their observer." (Kinsella 2006)

Their work put a new light on the human experience of knowledge creation. The old methods still dominate, but interpretive hermeneutic method—especially within the social sciences—has emerged as an accepted approach for legitimate and sometimes playful scholars to contemplate and experiment with an alternative pathway to "truth." I ground my research approach and overall discussion within the hermeneutic ontology inspired by Gadamer in his Magna Opus, *Truth and Method* (2004). Gadamer stresses that hermeneutics is an act of creative discovery unique to both the interpreter and the context of a particular act of exploration. Abulad sees it this way:

> In a way, method kills the art, especially since art requires a creative spirit. Each creation is a free process whose source is the interplay of faculties unique to each artist. The author thus follows a procedure that cannot be mechanically reproduced inasmuch as every artistic product is a singular and inimitable achievement. (2007:22)

Inspiration has guided me, as the interpreter. First, I treat Gadamer's ontology of play as the foundation for an interpretive venture. I do this because as Vilhauer suggests, "play is the 'key' to grasping Gadamer's alternative to the modern scientific notion of knowledge." (2010:xv) I then draw on the inspiration of Kinsella (2006) who offers a synthesis of the central characteristics of hermeneutics that, if applied, help one carry out a hermeneutic study. The central elements of the hermeneutic approach that I relate to are 1) understanding as dialogic; 2) interpretation as contextual; and 3) inquiry as conversational. Through the following expansion of a brief ontology of play and these three elements, I lay out the epistemological, ontological and practical methodological implications of this approach for my research.

2.2 Ontologically Playful by Nature

A hermeneutic research method is not so much a fixed method as a natural process (Gadamer 2004). As an alternative to the modern scientific formation of knowledge, its purpose is to expand and transform understanding through the interpretive act of dialogical, conversational interaction with a topic. Because the assumptions of the hermeneutic process have an ontological structure all its own, the avenue to "truth" and "knowledge" on which a hermeneutic researcher strolls looks very different from the path taken by the stereotypical white lab-coated scientist who uses positivistic methods. If we are to have an accurate understanding of what knowledge and truth mean to a hermeneutic researcher, this hermeneutic structure must be made clear. Gadamer and Vilhauer see this interpretive structure as a "structure of play." (2004:102ff; 2010:25)

2.2.1 Play: Quixotically Exotic or a Potential Reality?

This play-concept may seem foreign, even quixotic, to the Western mind, which commonly regards play as a sports competition, a game such as cards, or something reserved for children. However, other cultures and individuals have embraced play more broadly. Some cultures hold a cosmological view of a divine play as the source or catalyst of creation. The "play-structure" which Gadamer proposes is strikingly similar to the concept of divine play in many spiritual traditions. Heimann (1945) notes the Hindu notion of God is not a personified he or she, but an all-embracing impersonal 'It,' Brahma, which created the world through *lila*, a concept of divine play—an enduring life force (Heimann 1945:32). Doing so, Brahma transformed from an apparent singularity into a dance of multi-formity (Heiman 1945:29ff). *Lila* is referred to as both play and dance within a divine essence, where both, as Heimann tells us, "are expressions of neutrality, indifference, aloofness towards a single purpose. *Lila* is dynamic change, is swinging to and fro, up and down, like a pendulum in periodic movements." (Heimann 1945:31)

In this view, all of creation is an endless interactive dance of myriad animate forms, interactively woven through *lila* into a paradoxical phenomenon of separateness with an underlying interconnectedness. Furthermore, *Lila* is an expression of endless creativity, absolute beauty and has a higher eminence than that of seriousness (Heimann 1945). For the Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga, play as *lila* also has a mysterious quality of "taking on semblance of … pointing to the direction of the unreal, the illusory." (1950:36) Heimann tells us that *lila* bestows the traits of elusiveness and ambiguity into the nature of all earthly creation: "Like bubbles of Matter forms are assumed and lost, shapes are momentarily real and yet when seen in consecutive moments, they lose their reality and their forms."(1945:33) Therefore, if we try to grasp or define this playful nature of reality we may be disheartened, skeptical or even irate. In this way, according to Heimann, this notion can be interpreted as both "eternal fraud or eternal potentiality." (Heimann 1945:33) Though some may find this view of play difficult to accept as scholarly, it is important to explore and elucidate this concept, as it is the foundation of the hermeneutic process.

Lila is strikingly similar to a longstanding "sacred" or "divine" concept of play in Western culture, culminating with the hermeneutic philosophers of the 20th century. Heraclitus in *Fragments* (52) wondered whether "Eternity is a child playing…the kingly power is a

child's." (Stamatellos 2007:114-116) Heidegger while contemplating Heraclitus's statement, argued that, "[this] greatest royal child is that mystery of the play in which humans are engaged throughout their life, that play in which their essence is at stake." (1996:113) Plato speculated that man was created, "to be a plaything of God, and the best part of him is surely just that." (Laws VII 813 in Huizinga 1950:211-212) Schiller observed, "Man plays only when he is in full sense of the word man, and he is only wholly man when he is playing." (2004:80) Einstein, through his own successful experience in academia, tells us, "Playing is the highest form of research." (Calaprice Ed. 2011:482)

Gadamer drew his inspiration on play from Huizinga (2004:102ff.). In *Homo Ludens* (1950) Huizinga illuminates the playful embodied character of the human and how "culture arises in the form of play and it is played from the very beginning." (1950:46) Huizinga notes that play has a "significant function" and "must have some biological purpose" but is more than a sole function for survival (1950:1-2). Like the Hindu concept of *Lila*, play is part of a more all-encompassing animate realm that is a larger characteristic of life (Huizinga 1950:212). Play constitutes its own realm, dimension, process, field, experience and mode-of-being that cannot be pinned down to a singular stagnant property with a concrete structure and definition (Gadamer 2004:102ff.).

Huizinga describes the elemental quality, function and "meaning" of play as having its own essence, a meaning-in-itself. Gadamer similarly singles out play is the only "thing" with a nature that is in-itself. This is because 'it' is not a 'thing' but a process, a mode, an experience. (2004:102, 338) Moreover, there is no answer to 'why' we play. Play plays because it plays. Huizinga observes that civilization was at play in its earliest chapters, but "it does not come from play like an infant detaching itself from the womb: it arises in and as play, and never leaves it." (Huizinga 1950:212) It is an interaction involving two or more subjects in an indeterminate, indefinable, in-between space. Vilhauer refers to Hermes:

> Just as Hermes was the famous "go-between" of the ancient world, the true locus of hermeneutics is also as Gadamer calls it, the "in-between"—the space where the bridge that makes communication possible is built. The task of hermeneutics—as a theory and practice of interpretation—is to grasp how the mediating work of Hermes can be achieved, and to achieve it. (2010:67)

Gadamer observes that we must lose whatever element holds us back from fully playing in order to join in the fusion of the experience. This creates room for transformation:

> The ease of play—which naturally does not mean that there is any real absence of effort, but refers phenomenologically only to the absence of strain—is experienced subjectively as relaxation. The structure of play absorbs the player into itself and thus frees him from the burden of taking the initiative, which constitutes the actual strain of existence. (2004:105)

The original German term, *Spiel* used by Gadamer implies an essence of a dance (2004:104). Just like a dance, there is no destination in play. Both subjects must open up beyond their own rhythmic relationship with the music to include the reciprocal rhythm of each other. The kind of dance that Gadamer implies is essential to play (*spiel*) is an aware, receptive dance with reality.

The ebb and flow movements of play continually renew themselves and are not dependent upon which individual is playing, nor upon reaching a particular goal or end. This is a dance to an endless song. Gadamer continues, "The play is the occurrence of the movement as such. Thus we speak of the play of colors and do not mean that one color plays against another, but that there is one process or sight displaying a changing variety of colors." (2004:104)

Playing occurs between two or more subjects, but not necessarily two or more subjects in the conventional human sense (Gadamer 1962; Vilhauer 2011). Play is also something we observe in nature if and when we immerse ourselves into it and slow down enough to notice the subtleties of natural interplay. Thus, the title of Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* is derived from the Latin root *ludere*, which can describe "the leaping of fish, the fluttering of birds, and the splashing of water." (Huizinga 1950:35) Similarly, Gadamer observes, "If we examine how the word "play" is used and concentrate on its so-called metaphorical senses, we find talk of the play of light, the play of the waves…the play of forces, even play on words." (2004:104) If our perspective expands beyond the Cartesian dualistic *hubris* to include the animate world and all it contains as alive and interdependent, we are no longer trapped in the limited dichotomy of perceiving only humans as subjects and relegating all "lesser" life forms and inorganic matter to the category of objects (Vilhauer 2010:49). This expanded perspective transforms this constricted subject-object view into one that incorporates a multiplicity of interactions. In this sense, this natural world in a grander context is eternally at play with a multiplicity of subjects, whether human or more-than-human, in an interactive dance. If this is the case, then where does Man and his creations belong in this natural promenade?

Gadamer rejects the view that play is a strictly human phenomenon that we metaphorically project upon nature. Rather, it is inherent in nature thus also a quality of the

human (Gadamer 2004:105). Gadamer stresses: "It is obviously not correct to say that, metaphorically speaking, water and light play as well. Rather, on the contrary, we can say that man too plays. His playing too is a natural process." (Gadamer 2004:105) Huizinga shares this view, stating succinctly, "All is play." (1950:212)

Still, Gadamer delineates an important difference in human play. Our higher cognitive capacities enable a choice to play this, rather than that or even to choose to opt out of playing altogether (2004:107). This is an important distinction. Choosing to play opens incredible imaginative realms. Choosing otherwise, which both Gadamer and Huizinga term: "Seriousness" leads to contraction and atrophy. In fact, if one still finds this concept quixotic, it may be easier to define it by plainly stating what it is not: Serious. Although, it must be mentioned:

> Play itself contains its own, even sacred, seriousness. Yet, in playing, all those purposive relations that determine active and caring existence have not simply disappeared, but are curiously suspended. The player himself knows that play is only play and that it exists in a world determined by the seriousness of purposes…play fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play. (Gadamer 2004:102)

Seriousness is a critical element in play but not in the typical sense—one must commit wholly to the play or become, as Gadamer suggests, "spoilsport" (Gadamer 2004:102). Huizinga amplifies on this: "The play-concept is of a higher order than is seriousness. For seriousness seeks to exclude play, whereas play can very well include seriousness" (1950:45) Seriousness, often troublingly overwhelms modern society, its pursuits and its values. Especially within the Western tradition, Huizinga points out that we have collectively pushed ourselves out of this play continuum into a rather stagnant linear state (1950:195ff.).

The application of human imagination allows us to transcend our natural laws and cultural limits. Although some play follows strict rules-of-the-game and a boundary such as a court or field, in other contexts a player is free to decide the confines, or lack thereof. In the Play-realm, we deliberately create the rules of engagement, limits and boundaries of this play experience, and then expand the potentials and combinations within those limits (Gadamer 2004:10). In this way, in play, all is possible. However, the nature of our human nature *as nature* imposes earthly consequences. The Industrial Age's play without regard to earthly limits has had devastating results in the more-than-human-world.

2.2.2 Actual Imaginations, Possible Worlds

Children play naturally to learn the ways of their culture (the limits and boundaries), but also their play transforms culture and evolves culture (Bruner 1986, 1996). Through playing, we imagine the world into being and creatively transform our previous interpretations. We intentionally open to the play-state through numerous human activities, in which one must carry a "merry play-mood" like that of a child (Huizinga 1950:198). Once we become overly serious about it, it is no longer play. It is the children, and the playful artists and visionaries who help imagine new possibilities, who rise out and beyond a solid stagnancy and venture into the unknown to discover new insights and translate them creatively.

Hermeneutics seeks to restore reality playfully back to a fascinatingly unfathomable complexity (Kinsella 2006). We have an ambiguous relationship to the ever-in flux, "true nature of reality." We can only seek to interpret, individually and collectively, what life "means" to us by opening to the experience of the collective animate play of our nature. This discussion on play as an ontological foundation is essential to grasp how one arrives at understanding—in the Gadamerian sense—through a *fusion of horizons* (Gadamer 2004: 102ff.).

2.3 The Process of Understanding

Vilhauer summarizes play as "the reciprocal and dialogical movement that designates the process of understanding." (2010:xii) If we acknowledge the possibility of an ontological structure of reality as one of play, the manner in which we arrive at knowledge will be essentially within the same structure. This raises the question of how to form an epistemological method, or how we come to know how to navigate this ambiguous and complex territory. Gadamer insists that we need to do away with rigidly prescribed methods, but remain flexible and open to explore the topic in the ways that it presents itself if we are to be our own "hermeneuticists" (2004). Embarking upon research, we cannot know what will be revealed and how that might influence any preconceived ideas about the topic. The approach should be tailored to one's own context, the research context, and the nature of what one hopes to discover. (Krauss 2005:760). However, Kinsella lists three essential characteristics of the hermeneutic approach that help the "seeker of the sought" navigate wisely. These are 1) understanding comes through dialogue; 2) interpretation is contextual; and 3) inquiry is conversational.

2.3.1 Dialogic Understanding: The *Fusion of Horizons*

Vilhauer (2010) describes "understanding" as a dialogic play—processes of conversation and interaction between the seeker and the sought. This can be accessed as texts, speeches, conversations, art forms, multimedia, and any of the senses, among other avenues. Like the to-and-fro process of play, "understanding is something that 'happens' only in the movement of our back-and-forth interpretive engagement with what we are trying to understand." (2010:49) Therefore, we engage with the Other—the topic we seek to understand—through a dynamic process of interplay. Having been pulled into this process, the Other surely will be influenced in various ways by encountering the seeker. Such interaction may transform how both subjects interpret the topic at hand. Vilhauer again invokes our good friend Hermes:

> The work of Hermes, on a basic level, is to make it possible for someone to understand someone else about something. Hermes brings one 'understanding-beings' meaning, which is initially encountered as alien, obscure or incomprehensible by another 'understanding-being' to comprehensibility. In doing this, two beings, who were at first separated, are now in meaningful, communicative contact with each other; alienation is overcome through shared understanding. Hermeneutics, in the mediating spirit of Hermes, is concerned with this same process of overcoming the alienation of meaning and bringing about shared understanding. (2010:67)

To clarify this point Gadamer introduces a new dimension to the interplay of understanding. "To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were." (2004:379) Through this, one's previous understanding, the limited horizon of perspective, is expanded and transformed by the encounter—if the seeker remains open to the sought. This can transform one's previous understanding of the topic. Gadamer coins a term for this process, the *fusion of horizons* (2004:302ff.).

The *fusion of horizons* combines two important elements in the hermeneutic process. Fusion is the dialogical, conversational, interactive interplay between two subjects in which further expansion of understanding can occur. Gadamer describes horizon as "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point."(2004:302) That is, our horizon includes everything we are in contact and familiar with—everything that is within our range of view. Beyond the horizon lies that which we have yet to understand—the unknown, the alien. As with a physical horizon, this is not fixed, but constantly changes as one moves into new experiences that challenge a previous understanding.

Fusion entails transformation of the elements of the self that hold them back from playful dialogue. This requires a fundamental element of openness to the Other. Gadamer suggests that

an attitude of "knowing that one does not know" is required in order to go modify ideas of "how it is" (2004:357). Rigidity prevents fusion, but such stubbornness of perspective can be overcome by forming an honest intention to learn from the Other. (Gadamer 2004:302ff.).

2.3.2 Narrative "Situatedness" of Interpretation

History and personal experience create preconceptions that define one's horizon. Gadamer refers to this as "historicity" or historical consciousness (2004:302ff.). No one can be completely free from this, nor should we be. Each has an interpretation and not even the most learned expert holds a full understanding of any particular topic. This makes "multiple perspectives" both possible and important. There are important elements in forming a well-grounded interpretation, and it is important to understand how cultural/historical "situatedness" influences this.

2.3.2.1 Culture

A person's perspective is rooted in the past, and thus in culture, but not only in the sense of limitations. The horizon is not an obstruction, but the enabling limit of understanding (Gadamer 2004). It is precisely at this boundary where the process of individual understanding can occur. The "historicity," that is, the context and experience of the self, shapes current perspective. The current perspective one holds, is rooted the their past accumulated experience, opinions, biases that brought them to interpret and act towards the current situation in their particular manner.

As humans, stories are embedded in us, because narratives are the main avenue of our communication (Bruner 1986; 1991). I also align with the perspective that one's interpretation is heavily influenced culturally because we are an ultrasocial species, like honeybees and termites (Boyd 2010). Therefore, the stories we tell and learn make important marks upon our horizon's formation. Bruner (1990) suggests "meaning-making" and interpretation of reality are culturally learned and primarily influenced by language. Across cultures and within languages, we find narrative is a common form of communication. Bringhurst clarifies:

> Story is an essential part of language, a basic part of speech—just like the sentence, only larger. Words make sentences, sentences make stories, and stories still make up a larger part of speech, called mythology. These are essential tools of thinking. The story is just as indispensable to thinking as the sentence. (2008:146)

Bruner (1986, 1991) also notes humans have a predisposition for organizing experience into narrative thought and speech. As a young human grows up this instinctive tendency is

compounded, reiterated, expanded, and directed—specifically through the institution of education, absorbing a specific culture's tradition of making meaning or interpreting reality.

Culture has been defined and described in many ways, but to stay within the theme of my interpretive inspiration I shall use Clifford Geertz's definition, "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherent conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which [humans] communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitude towards life." (1973:89) So defined, a culture is an interpretive system collectively created, shared, transmitted, challenged and transformed by a particular group. These culturally collective horizons consist of the cultural patterns that produce, reproduce, recycle, expand and provide a template for varied presentations of that culture's religious beliefs, philosophical traditions, aesthetic creations, and scientific explorations or knowledge ventures (Geertz 1973:216). Many cultural scholars display individual, yet strikingly similar slants on the significant role of culture in our personal and shared reality construction. The works of Nina Witoszek, Pierre Bourdieu and Jerome Bruner deepen our understanding of culture's role in directing our horizon.

Nina Witoszek re-interpreted evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins' term *meme*, which he describes as mere mechanical units of transmission, through her cultural-historian lens:

> A *meme* is a unit of social memory (stemming from Latin *mem-oria*): an image, a social pattern, or a story which is not copied, but remembered and hence constantly reinvented in the process of recollection," and furthermore, "endow human culture with meaning. (2011:17)

Pierre Bourdieu gives us *habitus*, a complexly simple and simply complex concept that can be described as historical and culturally embedded values—one could even say habits—that influence an individual's everyday practices and thoughts. They may not always determine the actions or thoughts of an individual, but collective memory and cultural structures play a prominent role (Bourdieu 1993, Gregory et al 2009:342). This can become restrictive. *Habitus* can limit potentials, reproduce outdated mindsets, implant specific knowledge and construct the reality of its next generation if it is not widely recognized as an influential conditioning mechanism (Bourdieu 1993). Conversely, *habitus* can be beneficial. It may convey time-tested wisdom of how to both productively and non-harmfully live within the environment. It passes on art, music, rituals, stories and other understandings that help individuals align with and relate to

their community. Culture and the social world are not static or fixed, Bourdieu maintains. Like nature, like play, and like a horizon, they remain in constant flux.

Some cultures may evolve rapidly while others remain nearly static. Their agents are never completely free, nor are they completely bound. Culture, in Bourdieu's view, creates the underlying givens and taken-for-granted attitudes toward everyday life from which individual expression emerges, and then has the possibility to transcend in acts of defiance to *habitus* (Gregory et al. 2009:342). Witoszek concurs: "However curtailed by a culture's way of knowing, evaluating and interpreting, an individual is able not only to contest the given conventions, but also create new *memes.*" (2011:17) According to Bourdieu (1993), innovation in cultural identity and thought occur on the horizon of society, where social deviants—artists, writers, political radicals and progressive intellectuals—play and dance with new thoughts.

Witoszek holds that the emergence of new *memes* in the life of a community will depend on "how well they resonate with its experiences and aspirations." (2011:17) This is why integrating completely new, perspective-altering ideas, insights and innovations that challenge one's foundation are more difficult to adopt than ones with which a society has even minuscule experience. *Memes* do not arise out of the ether, but are reproduced in response to either a time-tested cultural narrative or recreated and expanded, in response to a sudden predicament or shift in society (Witoszek 2011:17).

Jerome Bruner also stresses culture's central influence on the intentions, norms, and beliefs of an individual, how they "make sense" of their experience and then act in the world. Bruner calls these "common sense" shared beliefs "folk psychology." Folk psychology is a "system by which people organize their experience in, knowledge about, and transactions with the social world." (1990:35) Folk psychology is organized as narrative, Bruner says. Language evolved in storied form, communicated mainly through folk narratives. "Culture's folk theories about the nature of human nature inevitably shape how the culture administers justice, educates its young, helps the needy, and even conducts its interpersonal relationships." (1990:162) Through this cultural transaction of stories, canonical meaning (common sense beliefs) is continually negotiated and renegotiated as culture evolves. Canonical interpretations about "what life is all about" arrive through narratives. Canonical beliefs are often taken for granted and internalized without reflection on their "realness" or actual "lifelikeness."

Understanding how culture influences perspective is crucial to the intellectual honesty of this project. I must acknowledge the "historicity" of both the seeker and the sought. That is, I must acknowledge my own cultural-historical "situatedness" along with that of my field research into a foreign (to me) pedagogy that emerged out of the Swedish woods in the 1960s and has evolved into its current model of ecological kindergartens.

2.3.2.2 A Glimpse of the Interpreter

From birth, a person's experience, interpretation, personal story and identity are influenced by cultural history. Taken together, this historical "situatedness"—the interplay of agent, situation, and historical context—directs how one approaches any topic of understanding.

I am a daughter of European immigrant families, the majority of which were Norwegian, who settled in the Northwest region of the United States. I have been culturally conditioned by the Western knowledge tradition through my cultural upbringing. My parents, who are educators, added their influence to that of my American public education. My mother was an educator of gifted children and taught creative, divergent thinking and problem solving at my elementary school and in our home. My father was an English and history teacher who has greatly influenced me to think in the "Big Picture." I was challenged to think outside of boxes, think for myself and recognize that most questions have more than one valid answer.

I was socialized to believe in the physical, mental and spiritual benefits of immersion in and preservation of the more-than-human nature. Through a childhood and adulthood immersed in the outdoors, I have come to intimately experience the earth as animate, interconnected and awe-inspiring. I am a committed "environmentalist" or ecological-human being who understands my self as intimately grounded within and interconnected with my biosphere. I see the Earth's fate as my own and I want to do what I can to help transition my life and inspire transformation around me. This thesis is a reflection of my desire to understand the deep "whys" of the current ecological crisis and to find way to find a personally meaningful way through it.

2.3.2.3 Historicity of the Sought: A Thick Description

From multiple encounters and a variety of sources, the seeker gradually gains a clearer picture of a phenomenon by interacting with its interrelated parts. This lessens the risk of interpreting the phenomenon solely through one's own cultural lens.

Again I draw inspiration from the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, and his chapter on "thick description" in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973). He emphasizes how the level of understanding of a topic at study depends on how deeply an outsider is capable of diving into another culture and pulling out a descriptive interpretation of that cumulative experience. A visitor who looks at a foreign culture through the window of a tour bus and snaps some photos will at best be able to give a surface level interpretation. Geertz describes this as "thin" description. Were I to rely only upon my own previously culturally formed lenses, I might arrive at a highly flawed interpretation.

A "thick" description uses multiple modes of gathering information from many perspectives, drawing upon varied sources and diverse experiences. This thesis draws upon multiple manners of research, inquiry, data collection and personal reflections to support a thicker description and well-based interpretation. Personal biases and "historicity" are refocused by a clearer picture of "what is." A multifaceted thick description enables better understanding and interpretation of the possible meanings of the phenomena observed and the stories told. My thick description has been based on the following:

1) Literature Review

I undertook a wide review of relevant literature to build a contextual foundation. This included books and scholarly articles pertaining to early childhood education, outdoor education, psychology of education, narrative learning, environmental ethics, pragmatism, environmental philosophy, environmental communication, Norwegian deep ecology, *friluftsliv* research, hermeneutics, various guises of research methodology, Scandinavian cultural history, Scandinavian natural history, Scandinavian folklore, Native American philosophy, Native American folklore and storytelling. This foundation provides the necessary depth of contextual and philosophical understanding to articulate and back up my interpretations.

2) Field Work: Collective Case Study

This thesis presents a contextual collective case study of how *Ur Och Skur* pre-schools in Norway and Sweden use narrative learning methods with goals of cultivating an ecological consciousness. I visited three kindergartens, in Norway and Sweden, all of which have embraced this ecological pedagogy for at least 25 years—the founding pre-school Mulleborg *Barnehage* in Lidingö, Sweden, and Trollsletta *Barnehage* and Hjellbakkene *Barnehage*, both in Volda, Norway. I also visited one "mainstream" *barnehage* in Oslo, Norway, to gain insights into wider cultural contexts and to identify similarities and differences among the four. I spent a five weeks in Volda, one week in Sweden and three weeks in Oslo. I joined outdoor field trips with every pre-school to observe how the children interact with the natural world and how the pedagogues incorporate nature and the narrative learning method into their pedagogy. The pedagogues gave me pamphlets, books, other relevant academic research, old newspaper articles, photo "yearbooks" accompanied by stories of their history, and other written resources to aid in my understanding of the *Ur och Skur* pedagogy within all three schools and to deepen the thick description.

3) Interviews

I interviewed current teachers and main pedagogues from each kindergarten to gain insights on the pedagogy and how it is used. I used a variety of interviewing methods, including in-depth, action, semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

I undertook two daylong action interviews with the two creators of the pedagogy. Siw Linde of Mulleborg and Berit Koen of Hjellbakkene took me on narrative walks and hikes in the Swedish forest and Norwegian Mountains to show how the pedagogy works.

While in Volda, I interviewed three teachers at each school—one "director," one teacher, and one teacher's aide. I did the same at the Oslo kindergarten, amassing nine semi-structured and unstructured interviews with teachers. To learn more about the Skogsmulle concept used within the Rain or Shine Pedagogy, I contacted the creators of Skogsmulle in Sweden. They invited me to the Stockholm area, where I engaged in a short observation of the first Rain or Shine Kindergarten and participated in action interviews with key informants Siw and Marcus Linde, the directors of the Skogsmulle International foundation. In Volda, I also sought to understand the cultural phenomenon and identity of *friluftsliv* because it plays a large role in my

cultural context and it has influenced the Rain or Shine pedagogy through an interview with a *friluftsliv* professor from the local college *Høgskulen i Volda.*

With the help of Berit Koen, the Director and creator of Skogsmulle in Norway, I contacted and interviewed nine former students from older age groups (age 26-31) who had enrolled in Hjellbakkene *Barnehage* in Volda within the last 25 years. To gain insights into the wider cultural context, I contacted nine students of the same age who went to kindergarten in Oslo, where I lived at the time of the fieldwork. I found these informants through random and snowball sampling methods.

I interviewed the alumni of Hjellbakkene to gain insights into what ways, and to what degree, this pedagogy might have been effective in its goals of cultivating an early love and respect for nature. My interviews focused on three elements that seemed relevant at that point in my research: 1) their memories of their kindergarten experience, their recollection of the character Skogsmulle and to what extent they feel it impacted their connection to nature along with the general (beyond kindergarten) influences of their nature connection, 2) Their current experience and connection to the natural world, specifically to their locality, and 3) to what extent an ecological "sustainability" consciousness has been cultivated and whether this extended beyond an ecological focus into the wider realm that includes engaged social citizen. As the Norwegian culture in general encourages a strong relationship to nature, I also interviewed alumni from conventional kindergartens in Oslo in order to find to what extent one can claim early childhood pedagogy as a major influence on a grown Norwegian's nature connection. I asked them about their current experience and relationship with nature and *friluftsliv* as well as their experience and exposure to nature in early childhood at kindergarten and within their personal lives including the role of family. The goal was not to compare the obvious differences that would exist between an urban Norwegian citizen and a rural Norwegian citizen but to better understand the Norwegian concept of *friluftsliv* and the cultural experience of nature. As the scope and focus of my thesis narrowed, the interviews with the Oslo adults became less significant so the interviews in Chapter 6 now focus on the Hjellbakkene students.

4) 'Becoming the Forest'

Finally, I engaged in a personal exploration and formed my own relationship with the Scandinavian forest, fjords and mountains. This helped me understand the cultural context of

friluftliv through personal experience and within the company of local friends and family. I immersed myself often in nature through two full seasonal cycles, and formed an intimate relationship the Scandinavian forest and Norwegian mountains with the help of native acquaintances. Besides the immersion into their nature, my Scandinavian family and friends introduced me to their cultural traditions, stories, and perspectives through numerous intimate conversations while gliding on skis, tromping through the forest or drinking *chaga* (medicinal forest tea) or *glug* (mulled wine) by the fireplace.

2.3.3 Conversation as Inquiry

Gadamer (2004) sees all present horizons as historical—both of the seeker and the sought. Through the *fusion of horizons*, the seeker expands understanding of that which is sought by attempting to understand its historical influences. What past interactions are responsible for the makeup of the present phenomenon? This is complex. By using conversations as dialogical play, one deepens understanding of the contextual influences that make up the observed experience. With more numerous and varied conversations, understanding grows wider. Gadamer sees understanding not as a destination but a process, never attaining perfection. However, we can gain a clearer picture of all relationships through conversation.

Conversational dialogic play is the hermeneutic avenue to understanding. In my fieldwork I took conversation as my hermeneutic path. Humans are storytelling creatures, and this characteristic takes primacy in the forthcoming chapter. Narrative hermeneutics acknowledges the storied manner in which we naturally communicate.

2.3.3.1 Narrative Hermeneutics

I use narrative methods of inquiry and analysis inspired by Steiner Kvale's Interviews (2009). This method supports my position that understanding is accumulated through intimate conversations with all one encounters. When these conversations are verbal, stories arise, accumulate and transform each subject. Kvale points out that data and insights accumulated from my interviews are not collected but co-authored. He clarifies:

> The interview is an inter-subjective enterprise of two persons talking about common themes of interest. The interviewer does not merely collect statements like gathering small stones on the beach. Her questions lead up to what aspects of a topic the subject will address and the

> interviewer's active listening and following up on the answers co-determines the course of the conversation. (Kvale 2009: 192)

The interview as conversation is not frozen words, but a living, animate experience and co-narrative. The researcher's role is to have an idea of the themes she wants to engage and explore, but not to dictate the course of the interview. I took Kvale's suggestion to be open to where the interviewee wants to take the conversation. The idea is converse naturally, and let stories arise from both sides, because this is naturally how human beings articulate and expand on their ideas and feelings.

I used narrative hermeneutics to interpret these conversations. This means that I look at the data as various stories and interpret these stories based on my thick description contextual understanding of the culture. This perspective allows a *fusion of horizons*. Relying on Jerome Bruner's *Folk Psychology*, I see the influence of one's cultural context in the narratives one tells. The interviewer must have a general knowledge of the culture and subject at hand in order to understand what is revealed by the stories told. An informal conversational interview lets the interviewee drop into narratives, a natural form of communication. It turns into more a conversation than a quiz, allowing more stories to arise (Kvale 2009). Mishler notes, "Stories are a recurrent and prominent feature of respondents' accounts in all types of interviews." (1986:235) These narrative responses are most likely to occur in unstructured to semi-structured interviews. Accordingly, I relied upon these as my main source of data, enabling me to capture the underlying values and their connections with other phenomena.

Kvale emphasizes that the most basic reason we interview is to gain insights into our research questions. It is not about gathering a thousand pages of transcribed conversations, but how that person's shared narrative helps one better interpret what has been shared (Kvale 2009:193). I ask myself after each interview, "How can I reconstruct the original story told to me by the interviewee into a story I want to tell my audience?" Kvale clarifies this saves time, stress and confusion (2009:193).

2.3.3.2 Critical Hermeneutics: A Reinterpretation of Objectivity and Subjectivity

Gadamer tells us that a more determining element of our horizon is not the perspective acquired through cultural upbringing, but whether one chooses to let that perspective limit understanding.

The key is openness—openness in reflecting on the origin of one's own biases and openness in attempting to understand the biases of another in their historical context. In this regard, I shall share two new ways I have re-interpreted the research concepts of objectivity and subjectivity to align with my interpretive approach.

Objectivity in Sociological Research

Challenging the common critique that qualitative methods are not objective, I endorse Kvale's (2009) re-interpretation of objectivity in relation to qualitative data gathering and analysis. The common definition of objectivity is that of obtaining a finding independent from our influence. The formal dictionary definition is "of, relating to, or being an object, phenomenon, or condition in the realm of sensible experience independent of individual thought and perceptible by all observers; expressing or dealing with facts or conditions as perceived without distortion by personal feelings, prejudices, or interpretations." (Merriam-Webster 2012b) Kvale explains the concept as related to sociological research: "Objectivity is attained when objects reveal themselves through acts of frustration to the researcher's preconceived ideas." (2009:243)

My interpretation is that one must recognize and incorporate that which objects to any pre-understandings, hypotheses and biases rather than take the easy road of pretending to not notice. Many aspects of this research have challenged my pre-constructed ideas, opinions and hypotheses—my horizon of understanding. But to honor objectivity is to honor, have sensitivity for and accept it with humility when a phenomenon reveals itself in opposition, in objection to my perspective. The aim is to be objective about one's "subjectiveness" and hold one's self with integrity throughout the process. This leads to a process of reflexivity, which Docket and Perry describe as:

> Rigorous examination of one's personal and theoretical commitments (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006: 327), and the ways in which these influence not only the research topic, but also the types of data generated, the people involved and the interpretations constructed. There is no sense that the researcher is an objective observer. Rather, there is an ongoing examination of how the subjectivities of researchers impact on the research process, and vice versa. (2007:51)

In applying Kvale's notion of objectivity, one seeks to understand why a countervailing phenomenon objects to one's current horizon of understanding. Then one stays open to explore the reasons why within one's own historical context and also to explore the context of the

objecting phenomenon more deeply. This clears the way to a deeper understanding of the entire research subject.

Biased and Perspectival Subjectivity

In concert with his objectivity, Kvale also shares a reinterpretation of subjectivity—*perspectival subjectivity*. The distinctions he draws between biased subjectivity and perspectival subjectivity help a qualitative researcher navigate through this sticky ground. Biased subjectivity implies careless, inattentive work in which researchers are "selectively interpreting and reporting statements justifying their own conclusion, overlooking any counterevidence." (Kvale 2009:213) This cannot be considered scientific research. This should not be confused with the ignorant shallowness of observation which Geertz calls "thin description." Biased subjectivity, in contrast, would be a scenario in which a researcher witnessing two or more conflicted phenomena reports only the information that best falls in line with the hoped-for report.

On the other hand, perspectival subjectivity can lead to a rich variety of interpretive results. This becomes possible when the researcher is able to take on different perspectives, or roles, when interpreting a text or experience. So she brainstorms different possible interpretations, along with her own. I've done my best to look at all I encounter and try to see if my immediate interpretation biases are influencing what I observe and to be very mindful of my pre-conceived ideas. I shared many of my thoughts and reactions with my local interpretive research assistant, a journalism student at *Høgskulen i Volda,* Alexa Camire. She operates within a different frame of seeing "the environment" and the Norwegian culture. At the end of my 5 months in and out of fieldwork I also had long talks with my main informant Berit Koen. I also had many engaging and reflective conversations with close Norwegian friends and relatives that helped me deepen my perspectival subjectivity of the Norwegian culture and identity. This ultimately enabled a thicker description and better-situated interpretations of my fieldwork.

Engaging in perspectival subjectivity asks me to step outside of my own interpretation of reality. It challenges me to identify, expand or alter my expectations, desires and personal truths. Kvale notes that this type of subjectivity is not faulty, but fruitful and adds vitality to the research (Kvale 2009:213ff.). A researcher cannot escape "situatedness" of interpretation, but can understand it better by challenging pre-constructed ideas and widening understanding through exploring and connecting with the interpretations of others.

2.4 Concluding Thoughts

If I do not reach concrete conclusions that can be repeated and measured quantitatively, what does this add to the collective body of written knowledge? The interpretive hermeneutic approach is not to be judged on its rightness or wrongness. The story that I share comes through my perspective, my venture toward understanding my topic. As Bruner points out, "Understanding is the outcome of organizing and contextualizing essentially contestable, incompletely verifiable propositions in a disciplined way." (1996:90)

The interpretive hermeneutic approach applied here cannot be evaluated by quantitative scientific criteria. Its contribution to the collective body of written knowledge is made through my contextual perspective—my disciplined venture toward the fused horizon reached through seeking an interactive understanding of my topic. As Bruner points out, "Understanding is the outcome of organizing and contextualizing essentially contestable, incompletely verifiable propositions in a disciplined way." (1996:90)

There is not one account that is better than another. Some perspectives of "what is" are more correct simply because they are better contextualized, critical and fair-minded. As Bruner says, "History never simply happens: it is constructed by historians." (1996:90) The more perspectives available on the subject, the more clear the phenomena become. Bruner cautions that a narrative and interpretive method can and must be taught or carried out with the same level of critical inquiry, rigor and care as quantitative scientific methods. (1996:90ff) "Any well-wrought, well-argued, scrupulously documented, perspectivally honest construal of the past, the present or the possible deserves respect." (Bruner 1996:92) This thesis is my honest attempt to present a thoughtful, critical, contextual account of what I experienced and how I understand it.

I have outlined the interpretive hermeneutic process of understanding rooted in Gadamer's ontology of play. My intent was to present my general relationship to how I carried out my research and how I interpret my results. I also focused on the ontology of play and interpretation as transformation. These are fundamental to my theoretical discussion in Chapter Three of the potential of narrative learning approaches to transform our relationship with the natural world.

Chapter Three: The Ecology of Enchantment

While The Wonderer was learning about play as a transformative avenue to understanding, she saw its integral connection to an offspring of play–stories. Seeing how Skogsmulle and its allies used stories to introduce children to the values of love and respect for the earth, The Wonderer reflected on her own experiences with stories. "There is something there," she told herself, but what was it? Why are stories effective? Why are they so well remembered compared to disconnected facts? Why have two-leggeds, until only recently, called upon stories to teach their next generations? These questions led her to embark on an exploration of the incalculable dimension of stories. She began to see how essential stories are to the two-legged experience and how central they are in cultivating the imagination. She began to better understand their potential as a transformative learning tool. (McDonnell 2013)

As Johan Huizinga remarked, "Oftentimes, the essence of teaching comes down to the ability to tell a good story." (1966) Stories have been used for thousands of years to inform, entertain and inspire. We know they been used to pass along knowledge since the dawn of man, but it seems this communication method has fallen out of favor among educators. Why not draw upon a practice that seems literally intertwined with our DNA to assist our teachers and energize our learning environments? What role might captivating tales woven by teachers play in putting the youngest members of our modern severed society in touch with their ecological connections? These questions inspired this chapter's theoretical exploration of narrative learning.

First, I explore why narrative, as a broad concept of culturally constructed meaning, is relevant to "transformative education" (3.1). I elaborate that narrative, as a form of *play,* is inherent in the way a child experiences the world and processes experiences (3.2). To make sense of these processes I draw upon Gadamer's hermeneutics—the ontology of play and the *fusion of horizons*—to explain narrative's interpretive, and therefore transformative, potentials (3.3). Next I discuss narrative as a tool to help cultivate a sensory and emotional affinity for the natural world. I discuss why this sensory element is significant and worthy of attention (3.4). All of this will be integrated into my discussion of the *I Ur Och Skur* pedagogy.

3.1 Narrative Transformation

As mentioned before, according to the UN, education to foster a sustainable humanity must be transformed because it generally relies heavily on transmission modes. Transformative modes are called for. This should not be confused with educational reform. Reform implies simply buttressing and redressing existing approaches (Selby 2002:90). Transform, as discussed in Chapter 2, is a complete metamorphosis. As applied to education—how we come to know, or

lead others in how to know and interact with the world—we might benefit from first reconsidering what, how and why we are transferring what we currently "know" about living within the bioregions and human cultures on this shared planet Earth.

A league of expert scholars in *Expanding the Boundaries of Transformative Learning: Essays on Theory and Praxis* (O'Sullivan, Morrell and O'Connor eds. 2002), co-created a definition, though not fixed, of the broad concept of transformative education:

> Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premise of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift in consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body-awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice, peace and personal joy. (O'Sullivan, Morrell and O'Connor eds. 2002:2)

There are many important themes within this working definition. It emphasizes how we think, feel, act and relate to the Earth upon which human cultures arise. We live in a transformative and challenging time in which our human species is instigating many sweeping ecological changes. O'Sullivan, Morrell and O'Connor also remark, "Because of the magnitude of our responsibility for the planet, all our educational ventures must be finally judged within this order of magnitude." (2002:2) Therefore, there is an ecological element to all current and future transformative educational endeavors as highlighted by the UN's DESD. As Orr states, "All education is environmental education. By what is included or excluded we teach the young that they are part of or apart from the natural world." (2005:12) An important element of transformative education, therefore, is a focus on how to transform our relationship to the natural world.

Cultural transformation also is occurring around the globe. Social uprisings advance the case for human rights and reformed environmental policy. "Transition towns" inspire us to reevaluate our lifestyles, scale down consumption and scale up our cohesion, sense of place and wellbeing. O'Sullivan, Morrell and O'Connor (2002) points out a mismatch between past assumptions and our current experience. Many old interpretations, old *habitus* (Bourdieu 1993), old *canonical meanings* (Bruner 1990) and old stories no longer hold true or equip us to face our challenges. The narratives we hold as true influence our actions. We now are at a time when our most fundamental stories about what it means to be human will have to be reevaluated.

3.1.1 The Narrative Construction of Reality

O'Sullivan, Morrell and O'Connor sees transformative education as an integrative process, where "integrative" and "integral" implies a state of being whole, requiring nothing more to be complete (2002:1ff.) Jerome Bruner suggests that narrative plays the *integral* role in how our mind constructs reality and how we act (Bruner 1991:5). So what role does narrative play in transformative learning?

Bruner outlines the two major processes in the mind. One is the paradigmatic mode—the rational and categorical processes. Complementing this is the narrative mode—the interpretive and connective processes that arrive through intuition and feeling. These two integrate to uplift the potential of the human mind (1986; 1991). Chawla (2002) draws parallels to Bruner's two modes of the mind in her discussions of mental vs. mythical consciousness. Chawla's inspiration comes from Gebster (1985) who breaks down Western humanity's evolution into five stages of consciousness. These are archaic (instinctual), magical (unifying), mythic (intuitive), mental (rational) and finally integral (holistic). He envisioned the next stage of humanity's evolution as one that fused the mental with the former archaic, magic and especially mythic forms of consciousness to compose an integral experience. This has important implications for narrative learning in childhood.

Many scholars believe the current culture of education has become fixated on cultivation of the paradigmatic mind and the mental form of consciousness. The logical-scientific, deductive and rational processes of the mind take priority at the expense of the narrative mode (Bruner 1986; Chawla 2002; Orr 1999, 2004; O'Sullivan 2002). Scientific variables are isolated, manipulated, measured and categorized (Bruner 1986:12). Chawla (2002) notes that the mental form of consciousness invites an incomplete mechanistic view of nature that focuses solely on the current physically measurable processes. In consequence the narrative mode—the interpretive, intuitive, imaginative and connective processes of the mind—often has been relegated to the back burner.

The second half of the 20th Century has seen a renaissance of cosmological speculation as continued scientific discoveries point begin to form an integral grand narrative of evolutionary life (Berry 1988; Margulis and Sagan 2007; Mathews 1991; Swimme and Berry 1994). Vine Deloria summarizes, "Not many people in the academic community have yet applied this idea to

the world as a totality, and certainly many of them would rebel at the idea that science is shifting significantly towards a tribal understanding of the world." (1999:132) But part of what Deloria implies is that accumulated scientific discoveries spanning wide fields of study create a place of discovery where stories can synthesize and begin to make sense of how these interrelations and influences comprise a grander whole. Connections are emerging within and across fields of study (Deloria 1999:132). By understanding mythic consciousness, we can begin to see why this connectivity has such crucial implications in learning.

3.1.2 Mythic Consciousness

Chawla describes mythic consciousness, mirroring Bruner's narrative mode of cognition, as:

> An intuition of emotions and associative metaphorical thinking that is known through voice. Therefore the world is half created, half received through story, drama, song and poetry and a fundamental social consciousness that communicates a sense of group experience and identity. (2002:217).

The interpretive narrative mode links to our emotional intelligence, intuition, creativity, divergent thinking, and imagination and is often represented as the "right brain." Therefore this dominance of the paradigmatic mode, as Bruner states, leaves us a culture full of little scientists, little mathematicians and little logicians (1991:4). This not only threatens cultural vibrancy, but ignores the fact that our brain did not develop in this fashion or this quickly. Boyd comments, "Rapid novelty threatens hard-won natural selection. We are taught to think more like computers but this threatens the full development of the mind which has evolved through stories." (Boyd 2010:405) In Gebster's view, our cognition expanded through a mythic consciousness into its current analytic capacities (1985). Unless we have both, we lose our potential to deeply experience and better understand the world, and to act wisely. Edith Cobb in her visionary work *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood*, adds, "Intuition remains guesswork until interpreted and given shape by intellect; intellect, unless it is serviced by sensory experience and intuitive levels becomes mechanized, computerized memory—colorless and dehumanized." (Cobb 1977:49)

Narrative gained its power through mythic consciousness. In antiquity many cultures created stories—cosmologies—to make sense an otherwise chaotic and perplexing world. These provided an understanding of place, a map to navigate the environment (Deloria 1999). However, with all their variety, Deloria (2001) points to one recurring element—a depiction of

the stages of unfolding or evolution within this earth sphere, culminating with the emergence of human beings as the youngest of the living families. “We were given the ability to do many things, but not specific wisdom about the world. So our job was to learn from other, older beings and to pattern ourselves after their behavior. We were to gather knowledge, not dispense it.” (2001:60) Humans learned to act wisely by observing the behavior and interconnected relationships of other beings in the more-than-human world. The whole world was also seen and spoken of as alive.

The underrepresented narrative mode, expressed through mythic consciousness, links directly to the topic of transformation in another important way. Narrative is understood to be transformative by its very nature, recalling Gadamer’s discussion of widening horizons of understanding. Bruner supports this in observing, “When education narrows its scope of interpretive inquiry, it reduces a culture’s power to adapt to change.” (1996:15)

This is not to imply an overhaul of current educational methods, nor of our current body of knowledge, in order to return to a mythic consciousness. Simply, I align with a discussion on potentials of a thoughtful and careful integration of narrative learning approaches as transformative approaches to uplift a balanced integration of the full potentials of the human mind. I argue these interpretive skills can be enriched within an ecological setting and moreover—are enhanced while cultivated in early childhood.

3.2 The Storytelling Creature

We often refer to ourselves the “storytelling creature.” Edith Cobb suggests that the humans have a drive to convey, contemplate and understand temporal experience by giving it sequence and cohesion in a storied form. This is one thing that separates us from all other earthly life (1977:50). Stories tend to have this temporal sequence of a beginning, middle and end in which the central format consists of the “possible making its way into the actual.” (Bringhurst 2008:225) This mirrors the earthly experience where life unfolds from the possibility of the future into the actual present. So it is logical that when we began to communicate our experience to others, it most often follows this form that is an integral characteristic of life.

3.2.1 Childhood Narrative Development

Boyd (2010:181), Bruner (1991) and Cobb (1977:49ff.) all suggest that the narrative form is the earliest and most natural way that humans arrange experience. Edith Cobb presented a theory of the evolutionary pertinence of ecological play in early childhood for the development of creativity, imagination and compassionate intelligence (empathy). Narrative plays an innate role in a child's inherent drive to make sense of the ecological and cultural self and other. The child comes into his "history," the particular cultural story of the world around him, as well as becoming a participant in that story (Cobb 1977:55).

Infants recognize patterns, lose attention when experiencing repetition, and respond positively to surprise and novelty. Around age 2, children begin to engage in multiple realms of reality—the past, present, future, the real, the imaginary within their play (Boyd 2010:181). At this age they enjoy participating in pretend play that represents the actual—such as a tea party. When asked to tell a story, they will most often give a delivery of the familiar rather than the extraordinary—like a recount of their day, or observing a cat hunting a bird. By age 3, the "fantasy-play stage," they begin to understand the importance of pattern and structure, but the stories begin to transcend the boundaries of the real and tend to be chaotic and to revolve around destruction. They explore the territory of the possible and impossible (Boyd 2010:182 ff.). By age 4 children have built a capacity for *metarepresentation*—the ability to understand another's subjective stories are representations, not reality. This builds empathy—a key component of compassion and cooperation (Boyd 2010:264). By middle and late childhood, they develop "subtler ways of extending and linking events by incorporating aims and intentions, then feelings, then even beliefs, at first implicitly into their play, their own stories, and their responses to questions about stories they read." (Boyd 2010:186) All of this will come into play—literally—in the Skogsmulle Concept.

3.2.2 Childhood Play within Earth's Narrative

Children are amazingly adaptable to cultural heritage. However, cultural meanings may not sufficiently explain the world. Cobb sees a sense of time as essential. "Meaning in the world of the child or man requires something more profoundly related to nature than can be rendered by the visual or verbiage alone. To be meaningful, the dimension of time must achieve expression in some pattern." (1977:48) Immersion in the cycles and rhythms of nature provides an element of life, which is absent from Western culture's Gregorian Calendar (Cobb 1977:48ff.). In contrast,

many Eastern and preliterate cultures make better sense of the earth's lunar, seasonal and solar cycles. This too relates to the Skogsmulle narrative and Rain or Shine pedagogy which is carried out in the "natural time" of the more-than-human world.

Westerners typically construct stories based on a cultural view of time. Cobb sees the human being as a complex ecological system—a unit of mind and body, which experiences time as both a biological being, and a cultural being (1977:109). This creates a disconnect between a child's senses and Western culture's construction of time. According to Cobb's theory, a child in interaction with the complex ecological systems of nature is able to connect with an element of himself that is not available through the dominant culture's construction of time. Cobb holds that a child who is able to discover and immerse himself in the cycles and rhythms of nature is able to connect to an innate element of the human and ecological experience—imagination and creativity. The child does this through play. Cobb states, "Play can be observed to be a sort of "fingering over" of the environment in sensory terms, a questioning of the power of materials as a preliminary to the creation of higher organization of meaning." (1977:33) Therefore, this "discovery play" in which a child explores his world through the senses is an essential prerequisite to his arrival into his cultures way of knowing.

Cobb's description of play parallels Gadamer's "to-and-fro" hermeneutic ontology of play. In a "Gadamerian" sense, children interact with both the cultural and ecological world in "discovery play" to widen their horizon of understanding. This play, she says, is essential to the establishment of compassionate intelligence which in turn is the prelude to loving the self, others, Earth and life in its entirety.

3.2.3 Theories on Our Storytelling Nature

Different theories exist about how we arrived at our "storytelling" nature. Boyd (2010) contends that narrative is a cognitive art form and arrived through play, as in childhood development. He believes early human play, like that of other highly social species, was *mimetic*, that is, representative or imitative. This can be regarded as a sort of "practice" for life—like rough-and-tumble play preparing young males for hunting, or a girl cuddling a log "doll" in anticipation of motherhood (Boyd 2010:12ff.). *Mimesis* can also inferred from early human art forms such as crafts and music. These often imitate design and color within the local milieu, or sounds such as a birdcall or rhythmic drumming aligned with one's heartbeat.

Boyd claims that humans are fervently attuned to both pattern and novelty. He contends that the attention and engagement of patterned art provides stimulation, flexibility and training of attention. But he adds that the human brain also needs the stimulus of unpredictability, change and "surprise" to maintain one's attention to a pattern (Ibid: 95). Further, this imitative and patterned representative play explored even more of the imaginative when we began to engage in the art form of "cognitive play" where our methods of representation unfolded into more diverse dimensions, in particular through language.

Margulis and Sagan (1986:222) share a symbiotic theory regarding the first inkling of fiction in our early ancestors. Early humans accumulated shared physically drawn out symbols, vocalized sounds and physical gestures that first represented *the actual*, such as a location of a berry patch or the details of a heroic hunt. This shifted again, as Boyd states, when we accumulated a higher diversity of shared symbols that led to a new dimension of play through exponential combinations of these symbols. This was a new outlet for creativity. In addition to sharing a description of a hunt with others, we began *to imagine* and describe the hunt we wanted to manifest in the future. Through fiction, pretend play and fantasy, we began to explore a new realm of the imagination, to push the boundaries of the real and explore the potentials of the possible (Boyd 2010; Bruner 1986; Egan 1988). Because narrative developed in concert with language, it is difficult to separate one from the other (Bruner 2002). Boyd argues that the human capacity for fiction helped our species survive through increased cognitive flexibility and capacity. The act of sharing narratives provoked creativity and imagination and further sharpened our neural wiring (Boyd 2010). Fiction also improved the ability to reflect, question, rationalize and interpret happenings in the story shared. Stories taught us about cultural mores, or risks in the environment, without having to learn through trial and error:

> As our brains expanded, we could apply the past to the present and future still more flexibly. But we were still trapped within what we had witnessed and remembered ourselves. With narrative we could, for the first time, share experience with others who could then pass on to still others what they had found most helpful for their own reasoning about future actions. We still have to act within our own time, but with narrative we can be partially freed from the limits of the present and the self." (Boyd 2010: 106)

Narrative gave us the ability to expand our horizon of understanding through a *fusion of horizons* with the other. In this way, knowledge became a co-creative process. Bruner adds:

> One of the principal ways in which we work "mentally" in common…is by the process of joint narrative accrual. Even our individual biographies depend on being placed within a continuity

> provided by a constructed and shared social history in which we locate our Selves and our individual continuities. (1991:20)

The stories our ancestors created, built upon and passed along became the living, evolving archive of a culture's collective understanding (Pringle 2013:43). Pringle refers this concept to the anthropological term *cultural ratcheting,* which requires first the ability to share knowledge with each other that then accumulates into a shared body of knowledge that is ever-expanding and complex as it evolves through generations. Narrative is the foundation of this ability to share our experience and collaborate on knowledge ventures and cooperate socially.

3.2.3.1 Meta-representation

Stories literally extend a culture's and an individual's horizons. Through stories, we can *feel* for the character's plights, imagine the settings and interactions. A person can be changed forever, almost as though actually having lived it. In this hermeneutic sense, the stories we share fuse and expand our horizon of understanding. We become capable of widening our understanding of a reality that has multiple interconnected perspectives, which are all unique yet related. Bruner says multiple perspectives "behold the world not univocally, but simultaneously through a set of prisms, each of which catches some part of it." (1986:26) Bruner implies that we all hold one important yet partial perspective of the whole. Bruner calls this *inter-subjectivity* (1996:12). We come to know each other's minds through recognizing each other's intentional states—beliefs, desires, and perspectives (Bruner 2003:58).

This *fusion of horizons* also plays a role in our capacity for meta-representation—the ability to understand how another might have come to know based on how they "represent" it to us through communication and how that might affect their actions (Boyd 2010:129, 274). Another's representation may not be the "truth" of the reality they represent. Our "truth" and our stories we hold as true are heavily swayed by our lived experience—our cultural embeddedness, our family dynamics, our formal education, our direct experience and our many diverse interactions. For this matter, critical reflection is key to navigating through the world of stories. As noted in Chapter Two, insights gained into the wider historical interactions that influence a story—that is, through a *thick description*—make one better equipped to expand our ability for meta-representation. With this knowledge of multiple representations of the same experience comes questioning. Questioning instigates reflection, whether of our own storied representation

or someone else's. Questioning is yet another aspect of the Skogsmulle Concept which shall be expanded upon in section 3.4.1.3 and 5.3.2.

There is a "logical-requiredness" of narrative (Bruner 1990). Does it make sense? Do all the ducks line up? This is a rational process. Even the most fantastic epic must have some element of life-relatedness in order to be comprehensible. Children are displeased when they perceive a gap in the logical flow of a story (Bruner 1990:80ff.) When horizons fuse, human experience and cognitive capacity are transformed. It is in this way that narrative becomes integral to our cultural and cognitive history. Story, then, is responsible for the evolution of the ways that we process and interpret that which we encounter, plan possible scenarios, and create our future (Boyd 2010; Bruner 1986).

3.3 Narrative Interpretation

Stories also loosen or unlock the interpretive processes of the mind (Bruner 1986:7). A story gains strength when it is susceptible to multiple interpretations. In fact, these are the rule rather than the exception. Scholars have various terms for this: Bruner calls it "polysemy" when a story has many levels of interpretation from which meaning can be drawn: literal (exact), moral (ethical), allegorical (representative or symbolic) and anagogical (mystical) (Bruner 1986:5). Kane (1998) writes of "polyphonic knowing," in which the main levels of interpretation are social, natural or supernatural. Though our interpretations may not necessarily fit neatly into one of these structures, they still can be helpful in making sense of narrative in its many forms.

When the amount and quality of stories decrease in our lives, so do our interpretive skills. Jerome Bruner speaks of "hermeneutic composability," meaning that the understanding of a story depends on a human's ability to process knowledge in an interpretive manner. If we only learn "facts" that need no interpretation, we lessen our ability to engage in divergent, creative and innovative thinking that are cultivated through interpret, and "brainstorm" many possibilities for something. Children who encounter only scientific facts during a walk through the forest are missing the stories, and interpretations, which might be offered by their surroundings. Bruner cautions that the imaginative potential cultivated through stories is "our only hope against the long grey night." (1986:159)

3.3.1 Interpretive Language

The interpretive power of story relies upon its language, the way that we speak of the world. Narratives depend on metaphorical and poetic language to transform more stagnant words into vibrant interactive images that come alive in the imagination of the reader or listener.[3] Kane notes, "The word comes from the Greek 'to carry across,' and in metaphor one set of patterns is, as it were, carried across to another set in the mind, and in a way that safeguards the integrity of relations of the whole that cannot be spoken about directly." (1998:143) Interpretive language relies upon the power of literary devices—metaphor, alliteration, analogy, simile, synecdoche, allegory and the rest—to create multiple interpretations and to make the literal less prescribed (Bruner 1990:59). This helps spark creativity and divergent thinking through the exercise of formulating a meaning and finding connections among seemingly contrasting or unconnected phenomenon (Robbins 2006).

Metaphor influences how we structure our reality, whether we are conscious of it or not (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Our everyday speech is saturated with metaphor. Fiction writer Tom Robbins—using metaphor—describes life as being refracted through the polychromatic lenses of metaphorical language (2006: 251). When an individual condenses a particular reality into language, we encounter a unique stylistic reflection of their reality. Communication through speech or writing is the product of how one is compelled to represent how they experience the world. (Robbins 2006)

It could be argued that interpretation basically always is metaphorical in that most experiences are described through symbolic representations rather than concrete particulars and logical equations. Lakoff and Johnson say essentially metaphor is "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another."(1980:1) The polyphony of existence is in a constant state of growth, decay, cycle and change—that is, transformation. By this reasoning, hermeneutic understanding is metaphorical, whereas a quantitative explanation attempts to be objective. Therefore, transformative learning approaches such as those employed by *I Ur Och Skur* pedagogues would essentially seek to encourage understanding in this sense rather than rigidly transmitting objective explanations.

[3] For this discussion, interpretive, metaphorical language, and poetic language hold the same meaning. The scholars I called upon to aid in this discussion apply these alternative terms for similar purposes.

"The language of poetry is the language of evocation" (Bruner 1986:24). Metaphor opens an avenue for the reader or listener to transform how they see a particular theme. We can gain insight to this through a well-known sonnet of Sir William Shakespeare. When Shakespeare asks his lover, "Shall I compare thee to a summers day?" The lover's conception of a summer's day emerges with images of Earth's full bloom, fluttering dragonflies and feelings of warmth and relaxation. Immediately she is flattered. But he goes on, "Thou art more lovely and more temperate..." Her cheeks turn rosy, her heart palpitates and she bats her lashes in affection to such a handsome pronouncement of love. With this newly shared insight, their connection deepens through this poetic *fusion of horizons*.

Kane rhapsodizes that metaphorical language makes "even ordinary speech act a sort of dance or music." (1998:144) The definition of play discussed in Chapter Two may hold as well for the definition of poetry and its interpretive language, "what poetic language does with images is to play with them. It disposes them in style, it instills mystery into them so that every image contains an answer to an enigma." (Huizinga 1950:134) Poetic language enchants the reader and holds him spellbound. This manner of communication is a way of "singing spoken word—singing the audience into a special place of mind in which they are connected deeply to the world." (Strauss 1996:3) Before the advent of written language members of societies knew only as much as could be remembered—both individually and collectively. Lore communicated in rhythm and rhyme was more easily coded into memory, thus preserving specific cultural interpretations across generations (Bringhurst 2008; Strauss 1996).

3.3.1 Memorization

In learning, stories and their metaphorical devices deepen memorization. When faced with something novel, approaching the topic in relation to phenomena that the learner is familiar with helps them grasp the new concept. This contrasts learning by rote. Memorization is an important skill, but is not sufficient for complex material. Boyd suggests, "We encounter multi-modially through the multiple senses, our emotions, our actions, our reflections." Current neuroscience research defines memories as multimodal constructions of "perceptual, motor and introspective states acquired during experience with the world, body and mind." (Boyd 2010:156) Stories activate vivid imagery through interpretive metaphorical language. Effective storytellers

communicate through their movements, their gestures, their varied tones of voice, and their metaphorical use of language.

On the other hand, words are *amodial*—void of meaning unless we have interacted with and experience something beforehand that links with or represents that word (Abram 1996; Boyd 2010). The same goes for learning a concept. A student who has been given many facts without an adequate understanding of the relationships between facts will be forced into short-term memorization, which likely will either be lost or not deeply understood. In outdoor kindergartens, memorization may come into play, but students also are immersed in nature and engrossed in various forms of interactive storytelling.

3.3.2 An Earthly Language

"Stories extend your imagination to see the world from perspectives other than your own. When you hear someone's own story, your sympathy is engaged and you recognize that other person as a conscious being capable of suffering and joy." (Nanson 2005:34) Stories draw out patterns and relationships of what was before mysterious and unknowable. This can translate to stories of the natural world. Stories can re-enliven the land for those who have closed to it, can reawaken the wonder of the natural world. A deeper comprehension, or *fusion of horizon*, can occur from hearing another's ecological story—a wolf, a glacier, a bolder, a mountain, a forest, a medicinal plant and so forth. Aldo Leopold remarked, "We can only be ethical in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in." (1966:251) Therefore, we must engage in an intimate contact with something (a *fusion of horizons*) in order to understand its value and act in an uplifting manner. When this translates to our relationship to the more-than-human world, we see a dominant society that is in many ways severed from this intimate contact and also acts indifferently or even purposefully in a destructive way.

This rupture is influenced by the way we speak about the more-than-human world (Abram 1996, 2005). Objective scientific language deadens natural phenomena by its rigid compartmentalization of facts. In contrast, storied language can convey similarities and associations that rouse recognition of movement and animation. Stories, and storied language can help connect humans to the natural world (Abram 2005; Nanson 2005; Strauss 1999). In the context of ecologically transformative learning, the role of the teacher is to help cultivate a storied relationship with the child's locality, both human and more-than-human. This sense of

connection may arrive through "an emotional investment in the locality where the storytelling takes place, so that people will care what happens to it." (Nanson 2005:25-26)

3.4 The Sensuous Experience

Essential as they may be, the interpretive elements of stories do not fully address the whole of transformation, which occurs through direct sensing and feeling. Yi Fu Tuan (1977) holds that sensation (the felt experience) is fundamental to experience. But how is "experience" defined in this context? Tuan posits an ever compounding and reiteration of sensation, combined with perception and conception (1977:8). Tuan reasons that emotion taints experience through sensation (feeling) and thought taints experience through conception (thinking). It has already been acknowledged that conception is highly influenced by our cultural upbringing, which influences our perception. However, sensation also highly influences our perception.

Sensations—feelings—are often ambiguous and difficult to articulate. Thought immediately "makes sense" of feelings and names the sensation as for instance: warmth, cold, pain, joy, positive, negative, anger, and disappointment. Experienced feelings influence how we define the culturally held conceptions such as love, which may be felt differently depending on subjective experience. Paul Ricoeur states that feelings, when communicated to another, are strange phenomena in which we name the felt states and qualities of an outward thing or experience. The manner in which we name these external states directly reveals how they affect us internally. (1986:84; Tuan 1977:9) Our feelings are intentionally represented through our words when we seek to communicate them, and this outward representation conveys the inward experience. Tuan reiterates:

> Experience is compounded of feeling and thought. Human feeling is not a succession of discrete sensations; rather memory and anticipation are able to wield sensory impacts into a shifting stream of experience…It is a common tendency to regard feeling and thought as opposed, the one registering subjective states, the other reporting on objective reality. In fact, they lie near the two ends of an experiential continuum and both are ways of knowing. (1977:10)

Tuan argues that a development and refinement of the senses helps one navigate better through space and provide it with more dimension (1977:11). The wild, non-human-dominated world can open the developing human child to a rich, subtle, and layered experience of sensation and afford the opportunity to explore it conceptually. Proponents of transformative education such as O'Sullivan, Morrel and O'Connor (eds.) (2002) emphasize that a sensory connection to

life is an important element of our experience, but it is not seen as a priority in a technological society.

Tuan sees humankind as part animal, part fantasist and part computer (1977:5). Thus, to deny the cultivation of our whole being is to deny the potential for deeper comprehension, feeling and perception of our experience. Transformative education includes a focus on cultivating the body, feelings, emotions, and sensory awareness along with the mind's creative and logical functions. In addition to narrative's imaginative strengths, its interpretive elements make it "sensuous." Narrative learning methods when practiced within the sensuous natural world provide a rich potential for sensory exploration and cultivation. These in turn may help a child to develop more fully within the social sphere.

3.4.1 Sensuous Stories

Storytelling is an intimate and sensuous dialogical experience between teller and listener. Educational philosopher Kieran Egan brings that perspective to the teacher and student interaction: "As our teachers are our professional storytellers, so should the curriculum be the stories they are to tell. The art of teaching is, in this view, tied to the ancient and powerful tradition of storytelling." (1988:109) Anthony Nanson (2005), professional storyteller and scholar, views storytelling as a co-creative experience, one of few art forms that depend on an audience to be affective. Active participation by all parties creates a shared attention that brings all participants deeper into the moment (this parallels Gadamer's *fusion of horizons*). Listeners play an active role rather than passively soaking in the story like a kitchen sponge (Nanson 2005:30). If a teller's story falls upon deaf ears, he or she can lose track and lose motivation to tell. Conversely, if the teller stumbles or is incomprehensible, the connection breaks—the story is not interpreted or integrated if it does not resonate for the listener. If attention is broken, it takes careful reconstruction to bring participants back onto the shared path.

There are similarities in the uninhibited free play of children. They are not teller and listener but even more active participants—actor, author, narrator, listener and spectator—creating the story as they go. A child's "storied play" requires full participation by all (a *fusion of horizons*) lest one become the hindering "spoilsport" of the collective play. In this shared moment the story experience becomes sensuous and alive. Oral storytelling and the spontaneous "story-play" of children ride to and fro upon each inhale and exhale, with each exclamation and

gesture (Nanson 2005:28). This rich intimacy of animate life cannot move to the same extent on a projector screen or inked page. Through these avenues we can interact with the uncharted territory and possibilities of the present moment (Abram 2005).

Children's play becomes more diverse and creative in wild spaces. (Chawla 2002:219). Two studies by Kirkby (1989) and Moore and Wong (1997) found children participated in more dramatic imaginative play, and less aggressive but more creative social interactions, when surrounded by shrubs and other vegetation or within a playground converted from asphalt to a "playscape" with a pond, meadow and trees.

Children do not require spectacular scenery or dense woods. They live in a small world and are fascinated by small things: bugs, leaves, sticks and so forth. So this discussion remains relevant to the design of urban playgrounds. Still, immersion in a "wild" living and growing "playscape" affects children, and adults for that matter, in ways that are hard to pin down quantitatively. I shall point to three elements of how wild nature uplifts children's development and their stories that fall within the scope of this thesis: the sense of diversity, sense of place and sense of wonder.

3.4.1.1 Sense of Diversity

Earth's evolution does not act out a "sustainable development" story or always go back to a state of equilibrium. It is continually evolving, blooming, responding and transforming toward more complexity and diversity (Holling 1973). Swimme and Berry suggest, "Many of the inventions of the natural world arose out of beings meeting the constraints of the universe with creative responses. Only by dealing with difficulty does creativity come forth." (1994:56)

The complexity of a wild "playscape" nurtures creativity of play. A new play area is around every corner—uprooted trees turned to nurse logs, mossy spongy beds in a variety of consistencies and colors, streams that cascade and bend in limitless curves and angles, multiple combinations of stepping stones and tree roots to hop on, boulders to scramble around and twisted trees to climb. The different "energies" or "spirits" of the forest have given birth to a variety of folktale characters: fairies, elves, nymphs, goblins, trolls and so forth (Nanson 2005:37). These folktale characters do not have to be seen as some type of fantastical or otherworldly phenomenon. For example, a child playing in a forest comes across a large

uprooted tree in the shaded northern slope of a hill. She senses through her eyes, nose, ears and touch that the "energy" of the place—the life around her is more still, darker and cooler than the fresh mossy turf around a sunny pond nearby. An uneasy curiosity draws her in to find out what is inside that dark recess where the roots rear up and expose the "underworld" of the earth. A primal bodily warning quiets her step and puts her on edge. She cautiously peers into a deep dark cavern guarded by spiders, emanating the stench of decay. Her imagination asks her what type of creatures would live in this mysterious place. Thus she perceives she is in goblin territory and had better watch her step because a goblin's lair is no place for a child. She retreats to a breezy, sunny meadow by a lake where sunlight shimmers off the ripples and melds with morning dewdrops on wildflowers. This "energy" or "spirit" scintillates and warms her. She's in a fairyland—a much more inviting place to play. This is the natural demeanor of childhood and is essential in hermeneutics to understanding another. Cobb writes of this exchange of energies:

> Within the orbit of the child's experience the value of fantasy and imagination is of the deepest importance yet fear of fantasy runs high. The balance, however, is most deeply dependent on earthly roots in sensory experience. There is a fusion between the emotion as energy of spirit and the spirit of place as the energy of the behaving world. (1977:32)

Play in wild nature also keeps our imagination grounded within reality. Playing in nature and creating imaginative stories within different natural playscapes not only enhance creativity of play but also deepen a sense of place.

3.4.1.2 Sense of Place and An Ecology of Stories

"Each place has its own mind, its own psyche" (Abram 1996:262) and each place needs its own stories. Humans are place-centric creatures by way of our upbringing (Orr 2004:160). Tuan describes, "place" (as opposed to a more abstract "space" which signifies movement) as space that has been given felt value and meaning by an individual and/or culture (1977:4-6). Multi-sensory exploration of nature in the "formative years," from birth to age 8, is suggested to be important in building an "environmental consciousness" of value, love and connectedness to the natural world or simply formation of "place". A sense of place is essential to this consciousness. A sense that "home" encompasses for instance—the family unit, the surrounding forests, the watershed, the flora, the fauna and the cultural community. To form an intimate connection with, and love for, this milieu makes one more likely to care for it. Orr's research points out:

> Children raised in ecologically barren settings, however affluent, are deprived of the sensory stimuli and the kind of imaginative experience that can only come from biological richness. Our preferences for landscapes are often shaped by what was familiar to us early on. There is, in other words, an inescapable correspondence between landscape and "mindscape" and between the quality of our places and the quality of the lives lived in them. In short, we need stable, safe, interesting settings, both rural and urban, in which to flourish as fully human creatures. (2004:161)

Relevant literature suggests this sense of place is most easily cultivated by direct experience in nature near one's home (Heerwagen and Orians 2002; Nabhan and Trimble 1995; Schultz et al 2004; Schultz and Zeleney 1999; Tanner 1998). Nabhan and Trimble contend that early direct sensory experience in nature teaches us in such a way that its omission cannot easily be rectified by textbooks, videos or PowerPoint presentations later in life, "No book can teach what can be learned only in childhood if you lend an alert ear and eye to the song and flight of birds or if you find someone who knows how to give them a specific name." (1995:9) These key components of ecological consciousness and sense of place are reinforced by several others (Barrows 1995; Burgess and Mayor-Smith 2011; Chawla 2006; Ewert et al 2005; Kahn and Kellert 2002; Mayer and Franz 2004; Orr 2004, Sobel 1996; Tilbury 1996; Wells and Leikes 2006; Wilson 1994). An understanding of the interactions between the multiple organisms that make up the local "place" is essential.

Stories can also help cultivate a sense of place (Abram 2005; Bringhurst 2008; Nabhan and Trimble 2005; Strauss 1996). Western culture has eliminated uncounted cultural traditions through colonization, but there is one major Western story of the natural world—science—which can help transform how we experience a place and tell us how to better live within our ecological community. According to Strauss, a coherent synthesis of connected stories now can be drawn from the many scientific discoveries within separate disciplines. She proposes:

> We must find a way to give the same content as story…simply to speak in a manner that lets the subject breathe, show its color, and character—in short, lets it live and show its relevance to life. Story speaking transforms the one dimensional quality of "information speak" by simply broadening the way in which something may be shown (translates information into imagery) and by creating a sense of journey (shows relationship and context). With these two qualities, information becomes experience and all of our senses—sight, feeling, taste, touch, and smell—are engaged. (1996:139)

A story told about a particular place or created through play in a specific location energizes it. We notice more details, feel more and listen more deeply to the land while we are in that place. Experiencing these stories of place creates an opportunity for a hermeneutic *fusion of*

horizons, in which our understanding can deepen and transform through our encounters. However, story's potential goes beyond this. Bringhurst suggests:

> When we hear stories one at a time, we're still in a sense trapped in the bus with tourists. A single story might reseed itself like a tree—a monoecious tree, like a pine or spruce…But even an orchard of trees, all the same species, is not the same as a forest. A coherent system of storytelling is like a system of science or mathematics. And like a forest, it is more than the sum of its parts. So long as it remains alive, literature is a system of storytelling, not just a collection of stories or myths. It is a system to regulate and to record transactions with reality. (Bringhurst, 2008:28)

One story, no matter how descriptive or captivating, cannot equal the potential of transformation through an ecology of stories. Such a system—a network and synthesis of the stories of the life buzzing within a particular place—could bring meaning to one's understanding and experience of that place, much as a Geertzian cultural thick description. For Bringhurst, such meaning "is not a thing, but a relationship." (2008:202) He sees it as something that already exists in nature as relationships and interplay between life forms. As humans moved away from an intimate connection with ecosystems, many of our shared meanings have gotten out of alignment with the meanings within the natural world. Therefore, when we ask what something means in Bringhurst's sense, we are essentially asking about its interconnections. Bringhurst explains, "If you want to understand the tree, you have to encounter it in the forest. If you want to understand the river, you have to explore its watershed. If you want to understand a story, you have to go beyond it, into the ecosystem of stories." (2008:169)

Correspondingly, David Abram suggests that we must "restory" the land if we are to "restore" our relationship to it (2005). Consider the experience of someone walking through woods she has "restoried." A giant boulder pops out in her consciousness because she now knows its ancient glacial history. Her grandmother told her of the trail behind the boulder to a secret delightful berry patch, and the boulder was the imagined site in childhood upon which forest fairies dance at midsummer's eve to call in a fruitful mushroom season. The stories this individual accumulates connect her to a world that now is alive with significance and character.

Even in the Anthropocene Era, we arise from, gain sustenance from and are at the whim of the natural elements within our bioregions. By bridging scientific understanding with both traditional stories of place and our current imagination, we can attempt to cultivate an early sense of place in children that sparks an ecologically grounded imagination through "restorying" our

way to a wider connection with the land. That is the basis of some of the questions posed to the Rain or Shine kindergarteners.

3.4.1.3 Sense of Wonder and the Art of Questioning

The child's experience in nature is unique and irreplaceable. This primal wonder is not some ethereal ideal. It is an integral to the awareness rooted within the childhood experience and is the foundation of our creativity and imagination (Chawla 2002; Cobb 1977; Kellert 2002; Sebba 1991). Cobb interpreted wonder as "a response to the novelty of experience," that "emerges as a sense of the cosmic." (1977:28) This sense of wonder about life arrives from a child's realization that the natural world is the primary matrix from which all life emerges. Rachel Sebba (1991:395) and Edith Cobb (1977:28-29) found that children do not experience nature as a backdrop setting, aesthetic landscape nor intellectualized experience. They experience it in a direct bodily, sheer sensory and fully immersive manner. Also it is enhanced through an emergent sensitivity to the rhythms and cycles of nature.

This sense of wonder connects deeply with E.O Wilson's term *Biophilia* (i.e. love of natural life). It is the innate tendency of an individual to connect with the rest of life, or simply, an affinity for life (1984). Before we conceptualize and intellectually name the experience of an encounter, we feel it directly through our senses. Rachel Carson suggests that, for a child, a sense of feeling the natural world is a prerequisite to intellectually grasping it. She reasons, "If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow." (1998:56) Both Wilson and Cobb suggest that we have an inherent desire to interact and understand. This is seen in the natural curiosity of children and their persistent questions of "Why?" Ancient Chinese philosopher Laozi states, "from wonder into wonder, existence opens."(Laozi in Witter 1994:31) Cobb adds that it is precisely through wonder that we come to know the world at all. Rachael Carlson, author of *Silent Springs,* wrote "If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder...he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in."(1998:54) So how does an adult best provide companionship that uplifts rather than stifles a child's unique sense of wonder?

Progressive scholars today see children not as passive empty vessels to fill with information, but as active agents in the acquisition and synthesis of both knowledge and cultural

values (Kahn and Kellert 2002). Eder suggests, “Children draw on their own creative and introspective abilities as well as on existing cultural knowledge to make a ‘peer culture’ with their age-mates.” (1994:17) Through peer interaction each generation or peer group develops an imagination and understanding that is unique and sometimes beyond the grasp of past generations. This is not to say that interaction and “transmission” from adults is not important and necessary, but the literature suggests it be done in a way that does not limit the next generation’s ability to build upon and transform it (Kahn and Kellert 2004; O’Sullivan, Morrell and O’Connor eds. 2002). Psychologist Lev Vygotsky proposed a related concept, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Within a lower range of the zone, the child discovers and problem-solves independently at a slower rate. In a higher range, the student advances more effectively and quickly through collaboration with a more capable peer or guidance from a knowledgeable adult (1977:86). In this way, narrative learning can be a “transformative” transmission method of cultural and ecological knowledge because it is a form of transmission that asks to be interpreted, and thus transformed by the receiver. The application of appropriate stories in learning can provoke questioning and reflection and has the power to transform current understanding.

Children ask questions passionately and frequently. Stories can be applied in a way that works synergistically with questioning. When the transaction is reversed through the “art of questioning,” the children’s own stories are engaged, creating a discussion in which the guide responds by asking engaging questions and gives partial hints rather than straight answers. This technique dates back at least as far as the time of Socrates. The role of the guide (teacher) is to ask questions that draw out the child’s answers in their own way. This is not to say a guide should never answer questions, but to be aware that providing answers can bring a quick end to curiosity and wonder (Young, Hass, McGowan 2010:94ff.)

Young, Hass and McGowan (2010:96-97) suggest students be guided through three layers of questions. First, ask a question the students can answer—one that is within their “horizon” of perception—so they are engaged and gain confidence. Next, a question at the edge of their horizon, but possible to grasp through a bit of reflection and exploration. Finally, a question beyond their horizon of understanding, but linked to the topic and their previous understanding. This helps the student become comfortable with puzzlement, Socrates’ *aporia,* and gain the confidence to deal with puzzling problems and questions throughout life.

A child may come up with an answer that the guide had never considered. In fact, the student of any age may have an answer that no one has ever thought of. It is up to the guiding generation to allow space for children to both draw upon the collective knowledge and transform it to create their own relationship to the world, fit it to the current societal context and continue the evolutionary process. Finally, the interaction between guide and discoverer creates a joint attention and storied dialogue between the two. My research questions provided room for Rain or Shine "alumni" to recall any interactions that may have transformed their understanding of the world and their place in it, then and now.

3.5 Concluding Reflection

This theoretical discussion was guided loosely by the words of Robert Bringhurst who remarks:

> All I have ever asked a theory to do is help me, like a bowline or a compass, get from one ledge or campsite to another. If it also tells me where to find true north, of course I am grateful, yet I don't suppose that any north is permanently true, or that it could or should be… I think a theory worth its salt is likely not to be a blueprint for a dream house but more like a proverb. (2008:10)

A theory helps us navigate through the wild waters of thought. This theoretical chapter discussed how narrative-learning approaches combined with an ecological setting and learning material may help cultivate a transformative relationship to the Earth. This is done in order to provide a guiding framework to interpret the Rain or Shine Pedagogy's narrative approaches. I present the rationale that in order to change our relationship to the natural world, we might benefit from updating our stories to better fit it. A logical way to transform our stories is to allow children to discover the more-than-human world through relevant storytelling and their own storied play. I take the position that inhibiting narrative approaches in learning restricts the interpretive potential of the young mind. A child growing up in a technologically information-rich but artificial environment may miss out on the interpretive, sensory, emotional and social intelligence provided by narrative approaches. I present relevant theories of why narrative exerts interpretive power through our human evolution and through metaphorical language. Specifically, I discuss how narrative is integral to the construction of our reality because of our historical intimacy with stories. I bring forth elements of the interpretive and therefore potentially transformative powers of narrative. Along with these I describe how narrative, applied through storytelling and storied play, can nurture an emotional and sensory connection to the natural world and an ecologically grounded imagination.

This chapter provided an overview of narrative's role in learning environments, and methods of introducing stories of the Earth to young children while immersed in play outdoors. This directly links to my research with the Rain or Shine pedagogy, an educational approach that employs narrative learning methods to cultivate an early sense of love, respect and wonder for the Earth. I will draw upon these themes in the background of the pedagogy (Chapter Four); utilization of narrative methods (Chapter Five); and the experiences of adults who were exposed to the ecological stories of Skogsmulle as young children (Chapter Six).

Chapter 4: Scandinavian Culture and the Rain or Shine Pedagogy

The more The Wonderer learned about Skogsmulle and its Allies, the more she recognized how Skogsmulle was a unique expression, though inspired in large by the collective historical imagination of the Merry Ski-footed Northlanders. She began to see more and more connections between the Skogsmulle phenomenon and wider cultural expressions through her encounters with family, schoolmates, co-workers, mountains, mushroom, birch trees, ski tours and books written or suggested on the topic by her personal guides widened her understanding of this Scandinavian imagination and its connection to Skogsmulle. (McDonnell 2013)

This chapter presents the contextual background of research on the Rain or Shine pedagogy. In summary, it begins with a thick description of my topic so that one can best understand how the pedagogy attempts to establish an emotional and sensory connection to nature through stories and discovery play, which will be presented in chapter 5. Specifically, this chapter begins with a presentation of Norway and Sweden's shared geographical and cultural histories, which underlie their common outdoor culture, known as *friluftsliv*. This broad cultural phenomenon manifests itself in the topic of my study (4.1). These common factors must be taken into account in order to understand the Rain or Shine pedagogy and its narrative learning method Skogsmulle Concept. This cultural identity is also exhibited within the Norwegian early childhood education policy, which in turn has been influenced by the research and advocacy of my main informant Berit Koen, of Volda, Norway to promote *friluftsliv* pedagogy nationally in the late 1980's (4.2). Koen's earlier collaboration with the Swedish Rain or Shine pedagogy influenced her later advocacy for the *friluftsliv* philosophy, experience and values around the country (4.2.1). Therefore, a discussion of how this Swedish pedagogy and it main narrative character, Skogsmulle, are geographically and culturally inspired is important clarification in order to better understand how it is applied in practice (4.3).

4.1 Scandinavia: A Theater in the Open Air

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players," declares Shakespeare. And what a dynamic, sensory explosion the Earth-stage is to experience. It can be flat, sandy, rocky, rugged, wavy, arid, lush, temperate, tropical, frozen, growing, decaying, beating, buzzing, howling, echoing, thundering, wailing, calm, sweet, fluttering, dancing, rejoicing, mild, misty and drizzling all at the same time depending on where you are and ever-shifting through the

days, nights, seasons and cycles. The very diversity of these "players" indicates that dynamic and vibrant presentations will result as they participate on our earthly stage.

What is the "theatrical stage" of Scandinavia and how has it co-evolved with its human actors? This question plays a role in understanding eco-cultural historical influences of the Swedish Rain or Shine Pedagogy, which is used at my main fieldwork kindergartens—Hjellebakkene *Barnehage* and Trollsletta *Barnehage* in Volda, Norway and my interviews with Norwegian adult "alumni" of Hjellebakkene *Barnehage*. I align with Bruner's narrative folk psychology approach as expressed in chapter 2 and 3, which suggest that the stories I encountered are in turn influenced by the many stories one experience in their life (where one's cultural stories highly influence an individual's own narrative.) Therefore, an understanding of the geographical, ecological, cultural and local folkloristic history as well as its present context helped me gain a thicker description and thus deeper understanding of the stories shared through my interviews with teachers and "alumni". I will focus on the Norwegian context because the bulk of my research lies within it. However, to discuss the influences of the Rain or Shine pedagogy and its narrative approach Skogsmulle Concept, I need to stress that this pedagogy used in these Norwegian kindergartens arrives from a Swedish eco-cultural context. Sweden shares a vaguely similar social history (e.g. relatively weak feudalism, important position of peasantry, etc), but distinct cultural and geographical differences exist. Therefore, a discussion of Swedish contexts related to the pedagogy and the interesting traits of the Skogsmulle character are also relevant. First I express relevant variances between the two countries.

4.1.1 Geographical and Cultural History

Geographical differences influenced the way of life between the two countries. Norway is a land characteristic for their fjords, inlets and valleys isolated between steep gradients of solid rock, and high mountain plateaus. This stunning landscape made for scarce fertile farming soil that climbed up mountainsides and along the shores of fjords. This geographical isolation from their fellow countrymen, along with the rest of the European continent influenced a culture of independent, robust, peasants who historically mostly subsisted on fishing, hunting and independent, small-scale farms in harsh and unpredictable arctic conditions. Even though Norway was controlled by Denmark, and then Sweden for over 350 years, its many individual and isolated pockets of population made it possible for their rich traditions of art, music, regional

dialects, traditional dress, folktales, and building styles to remain relatively untainted by outside cultural influences (Drengson 2008:21). However the vibrant cultural heritage of Norway lacks an urban element, which is characteristic of the cultural, intellectual and industrial progress hallmark to its European neighbors. Nina Witoszek, a cultural historian specializing in Scandinavian studies, adds "The sublimity of nature relieved Norwegians from having to apologize for their lack of cities, castles, ruins and libraries. The vast reserves of mountains, fjords and forests have functioned as the equivalents of castles and cathedrals, i.e. as national heritage." (2011:55) This developed a beloved nature *as* culture, where the city life was a "tumor on the soul of the nation."

Sweden, on the other hand, besides the very sparsely populated mountainous north, has flat fertile plains, a dryer and warmer climate due to being in the rain shadow east of the Norwegian mountains, and vast forests with many lakes and meandering rivers, where agriculture could better thrive. This type of landscape was one where the institution of feudalism and monarchy became established. However, not to the extent of its European neighbors. This contrast between the two countries led Sweden to develop subtly different culture through its history of more thriving economic and agricultural systems within the past 500 years. To some extent, this has spurred a larger upper class/bourgeois population. This gave room for the Swedish culture to show expressions of more refinement, more flourishing urban centers and deeper, a more diverse "high-culture" of fine art, literature, music, along with the fact that its population is nearly doubled that of Norway. The Norwegian landscape was not one easily manageable by feudal agriculture because of its isolation and rugged terrain. However, is not to say that the Swedes do not share the deep affinity and close connection to their land that the Norwegians are known for. The point is that slight variances in geography and recent historical culture exist between the two countries.

4.1.2 *Friluftsliv*

Norwegians and Swedes share a deep attachment to and identity with their pristine natural environment (Joyce 2012:83). They also share an institutional law, that our natural world is the commons, which employs *Allemansretten*, or "every man's right" to walk anywhere on the land regardless of privately owned property. Camping, leisure, hiking, swimming, walking, and ski tours are popular national pastimes for both countries. Both Sweden and Norway hold a term for

their experiential connection to nature and popular pastime by the name of *friluftsliv*. The essence of *friluftsliv* is difficult to translate into English. However, directly it translates to "open-air-life" or "free-air-life" but conceptually parallels the North American concept of 'nature-based outdoor recreation' (Beery 2011). Through interviews and research I have found little to no difference between the basic meanings of this word across the two cultures (Repp 2012, Linde 2012, Koen 2012). The concept is often described as, 'going for a walk in the woods to experience peace and quiet', though its meaning is purely experiential and subjective so it might range from a leisurely walk in the woods by the average layman (Beery 2011), to a spiritual communion and expansion of self as described by Norway's influential Deep Ecology Philosopher, Arne Naess (1987). The main national value that *friluftsliv* embodies is an experience or immersion in nature, which can come in a variety of forms.

However in Norway, because of terrain variances, there are more "extreme" activities common to *friluftsliv.* The expanded horizons offered by Norway's vast high mountain plateaus and an extensive North Atlantic coastline beckon with wonder. This influenced a more devoted culture of mountaineering, nautical exploration and arctic expeditions than that of Sweden. These activities, which require individuals to challenge themselves, and explore the vertical, arctic and oceanic horizons of the unknown also inspired a culture of contemplative, philosophic *friluftsliv* (Repp 2012). Three 20th century Norwegian cultural heroes—arctic adventurer Fritjof Nansen, nautical explorer Thor Heyerdahl and the long-time mountaineer and the inspiration of Deep Ecology, Philosopher Arne Naess—are examples the cultivation of *friluftsliv* through their famous lives of exploration and promotion of deep contemplative experiences in the "open-air".

4.1.3 Eco-Philosophy

Through this, Norway has a rich and globally influential tradition of environmental thought articulated within the book organized by David Rothenberg and Peter Reed, *Wisdom in the Open Air: Norwegian Roots of Deep Ecology*, which attempts to illustrate this country's "enlightened environmental ethic" through the writings of key Norwegian nature-philosophers- Sigmund Kavloy, Arne Naess, Peter Wessel Zapffe, Nils Faarlund, Johan Galtung, among others (1993:5). Deep ecology is a field of thought that addresses the planetary environmental problems with "deep" questions rather than "shallow" quick fixes. An example could arrive from recent "green" or institutional economists attempts to alter, fix and regulate elements within the current

dominant neo-classical economics to counteract the hidden costs, or "externalities" of various types of pollution and land degradation with market solutions. To a deep ecologist this would be most likely seen as a "shallow" solution. A deep ecologist would put into question the very nature of the dominant capitalistic economic system and propose the values and worldview it stems from are symptomatic of deeper problematic causes (Reed and Rothenberg 1993:1) As Arne Naess proposes, deep experiences in nature, such as those experienced through the tradition of *friluftsliv*, promote deep questioning, which in turn leads to a deep commitment to protection, preservation and resilience (1987).

Witoszek (2011) adds that the Norwegian ecohumanists (her term for eco-philosophers) did not gain their inspiration from the European Romantic movement of the 19th century as often suggested (Faarlund, Dahle and Jensen 2007), where they spoke of an increasingly urbanized Man who was separated from regular contact with nature due to such influences as industrialization and Enlightment stresses upon rationality. This separation, they argued, created a neurotic condition and a flawed human that continental Romanic thinkers responded to. Romantics contended that it might be possible to reconcile the suffering from separation of mind-body, and nature-culture, by re-merging into wholeness and through a "back to nature" movement that reconnected them to their previously denied emotions and senses. However, the Norwegian experience was one that never left nature for a separated culture. Therefore, the discourse of the ecohumanists reflects not a poetic or idealistic romance with the wild world, but rather a utilitarian and pragmatic philosophy, which puts direct experience and what is useful to this life, above all else (Witoszek 2011).[4] Witoszek, further describes this:

> The ecohumanist tradition of knowledge is forged less by the lore of the city and more by the 'wisdom of the open air': it promotes realism rather than extravagance, equality rather than hierarchy and though it launches organic, holistic perceptions of nature, it measures the value of the environment and culture in utilitarian rather than in romantically idealistic terms. (2011:54)

[4] When I use the term pragmatic I refer to the philosophical tradition of Pragmatism, not the more common intonation of solely "practical". Pragmatism is a grounded, non-dualistic philosophical tradition inspired by the work of early 20th century philosophers Charles Sanders Pierce, John Dewey and William James. Pragmatism is based on the tenet that human beings are living earthly creatures in a trans-active relationship with their physical and social environments; that life is a continuum not hierarchy. It is their central recognition of our interdependence, our earthly existence and inability to grasp an ultimate static truth, that these philosophers suggest a contemplation on the practical and ethical implications of human ventures lie at the forefront of all quests for knowledge and creative ventures. Often they call upon the pragmatic test of Truth that asks, "What are the practical implications of said phenomenon/concept/thing being true?" The "truth" passes the test if it uplifts life, human and otherwise rather than harming it.

This pragmatic connection to nature arrives from a mixture of phenomenon: their more recent culturally protestant leanings and their historically peasant/indigenous lifestyle and mythology. The Norwegian eco-philosophers (what Witoszek refers to as ecohumanists) heavily swayed by their Lutheran *memes* of moderation, charity, fear of God, reason, humanism and community perceived nature as divinely reasonable. This opposed the continental romantic movement which often expressed nature with more "heathen" eroticism or "otherworldly" elements of magic, miracles and mystery (Witoszek 2011:36). Witoszek contends that the early protestant Lutheran pastors of the north interpreted the good Word to jive with the more "indigenous" Norwegian peasants' worldview. She adds, "Here they lived in conditions of unmediated nature, with an acute physical awareness of trees, birds, the moving shapes of the land, the timeless rhythms of agriculture and the seasons, which they celebrated in hymns dedicated to mountain peaks and odes addressed to herb pots." (Witoszek 2011:64). This manifested an "ecolect" of hymns, songs and sermons that celebrated the Norwegian nature, farm life and a new national patriotism. The conversion of the Norse population to Christianity was a slow one, and many Norwegians to this day align with an organic earth-based spirituality rather than their rather short history of established Lutheranism or with a hybrid form of eco-Lutheranism (Kvaloy-Setreng 2010). Elements of an organic and holistic conception of their world manifest themselves from the rich cosmological remnants of the indigenous Viking Era, which endure to this day, as evidenced by the folk stories and *memes* that widely continue.

This pragmatic connection to nature also carried across from the pre-Christian era of through the cultural *memes*, folklore and mythology and passed through the centuries by a people who led modest lives and were in direct, intimate contact with harsh natural elements, and serene wild nature. Witoszek (2011) also insists that this cultural identity emits from various expressions of Norwegian art, philosophy, music, poetry, and literature, which can be seen as influence by their ancestral, pre-protestant beliefs—specifically from themes within the *Poetic and Prose Eddas.* These 12th century texts are the source and the main archive of Old Norse mythology, which holds within it a representation of the pre-Christian Norse cosmological relationship to the world. The *Eddas* are known for their "heroic" violent nature but they also promote an organic and holistic perception of the world where nature is alive, sentient and wise:

> The Northern scalds and scribes did not treat nature as Other. They neither seek wilderness as a locus of spiritual athleticism nor discover within it metaphors for the human or divine. Rather,

> they identify nature as the primary stuff—the *material*—which is used to describe the secondary stuff (epiphenomenon) of culture. (Witoszek 2011:89)

Witoszek argues that there are surprising continuities in Norwegian culture: Sayings of Odin the wise, point to an ecological code of ethical conduct that emphasizes self-preservation, balance, survival and especially moderation. This ethos has been remarkably persistent: centuries later it can be seen as one of the core values of the agenda of "sustainability" or "Sustainable Development," introduced by the former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Bruntland in 1987. This term is now the global expression to describe the current task of shifting the whole of modernity into a reciprocal and co-thriving ecological lifestyle. Witoszek points out:

> All "sustainability values" are included in Odin's ethical advice, carefulness, acceptance of your place in the grand scheme of things, modesty, humility, sympathy for one's fellows. But above all: restraint. Be wise but not too wise, be indulgent but not too indulgent, generous but not too generous, be presentable but not overdressed. Show moderation. (2011:102)

Håvamål is an ancient expression of the Norwegian pragmatic nature *meme*. It penetrated numerous cultural creations, from Arne Naess' strand of eco-philosophy, the adventures of folktale hero Askeladden, Henrik Ibsen's "ecological plays" and on to educational endeavors such as *Friluftsliv* outdoor preschools (Witoszek 2011:105).

4.2 *Friluftsliv* in Norwegian Early Childhood Education

Just as *friluftsliv* is central to the Norwegian culture in general, so is it valued in early childhood education. *Friluftsliv* within kindergarten (*barnehage*) and primary education started as a slight counter-cultural movement in the late 1980's (Koen 2012) but now ecologically based *friluftsliv* education is a central mandate within governmental mandates with an intention to teach the younger generations to be aware and considerate of the inevitable challenges we face environmentally (Gurholt 2008:147). Norwegian children now have the option to enroll in multiple *friluftsliv* kindergartens whose popularity has risen in recent years because it is both a national value and we are culturally becoming more aware of the modern influences of "Nature-Deficit Disorder" on modern affluent and technologically advanced societies[5]. National

[5] Various studies (Charles and Louv 2009) link the modern changing experience of childhood, brought on by the quickening technological and urbanization of collective experience as lessening the amount of quality time children have immersed in the outdoors, with multiple negative implications. These range from numerous health issues, lower concentration and fear of outdoor spaces. Researchers often referred to this as 'nature-deficit disorder' (Louv 2005). Though Norway has a deep connection to the outdoor experience,

educational policy even identifies the importance and necessity of *friluftsliv* experience and values within early years of education. The Framework Plan for all Norwegian kindergartens articulates goals such as "developing positive attitudes and practical skills relating to nature and outdoor activities."(Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, 1996 in Kaarby 2004) *Friluftsliv* education has a formal history and pedagogy based on experiential knowledge and *veiledning, which* translates to leading or guiding someone through life (Gurholt 2008:138). This experiential knowledge is related to both survival skills outdoors and cultivation of ecological values and awareness and sensitivity through immersed contact with nature through 'wild' outdoor experience.

Norway requires *friluftsliv* in both theory and praxis to be integrated into the learning experience at every kindergarten, whether it is a designated *friluftsliv* kindergarten or a standard kindergarten. This incorporation of *friluftsliv* and ecological values emerged from a long-standing common cultural value as previously expressed and first emerges within the early childhood education as a national mandate in the *Barnehage Act of 1995* (OECD 2001:1), which has evolved into the current *Framework Plan for Day-Care Institutions of 2011*(2011). All kindergartens across the country must adapt their individual pedagogies to incorporate shared national goals, values and content of the document. Collectively, Norwegian society's idea of a happy childhood is one spent outside playing regardless, of rain, snow or -20 degree winters (Nielsen 2008). The main expression of *friluftsliv* in Norwegian early-childhood education is the notion of free play while outside. This framework plan illuminates the role of play and in particular outdoor play:

> Play shall play a prominent role in life at kindergartens. Play has intrinsic value and is an important part of child culture. Play is a universal human phenomenon, which children are skilled at and enjoy. It is a fundamental lifestyle and way of learning through which children can express themselves…Outdoor play and activities are an important part of child culture that must be retained, regardless of the geographic and climatic conditions. (2011: 28-29)

---

modernization has brought about changes in lifestyle of every generation in both rural and urban communities (Gurholt 2008). Even with Norway's sparse population and vast 'wild' nature, few people within rural populations today live directly off of what their land provides. This is a radical shift within the last century (Gurholt 2008:135). Outdoor play, learning and work was a common and essential experience of childhood in the past, but today multiple changing societal forces- indoor sports, TV, electronic games, extreme sports, and globalized popular youth culture influence the amount and type of experiences youth have outdoors (Gurholt 2008:135).

Through play, children explore their world building sensory, communicative, kinesthetic, cognitive and creative skills. Norwegian parents and pedagogues value this independent discovery in learning especially outdoors. The Framework plan recognizes that outdoor play is essential and must be included into the childhood experience, regardless of realities of their harsh climate. An interview with Teacher A (2012) from the Oslo kindergarten elucidates this:

> We try to get them outside to play as much as possible. There is a saying in Norwegian, *ikke dårlig var bare dårlige klær*—"there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing"—so snow or negative 10 degrees does not stop us from playing outside—but the children must have the right clothes. It is important for their health to be outside and breath the fresh air. We make games and activities, but the most, we just let them be free and run around when we come outside.

Nielsen (2008) further suggests that the element of *friluftsliv* in Norwegian schools contributes to the cultural construction of Norwegian children as independent, robust and even a bit rugged through interaction with nature in all types of weather. An interview with Kristin[6], a director of three kindergartens in Oslo shared her experience:

> When people that lived abroad come back to live in Norway, or people that live here for work, but are from other countries, and put their children in *barnehage,* it is interesting to see their reaction to all this outside time we have here in Norwegian *barnehage*. It takes a while for them to really understand how important it is for their children to have the right clothes. It rains and it snows here and it's very cold. It's not about dressing your child like a little porcelain doll here—you have to put them in rubber boots and a waterproof bubble suit. I think some find it difficult to adjust to this mentality of being outside under any conditions. If the children don't have the right clothes, then you can't go outside to play in Norway. It's just the reality of this place. But it's not just about the weather—it's also a value here. In some other countries they don't do this at all because it's not a value. In Italy for instance they never go out. They stay in even though they have much better weather…The people from France, for example, dress their kids in ballerina skirts and shiny shoes, and then get mad when they come back with dirty clothes. Whereas, when the Norwegian parents are usually proud that their children are dirty and wet. [Foreigners] often think we Norwegians are crazy! (2012)

The Framework Plan for Day-Care Institutions elucidates not just play, but the importance of nature exposure to children:

> Nature provides a multitude of experiences and activities at all times of year, and in all weather. Nature allows children to experience beauty, and inspires aesthetic expression. This learning area helps children become familiar with and gain an understanding of plants and animals, landscape, seasons and weather. The aim is for children to begin to understand the significance of sustainable development. This includes love of nature, and an understanding of the interactions within nature and between humans and nature. (2011:38)

[6] Name altered at the request of my informant.

It then goes on to the points every *barnehage* must introduce the children to this national goal by: 1) start from children's curiosity, interests and backgrounds, and help them to experience with all of their senses, observe and wonder about phenomena in the natural and technological worlds; 2) promote an understanding of sustainable development through words and actions, and select literature and activities that promote such an understanding; 3) include outdoor activities and play in the daily routine of the kindergarten; 4) use the local neighborhood so that children can observe and learn about animals, fish, birds, insects and plants; 5) give children an insight into the production of foodstuffs and 6) give children an incipient understanding of birth, growth, aging and death (Framework plan 2011). However, Kristen, through her 20 years experience, remarks that many schools get lazy and create write ups that look like they follow these regulations, but do not. She also believes, the quality of these *friluftsliv* and ecological elements in instruction depend upon the values and interest of each individual teacher more than anything else (Kristen 2012). So no matter if the kindergartens are *friluftsliv* or regular, the proposed national cultivation of these elements depend upon the teacher's own values.

The Norwegian emphasis on children having ample time and space for play, especially outdoors was expressed both in the *Friluftsliv* kindergartens and in the traditional Oslo kindergarten I researched. The main distinctions revealed were not in the values of outdoor play among teachers. Rather, I encountered variances between the *Friluftliv* and traditional *barnehage* in the *frequency* of outdoor play, the quality of the outdoor setting and in *how* the outdoors is experienced and integrated into the children's play and learning.

The ideals and mandates stated above from the Framework Plan for Day-Care Institutions are all essential elements of the *Friluftsliv* kindergartens I have researched that utilized the Rain or Shine pedagogy. However, variances in the quality and quantity of outdoor play and ecological learning were observed as reflecting the values and experience of the teachers. For example, Trollsletta's head teacher, Rune Humberset has been teaching there since the inception in 1987 and his co-teachers and teachers aids have all been there for many years. He grew up with the forest, an interest in the outdoors and ecology. This holds true for his other teachers and aids. Hjellbakkene on the other hand has transitioned through 5 head teachers and numerous teachers and teacher's aids over the last 25 years. Because of this, the initial Rain or Shine pedagogy has slowly become more shallow and Skogsmulle is not used as integrally or

effectively as it was while Berit Koen was the teacher or compared with the teachers application of the Rain or Shine pedagogy at Trollsletta and Mulleborg. However, it must be added that the newest head teacher of Hjellbakkene is now currently retraining teachers through Berit Koen's help to reintegrate the Rain or Shine pedagogy.

My experience with the two schools helped me understand how large of a role the teacher has in a kindergarten experience with cultivating *friluftsliv* values. If the teacher's are equipped with the value, knowledge, experience and playfulness necessary for helping cultivate ecological values and knowledge for young children, then it can be potentially transformative for the child. If the *friluftsliv* kindergarten teacher's solely let the children play outside more than traditional Norwegian kindergartens, then there is not much to report. Because Hjellbakken barely integrates the Rain or Shine pedagogy today, most of my results are from interviews and experience with Trollsletta and Mulleborg in Lidingö, Sweden, and interviews with Berit Koen and a teacher's helper at Hjellbakkene who has been there longer than her colleagues, and more intimately knows the Rain or Shine pedagogy. I rationalize this because the more the Alumni of Hjellbakkene experienced a more "pure" form of Rain or Shine pedagogy under the guidance of Berit Koen. In order to best understand their early childhood experience in Hjellbakkene, then I needed to take this all into account.

4.2.1 The Volda Stage

Volda, the town where I carried out the bulk of my research, is located in the remote Sunmøre district of Møre og Romsdal County located within mountainous, fjord-lined, mid-West coast of Norway, 50 kilometers south of Ålesund. The town of 8,500 people, sits on the northern shore of the Voldasfjorden inlet that eventually wanders out to the mouth of the North Atlantic Ocean. It is surrounded by the *Sunnmøre Alps*, a chain of sharp and dramatic snow-capped peaks formed by multiple glacial events that have carved out the curves of ancient gneiss stone. These stunning high alpine peaks above the forest line melt down into dense forests intermixed with pines, birch and fir trees. The lower more temperate shorelines that line the inlets of deep fjords and the valleys are strewn with rivers, streams, lakes and ponds that commingle with traditional farmland and Volda's town center. The warmer coastal climate brings less harsh winters than inland Norway but much precipitation year round and snow in the winters.

Historically, Volda, like many other settlements that line the Norwegian coast, was a small community that subsisted on farming, fishing and forestry. However, Volda has become a cultural epicenter for the area due to its establishment of a teacher's training college in 1895. It has now transformed into *Høgskulen i Volda* (Volda University College), an institute that is known for its Journalism, Education, Animation and *Friluftsliv* programs. Due to this long influence of well-taught teachers, and a culture of education, the town is known for its schools and communal focus on education at all levels.

Furthermore, the multiplicity of hiking, skiing, and paddling options makes this town also an epicenter of *friluftsliv* culture. Annually the town hosts X2 an extreme sports competition that utilizes the local "extreme" topography for mountaineering races, ski competition, paragliding and the rest. Because of its isolation from cultural centers and its numerous outlets for hikes, walks, boating and ski tours, Volda, even more than most Norwegian communities has a vibrant *friluftsliv* nature-culture. This combination of the main two cultural influences of Volda-education and *friluftsliv* make a fertile setting for the first *friluftsliv* kindergarten in Norway to emerge. *Friluftsliv* kindergartens are different from regular kindergartens in that they have a higher focus on *friluftsliv* philosophy, emersion and ecological knowledge, which is explored through longer periods outside in non-human built nature. *Friluftsliv* kindergartens are required to adhere to the national mandates on early childhood education. However, they utilize the outdoors to teach the core foundations of learning rather than in a traditional classroom setting inside (Borge et al. 2003).

The two kindergartens in Volda that are primary to my research are "the oldest" *friluftsliv* kindergartens in Norway. Both Hjellbakkene *Barnehage* and Trollsletta *barnehage* were established in 1987. My main informant in Volda, Berit Koen, former head teacher and founder of Hjellbakkene *Barnehage* told me that the idea for an outdoor kindergarten came through a few different avenues. At the time, circa 1987, Volda had a population boom and there was high demand for more kindergartens. Also, she and her co-founders—mainly a cooperative of neighbors within the same block who all had young children—felt that *friluftsliv* as a local value was losing popularity to modern influences of television and videogames in the childhood experience. In essence, the birth of Hjellbakkene was founded as a counteraction to what they saw as community threatened by "nature deficit disorder". In her early document "*Vi vil ta eit*

steg tilbake- til Naturen," translated as "We will take a step back—to Nature". A "return to nature" became an important founding theme (Koen 1987).

Even though Norway has a unique history of a "nature-culture," they have experienced a recent and quick modernization and transformation of experience. This is due in part to their countries economic gains from North Sea Oil drilling that began in the 1970's, as well as the world wide technological gains experienced by recent modernization. In addition, *friluftsliv* was a core value to the founding families, and they desired a learning community that could communicate their appreciation of their nature and culture to their children.

Within the first years of Hjellbakkene, Berit Koen became an early influential promoter of *friluftsliv* values and early childhood curriculum across Norway. She first connected with the influential teacher Asbjørn Flemmen, a lecturer at *Høgskulen i Volda's* teaching department. He introduced her to the Swedish Siw and Magnus Linde and Gösta Frohm who had together established the formal early childhood pedagogy, *I Ur Och Skur* (translated as "Rain or Shine"), which utilizes the narrative Skogsmulle Concept at Mulleborg kindergarten in Lidingö, Sweden. Much of her work was developed in collaboration and through the inspiration of her Swedish counterparts. The Rain or Shine pedagogy was translated into Norwegian as "*I ver og vind"* (In wind and rain). Gösta Frohm along with other *I Ur Och Skur* pedagogues came numerous times to Volda within the first years to train teachers and their aids to the specifics of the pedagogy. During this time, Trollsletta *Barnehage*, the neighboring *friluftsliv* kindergarten in Volda adopted the Rain or Shine pedagogy under the direction of the head teacher Rune Humberset, who still teaches with this pedagogy today.

In 1988, in collaboration with *Høgskulen i Volda*, Koen (2006) worked on a project with the *Høgskulen i Volda* called "Forsøk med pedagogisk tilbud til 6-åringer" (Pedagogic Experiments with six year olds) with funded by the National Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to develop potential outdoor ecological educational curriculum for early childhood. The result of this was the book *Naturstudier, friluftsliv og Miljøvern* (Nature study, *friluftsliv*, and environmental protection) in collaboration with Jorunn Nyhus Braute, Christofer Bang, Kirsten Bang (Koen et al. 1988) and the film *Barneskogen* (The Child's Forest) in 1989 that was presented soon after at the national symposium by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, which is the national department that composes the *Barnehage Framework Plan*. The film

poetically tapes Koen and her first students, many who happen to be my "Alumni" interviewees, engaged in their outdoor play and activities throughout the four seasons. The book has been influential in outlining the rationale for early childhood immersion in nature, the practicalities of outdoor *friluftsliv* education and curriculum ideas for how to introduce ecological knowledge to young children while outdoors (Koen et al. 1988). This book has now been given to every Norwegian kindergarten to inspire how to engage in outdoor learning (Koen 2012).

Much of Berit Koen's work and ideas are expressed now, whether directly or indirectly within the governmental mandated Framework Plans for Day-Care Institutions. In the late 1980's Koen travelled around Norway promoting *friluftsliv* in early childhood curriculum and took the concepts from Rain or Shine to a new and wider level (Humberset 2012, Koen 2012). Her collaboration with the Swedish Skogsmulle creator Gösta Frohm, and founder of the Rain or Shine pedagogy and promoter of the Skogsmulle Concept, Siw Linde has influenced her work. It is possible, through this avenue, that the core philosophy of the Swedish *I Ur Och Skur* has indirectly influenced Norwegian early-childhood *friluftsliv* education at a national level. Therefore, it becomes even more interesting to discuss the history and cultural influences of this unique Swedish Pedagogy.

4.3 The Rain or Shine Pedagogy

In order to express the Rain or Shine pedagogy practiced in Trollsletta and Hjellbakken and how they utilize the narrative "Skogsmulle Concept ," I will first present how the genealogy of this pedagogy came to its current fruition.

The late Gösta Frohm, a Swedish leader in the national *Friluftslivframjandet,* the national outdoor recreation organization, created Skogsmulle, a fictional forest creature, who would visit the children on weekends to help facilitate learning for young children through songs, games, and stories about and in nature at the place of his home and work a nature park called *Lida Friluftsgård* (known in English as: Lida Recreational Area) just outside of Stockholm, Sweden in 1957 (Linde 2012). The success with his early children's programs that applied Skogsmulle led to him authoring collection of four ecological, place-based children's' story books *Skogsmulle* (1970), *Laxe* (1978), *Fjellfina*(1971) and *Nova*(1998). These four books are a collection stories related to each of Skogsmulle and his three mythical friends. All of these characters help teach the children about the local natural environment including: Laxe lives in local water bodies and

teaches about rivers, lakes, and the water cycle; Fjellfina is a mountain dweller teaching children about the flora and fauna in the higher land; and Nova is an extraterrestrial from Tella, an unpolluted planet, who teaches the children about the dangers of littering and polluting our environment (Linde 2010:2). These books have multiple stories of these character's adventures that include natural flora and fauna within to introduce the local natural world to the child. After each story, there is a song that accompanies the story.

This local program at the Lida Recreational Area expanded into the formation of widely spread and popular child's weekend activity groups, *Skogsmulleskola*, across Sweden in the late 1960's. *Skogsmulleskola* has now has evolved to include a unique formal outdoor early childhood pedagogy around this character referred as *I Ur och Skur* that began in 1985 at *Mulleborg* kindergarten in Lidingö. This happened through Frohm's collaboration with Siw Linde, a dedicated Skogsmulle leader of a local weekend *Skogsmulleskola* group and early childhood teacher, who founded the first Ur Och Skur, just outside of Stockholm. This earlier weekend child's nature group, and now formal outdoor pedagogy, has exposed Skogsmulle to one in four living Swedes of age compatibility (Joyce 2012). This reaches the level of exposure that Skogsmulle today has become a bit of a cultural hero in Sweden. Today there are over 200 Rain or Shine kindergartens in Sweden. Moreover, Skogsmulle's influence has reached beyond cultural borders. It has become an international ambassador of the world's forests where the pedagogy has crossed 17 international borders where it is used in such countries as Latvia, Russia, Lebanon, Germany, Norway, Scotland, Canada and Japan. There is even a yearly "International Skogsmulle Symposium" where the most recent was held in Japan in Autumn 2012.

But who or what is this fantasy forest character named Skogmulle? A discussion on this question is central to understanding the Rain or Shine pedagogy and how the Skogsmulle Concept is applied as a narrative learning approach.

4.3.1 Who is Skogsmulle?

In order to understand who Skogsmulle is, it is vital to first understand its creator, the historical context of its arrival to the Swedish forest, and the influence of other Scandinavian folklore upon the character. First and foremost, Skogsmulle is character of Swedish folklore. Witoszek explains:

> As Italo Calvino has observed, every tale, no matter what its origin, "tends to absorb something of the place where it is narrated—a landscape, a custom, a moral outlook, or else a very faint flavour of the locality." To argue this point is not to read a national character into the narratives but rather to situate them within a broader cultural context. (2011:118)

Gösta Frohm, born in 1908, grew up close to nature in Northern Sweden (Joyce 2012: 82ff., Linde 2012). He was a sensitive man who described his affinity for nature, and social values were highly influenced by his Lutheran mother. He was neither a pedagogue nor a philosopher in the formal sense. His traditional education stopped at age 19 when he joined the military. In the service, he learned-by-doing and taught others skiing and practical outdoor survival skills through this method. After the military he worked for the *Friluftlivframjandet*—the Swedish national outdoor recreation organization, which promoted the *friluftsliv* lifestyle like Norway—at the Lida Recreational Area.

After two snowless winters in the mid 1950's, he felt it was necessary to provide children alternative winter activities besides skiing. During this time, he felt concern about a trend of his society becoming more disconnected with their natural environment. Joyce explains, "Frohm believed that in order to develop a love and respect for nature it is important to start with young children before they become corrupted by the lure of society, technology and commercialism." (2012:88) Also, major reforms occurred at this time in Sweden to 'modernize' national education focusing more on a rationalist approach (Joyce 2012:84). Frohm saw this as threatening the childhood experience. His tales in the book *Skogsmulle* (1970) often relate to the theme of pollution, wanting to harm an animal, or destroying nature in someway. Skogsmulle arrives to save nature from these calamitous acts of 'square' individuals with distorted values.

Frohm, an engaged father with a personal interest in children's learning, began self-study of a wide variety of early childhood pedagogies. He found inspiration in the work of Friedrich Frobel, Maria Montessori and Ellen Key, who all in different ways emphasize self-directed learning, experiential and sensory learning outside, questioning, and the role of adults in enhancing the educational experience (Joyce 2012:85). Frohm, a natural storyteller and musician, combined these inspirations with his own to create the Skogsmulle character and a children's program at the Lida Recreation Area.

The character Skogsmulle was inspired through a host of bedtime stories Gösta Frohm told his own children. *Skog,* the Swedish word for forest, and *Mulle* a personal name are the roots

of his name. He called upon the local geography, flora and fauna of his home at the recreation area at Lida to aid in the imagery of the story. This is present in the most widely read, "Skogsmulle Genesis" story, which is the opening chapter of his first published book *Skogsmulle (1970).* Skogsmulle was born in a fierce storm, by a loud thunder and a crackle of lightning upon a large boulder near Frohm's house. "All of nature shook…and when nature was at its most turbulent, Skogsmulle was created." (Frohm 1970:3) Like a popular theory of the explanation for the origins of the universe, Skogsmulle was born from a "Big Bang". There he/she[7] (Skogsmulle is genderless) lie naked upon a large boulder surrounded by pine, birch, spruce trees, blueberry bushes, moss covered stones, lichen and mushrooms. The local fauna sensed its arrival and came to investigate. They gave it clothes, a birch bark hat, a moss one-piece, a tail made from tree roots with a tassel to help sweep up nature if found unclean. Now Skogsmulle was equipped for his mission "to show all the children everything, which exists in the forest, to teach them how important it is to take care of nature." (Frohm 1970:6)

Through multiple methods to find out whom Skogsmulle really is—interviews, storybooks, and finally, a very special personal meeting with this forest creature at the exact boulder where he was born (Lida Recreational Area*)*—I've come to some initial understanding. First, Skogsmulle is unique: he is neither an earthling in the sense that there are others of his species. Nor is he an extraterrestrial—though it does have a friend, Nova from *Tella*, and unpolluted planet that also visits children to warn them about polluting our earth. There is only one Mulle, and his home is the forest. In fact, you can find it in all forests of the world (but it tends to reside in the Swedish forest). He is also quasi-magical. Skogsmulle is known to come to people in their dreams. He can be in Japan and travel to Sweden in a blink of an eye. He inexplicably can change the mind, at the last minute, of corporate managers who have set plans to destroy nature (Frohm 1970:50ff.). As mentioned, Skogsmulle is genderless and this may be for multiple reasons. One of them may be that the Scandinavian countries are praised for their egalitarian culture and equal status of women compared the wider world where it is most common for patriarchal societies to dominate. Another reason may be that a genderless Skogsmulle makes it easy for both female and male pedagogues to dress up as the character.

[7] For the sake of consistency, I shall refer to Skogsmulle as "he ," as the English language patriarchal.

Skogsmulle communicates with animals and plants, though not through our modern languages. He speaks through his ability to sense nature and all that inhabits it. He sings dances and plays in the forest and shares his love and wisdom of the forest with the children who come looking for it. In general Skogsmulle most resembles a forest spirit. Unlike other Scandinavian folklore, which demonizes forest dwellers and puts fear of the forest into the population—like the troll, *tusse*, *Nokken* and *Huldra*—Frohm created a loveable and approachable character that acts as an ambassador for the forest. Joyce contends that Skogsmulle is influenced by old Scandinavian legends, though does she does not go into details (2012:86). Therefore, my research on the subject discusses possible influences of two common Scandinavian folktale characters upon Skogsmulle, though my limited expertise on of Scandinavian folklore prevents me from seeing other connections.

The core of Skogsmulle's characteristics, described in Gösta Frohm's first published book, *Skogsmulle*, shares similarities with two particular regional folklore characters, *Skogsrå* and Askeladden. It is highly logical that a Swedish father's imaginative bedtime stories would draw from his archive of his traditional tales. Skogsmulle's forest spirit essence mimics the Swedish folklore of *Skogsrå*, the guardians of the forest, which parallels the Norwegian version called *Huldra*, but with a twist for the children. *Skogsrå* was a folk character imagined to make sense of the unknown mysteries of disappearances and strange phenomena that occurred in the forests. Legend has it that she would lure and seduce certain unlucky souls, by way of their enticing beauty, into her deep and damp chasm of the forest, and have her way with them. Then she would leave them disillusioned and lost in the wood, often never to return. Arnehed (2012), a Swedish storyteller suggests *Huldra/Skogsrå* can also be seen as an anthropomorphized archetype of wild nature, which has morphed over time to mirror the cultures changing relationship with the natural world. She expressed that the Eros of nature – the creative, sexual, life force. *Huldra/Skogsrå* sexual exploits represent the sensuous lure the forest holds for many Scandinavians. Arnehed has pointed out that the archetype of *Huldra/Skogsrå* became more demonized as the culture incorporated the Christian patriarchal God. However, there is also an element of respect within the *Huldra/Skogsrå* tales—the lucky ones that made it out alive respected *Huldra/Skogsrå*, walked carefully in her presence, and never commented on her long bushy tail.

In this respect, Skogsmulle can also be seen as an anthropomorphized archetype of nature, which he intentionally gives positive, child-friendly rather than erotic and demonizing traits—possibly to promote an alternative perspective of wild nature. Skogsmulle represents the forest as genderless—neither the as a Mother Earth Goddess or Father God in the Sky. Skogsmulle does not lure and seduce, but invites exploration of the forest playfully, lovingly and through fantasy, imagination and curiosity. Skogsmulle also teaches the children practical survival skills in order to find their way out of *Huldra/Skogsrå's* deep chasm if they are ever to get lost. *Huldra/Skogsrå*, an indifferent neutral force can aid and avenge, sometimes taking lives. Skogsmulle, on the other hand, is more Ghandian. Though he speaks for, and protects nature, he does not cause harm to any beings. Both Skogsmulle and *Skogsrå* have friends. *Skogsrå* plays with *Sjorå*, the guardian spirits of water bodies. Skogsmulle has a friend, Laxe, who teaches children about protecting and taking care of lakes, rivers, oceans and streams.

Skogsmulle also shares similarities with the Norwegian cultural folktale hero, Askeladden (also known as Ash-lad). Though, Askeladden is predominantly a Norwegian tale, many Swedes are familiar with Askeladden's adventures. If not, the characteristics of Askeladden arrive from wider *memes* that are the hallmark of these two Scandinavian countries' shared history. Both protagonists are products of pragmatic, protestant cultures, with intimate histories of living closely with the cycles and rhythms of nature and a rich indigenous mythological tradition from the *Poetic and Prose Eddas* of the Viking Era that was never fully lost (Witoszek 2011:107ff.).

Askeladden is the youngest son of a poor peasant family who appears as the underdog, but always wins great prizes of princesses and kingdoms in the end through heroic, effortless and creative means (Witoszek 2011:107ff). He comes up with imaginative solutions, outwits his opponents and works with a *codex natura,* working with, not against nature, where he succeeds without striving (Witoszek 2011:107ff). Witoszek explains he achieves his goals because:

> a) he is a great energy saver and goes about his tasks without trying too hard; b) he treats nature as his partner: always staying attuned to it; c) he relies on innovation, investing in unconventional, short-cut solutions; d) he is compassionate soul, always helping the poor and needy; e) he has faith- he trusts his good luck. (Witoszek 2011:117)

This mirrors Skogsmulle in the tale of the *Golden Fox* (Frohm 1970:54-65) where he quickly must deter a hunter and his dog from finding the tracks of the golden fox, which has a hurt paw from stepping on a tin can, which someone carelessly threw in the woods. He comes up

with a creative and resourceful solution to put a potent smelling mixture of berries on the sole of his shoes, walks over the fox's tracks in the snow and then leads the hunter away from where the fox is healing in a snow cave.

This narrative exhibits both traits of compassionate action and quick, divergent thinking and creative problem solving that makes practical and effective use of the resources around it. Jensen (2007) argues that Askeladden embodies the Norwegian term *kjennskap*, which he explains is a method of acquiring a kind of wisdom through 'tumbling and fumbling' or learning through experience. He further reasons that "Kjennskap is a way to recognize, come close to, get used to, look and listen, touch and taste - using all your senses. Kjennskap is a way to understand life, and that wisdom can only be obtained by "being in reality"." (Jensen 2007:102-103) Frohm's work in the military focused on teaching soldiers practical survival skills and he was an advocate of learning-by doing, having no formal education past secondary school. Skogsmulle embodies *kjennskap*, where he operates and connects with nature on a sensory level and helps open children to this sensory level of knowing through direct experience in nature.

Like Askeladden, Skogsmulle is also highly attuned to nature. Askeladden is known to idle by the fire, poke at the embers and ever-changing flames (hence the name Ash-lad). Kvaloy-Setreng adds: "He is fascinated by the process [fire], how nothing is constant, and how he can kindle and re-kindle the process, but never control it." (2010:1) This helps him learn to stay openly attentive by sensing his experience of the world around him. Linde (2012) clarifies that Skogsmulle senses all of nature, which is how he helps protect the forest. He knows when someone, or something is threatened and comes to their aid—*by sensing*. Also, one of the main values he teaches children that visit him, is how to experience nature fully by engaging all of their senses. It appears both Skogsmulle and Askeladden operate on a heightened sensory level compared to your average layman, which helps them respond creatively and practically to the complex world around them.

However, there is one element of Skogsmulle that is quasi-mystical—a feature that he does not share with Askeladden. Kvaloy-Setreng notes:

> The hero of Danish and Swedish fairy tales win out in contests through magic and miracles, while the Norwegian Ash-lad wins by his own knowledge-seeking and inventive action. In other words, the Ash-lad is an ideal inspiring practical and self-reliant activity and a concomitant distrust in higher spirits as helpers in difficult situations. (2010:4)

This difference between the two characters can be seen as an expression of the differences between the two cultures: Norway's cultural hero, Askeladden, mirrors the pragmatic *memes* of its cultural history. Skogsmulle holds both pragmatic but also more mystical traits that are characteristic of societies whose pasts are more influenced by agriculture and feudalism.

4.4 Concluding Discussion

The objective for this chapter has been to reveal how the character Skogsmulle has been influenced by existing Scandinavian folklore. I have touched upon the local color of Swedish places, the cultural context and personal experience of creator Gösta Frohm's life and referred to the fact that Skogsmulle leaders tweak the story to their own individual taste and history. At the basis though, is a character that is meant to transmit Scandinavian cultural values, such as preservation, love and respect for nature. The protagonist is loveable and non-threatening. He shares the wonder of nature with children with the hope that the children will care about nature as they grow into adulthood.

However, I will add that the contextual history of the Rain or Shine pedagogy reflects a more "Romantic" connection to nature rather than the more common pragmatic Norwegian *meme* as outlined by Witoszek (2011). This may be borrowed from the Swedish context. However, the main kindergarten in Volda, Hjellbakkene, was founded on the premise of a "return to nature". The reality is that today, even Norway—the pristine nature-culture—is gravitating away from an intimate connection to nature at large due to the pressure of the ever influential collective modern globalized experience. Therefore, "Romantic" ideas of reestablishing a severed bond through rediscovering the magic and beauty in "sublime" untamed nature through the senses and emotions hold an appeal—though this possibly holds truer for Sweden with its slightly alternative cultural history that was more stamped by feudalism and urbanization.

I have sketched the main influences of Scandinavian cultural and geographical history upon the Skogsmulle pedagogy. This includes the deeply established tradition of *friluftsliv* and the Norwegian pragmatic attitude to nature. How *friluftsliv* presents itself within national early childhood education policy was discussed along with the potential influences of the Swedish rain or shine pedagogy upon Norwegian national policy through the advocacy of my main informant,

Berit Koen. Finally, I have outlined a description of the Rain or Shine's historical development and the genealogy of Skogsmulle character.

An inquiry into the folkloric inspiration behind Skogsmulle and the wider Scandinavian cultural history aid the reader to understand how the teachers of this pedagogy apply the narrative Skogsmulle concept as a method to forge an emotional and sensory connection to natural phenomena and a wonder for the natural world, which is presented in Chapter Five.

Chapter Five: Narrative Learning and "Rain or Shine" Pedagogy in Practice

The Wonderer wandered all over the Northland to seek the stories of Skogsmulle. This led her to the rugged fjord-lined Western coast and to the serene forests of the Eastern seaboard. There she had two encounters with Skogsmulle himself where he told her how he helps the merry ski-footed children open to an affinity for the wondrous more-than-two-legged nature. She also met many allies of Skogsmulle who introduced her many stories and experiences that helped her better understand how Skogsmulle and his Allies use play and stories to uplift an ecological imagination. (McDonnell 2013)

The Rain or Shine pedagogy applies ecological narrative learning principles. Through the narrative Skogsmulle Concept, children are introduced to emotional and sensory connection with, and sense of wonder for, the natural world. This pedagogy also introduces an ecological understanding through a systems-based approach to nature. The narrative characters Skogsmulle, Laxe and Fjellfina help illustrate natural associations and interconnections. After an overview (5.1), application of the Skogsmulle narrative method is described through its two main elements: (5.2) cultivating a local sense of place and ecological understanding within the local rhythms and cycles of the bioregion, and (5.3) promoting a love and wonder for the world as inspired by Skogsmulle, a protagonist of discovery play and the art of questioning.

5.1 Overview

Teachers supplied verbal descriptions of Skogsmulle the character and its accompanying stories. Primary informants were Berit Koen, the former head teacher and creator of Hjellbakkene Barnehage in Volda, and Siw Linde, creator of the formal early childhood pedagogy *I Ur Och Skur* (Rain or Shine) at Mulleborg Barnehage in Lidingö, Sweden. More background was gleaned from two films, *Barneskogen* (1989) and a vintage Skogsmulle video by Gösta Frohm from Berit Koen's personal archive. Several teachers also provided experiential examples of the Skogsmulle pedagogy in action. Full immersion into the Skogsmulle world came through field trips with all three kindergartens. Anita Stigberg and Siw and Magnus Linde guided me through "Skogsmulle and Friends" interpretive nature trails in Lida Recreational Area, where the concept originated. Berit Koen, granted a full day "action interview" on a hike up one of Volda's mountains. I had two direct meetings with Skogsmulle in the forest—one with the children of

Trollsletta in Volda, and one personal meeting at Lida Recreational Area. Finally, I transformed into the character myself at Berit's home in order to try to embody the character.

The Skogsmulle concept is unique, first employed by Gösta Frohm at Lida Recreational Area. Frohm's ecological stories are brought to life for the children by adults in costume within wild nature. Skogsmulle was the first character and still is the one most used by teachers, because the forest is Skogsmulle's neighborhood and forest is the closest playscape for the majority of kindergartens. Each teacher has leeway to present a distinctive style and interpretation, but in all instances, Skogsmulle and friends are treated as ambassadors and guardians of nature. In describing the Skogsmulle Concept, the conversation can also switch to the characters Laxe of the water and Fjellfina of the mountains[8]. Through their own presentations of the character from Gösta Frohm's books, teachers build up Skogsmulle to be a kind, friendly and protective forest dweller, an ally of nature and of children. Skogsmulle's goal is to help the children experience the forest through play, the senses, curiosity, respect and love. Another goal is that the children become comfortable and enjoy being outside in wild nature.

The Rain or Shine pedagogy has three age groups. Children ages 1 through 2 experience *Skogknopp*. This age group is less focused on the Skogsmulle stories and more focused on sensory exploration of the natural world through free play and child-led curiosity. From personal observation, some of these youngest children are fearful or apprehensive at the initial meeting with Skogsmulle. However, they often slowly warm up to the character as they see the older children excited and interacting with it. The ideal age for the Skogsmulle experience appears to be ages 3 through 4, in the *Skogsnytte* group. Children of these ages are in the fantasy-play stage of development—their imaginations easily jump between reality and fantasy. But some of the oldest children, ages 5 and 6 in the group *Skogsmulle*, begin to question whether Skogsmulle is real and some feel it is too childish for them. Teachers adapt by putting less emphasis on Skogsmulle and more on ecological knowledge through their discovery of the natural world. In summary, the narrative of Skogsmulle and Friends builds a bridge to this later confident immersion in and exploration of one's local nature.

---

[8] [8] It must be noted that in Norway, the stories of Nova the extraterrestrial are not often used (Koen 2012). My exploration of this reveals that the otherworldly characteristics of Nova are incongruent with the Norwegian pragmatic and Protestant heritage. It is possible that the distinctions (highlighted in Chapter Four) in Swedish cultural history that drive its folklore into more magical imaginative realms might be a factor.

For the Rain or Shine Kindergartens, the narrative begins in the months of August/September, as they begin to hear the first stories and rumors that Skogsmulle, a forest-dwelling friend, lives just outside in their forest. They also learn of Laxe, a water-dwelling friend in the lakes, rivers and seas nearby, and Fjellfina, who lives up high in the high hills and mountains. This is done in a traditional "storytelling" manner with children gathered around the teacher, usually outdoors. Puppets of the characters may be utilized to help give a better visual representation for young minds.

The stories in Gösta Frohm's books were not used directly by Hjellbakkene and Trollsletta, the Norwegian kindergartens in Volda, because they are written in Swedish (Koen 2012, Humberset 2012). Berit Koen also noted that much of the content is outdated, having been written nearly 40 years prior (2012). She and the teachers she has worked with have created their own versions of the Skogsmulle stories.

There are no specific rules for telling the stories. Leaders are trained to understand who Skogsmulle is and what it stands for but thereafter are encouraged to allow spontaneity and imagination into their interactions. The teacher's personality and the setting where the story is told can reshape the adventures. What is valued and encouraged is the preservation of Scandinavian values through the inspiration of native folklore. (Källström 2012; Koen 2012; Linde 2012).

5.1.1 Skogsmulle: A Story of Place

The captivating Skogsmulle story is a direct expression of its place. When it is translated from its original language and applied to another cultural context, it may lose some of its effectiveness. There are two examples within the main story in *Skogsmulle* (1970): the first chapter, *"Då Skogsmulle Kom Til,"* translated as "When Skogsmulle was born" (Frohm 2002). This describes how Skogsmulle came to exist and its purpose to protect, and to share intimate wisdom with children who come into the forest. The original Swedish comes alive with vivid metaphorical language (Anstrell 2012)[9]. The first lines are as follows:

> *Det var en skön härlig dag i skogen då solen sken och vinden i träden lät som musik. Plötsligt slet vinden i trädtopparna så att de nåstan böjdes mot marken. Ett mörkt moln gled fram. Åskknallarna ekade mellan bergsväggarna och med en gång föll regnet tungt og tätt.*

[9] Please refer back to Chapter 3—section 3.3 Narrative Interpretation—which provides a base discussion on the power of metaphorical language.

> Translation: It was a wonderful day in the forest; the sun was shining and the wind in the trees sounded like music. Suddenly there was a tremendous rush of wind through the treetops, causing branches to bend until they nearly touched the ground. A dark cloud slid across the sky and thunderbolts echoed between hillsides, all at once rain started to fall heavily and densely. (Frohm in Internationella Skogsmullesymposiet 2002:3)

Lively as this passage reads, Swedish translator Mike Anstrell (2012) notes that the English version loses the rhyme and alliterations that empower the original Swedish text. Another example can be drawn from the tale of Skogsmulle's moss suit, which reads as follows in English:

> "Spiders hurried to spin threads and the ants brought long pine needles. All waterspiders were helping with the sewing." (Fromm 2002:4)

but in its original form,

> *"Spindlar skyndade sig att spinna trådar och myrorna bar fram långa barrnålar. Alla skräddare I skogssjön hjälptes åt att sy."* (Frohm 1970:1-2)

In Swedish, *skräddare* is a double entendre for "water skeeter" and for "tailor." So the act of the "tailors" helping to sew Skogsmulle's suit is enriched by this term's double meaning. The poetic association of this wordplay may help the child remember these words and meanings.

In Swedish the story is quite engaging. In another language it is likely to lose its rhyme and rhythm. Additionally, moving it to a different forest, or non-forested learning environment and culture, robs it of its place. After a full day at the Lida Recreational area (the direct inspiration for the Skogsmulle stories) it becomes apparent that the setting is important for connecting to the story on a deeper level. I explored all four nature trails of the characters. I felt the breeze off the lake that was lashed into whitecaps on the blustery and wild day of Skogsmulle's birth (Frohm 1970:3). I touched the giant mossy boulder behind Frohm's homestead where Skogsmulle magically appeared, naked upon this giant stone in the aftermath of a thunderous boom. I walked within the remains of Frohm's old home, where the stories emerged out of his and his children's imaginations, which were in part the imagination of that place.

Why is it that Skogsmulle is not more popular in Norway, which has only the two schools in Volda, compared with over 200 in Sweden? Berit Koen said there is no single explanation, but she noted that during her earlier promotion of *friluftsliv* early childhood curriculum around

Norway, Norwegians were receptive to the ecological components of the pedagogy but not to the narrative Skogsmulle and friends. She also noted that sometimes the subtle rivalries between the two cultures make the adoption of a Swedish character more difficult. It suggests questions for additional research. If the pedagogy were adapted to transform Skogsmulle into a more Norwegian-friendly character, what would this look like? Would Skogsmulle be more of an Askeladden type character, possibly human rather than nature spirit, who introduces children to ways of nature through attunement, simplicity, non-striving and practical innovation?

5.1.2 Encounters with Skogsmulle

When the children go into the forest they learn that if Skogsmulle hears a call, he may hear them and come for a visit. The call for Skogsmulle is *"Hei Kolikok! Hei Kolikok!"* In the aquatic ecosystems of Laxe, they call out *"Hei Bubbeliå! Hei Bubbeliå!"* and in the high alpine and subalpine ecosystems above the treeline of Fjellfina, they shout, *"Hei Vindivil, Hei Vindivil!"* If they are willing to come, Skogsmulle, Laxe and Fjellfina respond with the same call. The children call out frequently but meet Skogsmulle in the forest only twice a year—often in the first summer months of the term and again in the springtime. The pedagogues reason that Skogsmulle would not be as effective if encountered daily or weekly, because the novelty and surprise would wear off (Humberset 2012; Koen 2012; Linde 2012). Furthermore, the suspense of not knowing whether their calls will be returned helps keep the children aware and attuned to their senses. They call out, then get quiet and listen to the forest, hoping to hear *"Hei Kolikok!"* in the distance. They look for a creature with a suit made from moss, a birch tree hat with a red feather, traditional Sami leather boots, and a long tail that sweeps up debris that doesn't belong in nature.

Both meetings with Skogsmulle and conversations with teachers helped me understand the excitement and anticipation of finally meeting this character, along with its lasting effect on the children. On one such outing Rune Humberset, founding head teacher of Trollsletta Kindergarten, escorted the children into the nearby forest and began a typical learning activity of looking for insects and flowers to classify on a big canvas chart of local flora and fauna. This was done so the children would not expect a meeting. As they gathered, Humberset nonchalantly asked whether they wanted to see if Skogsmulle was nearby. We called, then became quiet. All were on edge and wide-eyed as we waited. Nothing. We called again and sat eagerly in silence,

heads turning and eyes scanning. Then we heard a far cry, *"Heiiiiii Kolikok!"* Excitement burst out of the children as many of them began jumping or standing on logs to get a better look. The encounters that I experienced, saw on film or heard described by teachers had differences as well as similarities. The encounter varies with the children, the season, and the personality and knowledge of the parent or teacher playing the role of Skogsmulle. All encounters begin with this type of approach followed by the "Mulle Song" that most of the children sing, some timidly. It includes the lines "I am Forest Mulle! I love my life in the forest. Oh what fun I have, oh what fun I have…We are all friends with the flowers and the trees and each other and sing like this sometimes: Let us hike together and explore our beautiful world," as translated by Marilyn Barden (Internationella Skogsmullesymposiet 2002:6).

Skogsmulle then introduces itself and tells the children about the stormy, turbulent day he arrived to protect the forest. It also asks the children to take care of the forest and treat it kindly. This is followed by questions to give the children a chance to show off what they have learned about nature and about the Skogsmulle stories (Humberset 2012). Skogsmulle encounters are never long, but tend to be intense and energetic. They may include a game, such as a form of chase. Then Skogsmulle tells them it must leave to go protect the forest.

Though meetings are infrequent, children hear about Skogsmulle constantly, call for it on trips to the forest and often refer to it when out in nature. Many teachers observed that the element of having a creature from the forest that teaches about its forest as its intimate home gives Skogsmulle an extra element of authority. They feel that when Skogsmulle teaches something, such as why to not litter in the forest, the children listen much more intently and the lesson or value sits much deeper. They see Skogsmulle as the omniscient guardian living in the woods who is in direct sensory communication with all the forest's life forms. Skogsmulle is a friend, and they want be kind to a friend and its home. They also trust it as their ally—the forest is less mysterious and there is less fear in knowing that Skogsmulle is always there.

5.2 Rhythms and Cycles of Nature

Many teachers said the use of the character and its friends helps them engage the attention of the children to open to the many other actors, interactions, changes and cycles nearby within nature. This engagement also derives from intimate contact and exploration outdoors through the rhythms and cycles of the seasons. Activities, field trips and lessons vary according to the month.

This includes the traditional and cultural activities and lifestyles that cycle with the seasons. They visit farms, plant seeds, and watch plant life through the seasons. They observe birds in the forest and listen to their songs. They watch frogs mate, collect the eggs and watch them develop in an aquarium before releasing them. In the fall, they learn about death and decomposition by observing the decomposers of the forest—mushrooms, bacteria, and worms. A trip to play in the same woods will be a highly varied experience in different seasons. In all these, teachers can invoke Skogsmulle as a learning aid.

A few teachers spoke about the benefits of a pedagogy based within seasonal cycles. Humberset said ecological knowledge combined with feelings of intimacy with seasonal rhythms brings one to naturally notice more while outdoors (2012). Koen affirmed that early recognition of seasonal cycles of death and regeneration help young children understand and deal with the fundamental components of life and rebirth throughout life (2012). This intimate exposure to the seasons acquaints children with the natural cyclical rhythms of their region (Cobb 1977:48-49). Linde (2010, 2012) elaborates that exposure to the subtle shifts, cycles, inhales, exhales, ebbs and flows imparts understanding of inevitable life changes. These children learn to be aware, responsive, and adaptable. This deeper reflection widens the potential influence of Skogsmulle and the Rain or Shine pedagogy. Linde also states that future generations will benefit from this increased adaptability: "…children can explore, learn and understand the laws of nature and its cycles. The children can prepare for a future with lots of changes, where a lifestyle with consideration for the environment has to be a main objective (Linde 2010:4)." These responses from the pedagogues' validate Chapter 3's presentation of early childhood play within Earth's narrative (Section 3.2.2). As highlighted, Edith Cobb outlined the importance of immersion in the rhythmic and cyclic "natural time" to open children to exploring the Earth's narrative, for the development of an ecologically grounded creativity in childhood.

5.2.1 Holistic Science

Another element of this pedagogy is to expose children to an early ecological knowledge of their local environment. This is done in a variety of ways, but the overarching principle is a systems-based approach. Berit Koen's work *Naturstudier, friluftsliv og Miljøvern* (1988) outlines how to impart scientific understanding through more ecologically "storied" avenues. She uses webs of

associations to focus on connections and analogies. Here is one example about helping children discover a tree:

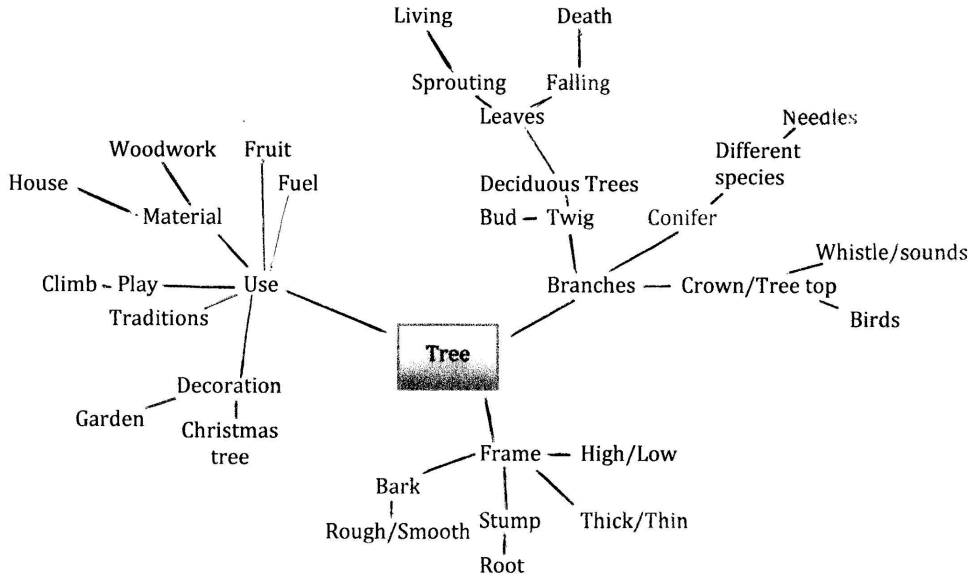

Figure 2. Translated *Associasjonskart* from *Naturstudier, Friluftsliv og Miljøvern (1988)*

This book has numerous examples of "*assosiasjonskart",* or webs of association regarding life/death, rocks, animals and plants in different seasons, light/dark, roots, rain, snow, sun, and the seasons, among many others. Koen (2012) and Humberset (2012), besides focusing on connections, create charts of local flora and fauna in the standard biological organization of kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, and species. At Trollsletta children engage in scavenger hunts for flowers, leaves, and bugs. As they return, Humberset helps them place their species on the chart. He then leads a discussion on how they are all both unique and connected, hanging together within the designated categories. All of this early and basic ecosystem knowledge helps the child begin to understand the basic cycles and energy flows from the sun to the soil and everything in between.

This ecological component is vitally linked with culture. One of Berit's association charts on life and death includes the human elements of old/young, disease, ancestors, war, and accidents. These he links to other natural processes of birth, renewal, and transformation such as the seasonal cycles and forest decomposers (fungi, bacteria).

The children also go on numerous day trips known as *turdag* to understand the natural historical and current cultural lifestyle of the Volda area. Each spring they take a replica Viking

ship across the fjord and stay overnight. They go to the local ski center and numerous ski tracks in midwinter. Humberset said visits to the "open-air" museum that showcases much of Volda's history are particularly valuable. The remains of traditional farms are preserved along this historical path following the main stream through town. Children also get to explore the stream ecosystem and discover many species of birds. Among the ecosystems around Volda area are pine and birch forest, non-native grand fir forest planted for logging, alpine biomes and sub-alpine meadows, freshwater lakes and streams, cultural landscapes of the traditional farms and saltwater ecosystems.

At the end of the year at Trollsletta, the graduating children choose their final field trip. In 2011 and 2012 the children chose a hike up Rosethornet, an iconic towering rock jutting from sea level to 1,119 meters on the southwest edge of the town. Residents say no one is a true 'Voldian' until reaching the summit. Koen led a day hike up Rosethornet, to Fjellfina's home environment. This is no easy task—two to three hours at a very steep pitch. At several points ropes and chains are needed to scale the rock faces. Every year there is at least one fatality, usually a non-native unaccustomed to the skill required to walk the rugged and steep Norwegian trails. The town slowly shrinks in size and the sounds of civilization—the tractor's roar, the automobile's honk, and the ambulance's siren—slowly become muffled by the subtle sounds carried by the thinning air with each step upward. Within the depths of silence, songs of rushing wind float float by. Rustling leaves sing with the salty western sea breeze and birdsongs chime in, adding dimensions to the new "silence."

At the summit a 360-degree panorama encompasses the greater geological story of the land and opens a window into Earth's slow geological time. The tracks of ancient glacial advances and recessions are carved into peaks afar and fjord inlets below. This route, along with the many other day hikes the kindergarten takes around the Volda area, affords an expansive experience for children to see their home from a wider, profoundly different perspective. It may play a role in rooting them deeper into a sense of place through placing their home, the town of Volda into its wider geography, while also expanding their horizon. The perspective gained from the height may open them to the wider world they are connected to.

5.2.2 Senses and Embodiment

The rush of sensations a hiker feels on windswept Rosethornet exemplifies the importance the Rain or Shine pedagogy attaches to cultivating a sensory connection to nature. One avenue toward this is through Skogsmulle. Siw Linde relates, "Skogsmulle senses and feels the forest…he does not speak to animals directly in our language, but he understands them." Also, "He helps children experience the forest the way he does." (2012) It encourages children to examine nature by utilizing their five senses to smell, taste (when appropriate), feel, breathe, hear, and see it. This can be experienced at first hand at Lida Recreational Area, Skogsmulle's place of birth. There, four interpretive trails tell the stories of Skogsmulle, Fjellfina, Laxe and Nova. The trails are designed to encourage families to enjoy nature together while also learning about it. Each has 10 to 15 stations, each disclosing more of the story and encouraging readers to engage in activities that appeal to the senses and connect with the life within each ecosystem. I recorded and transcribed my experience on the Fjellfina trail, where Anita Stigberg (2012) translated the Swedish text to English. Here is a snippet of the experience in the highest "mountain" terrain:

> A: There was a little piece of sun coming through and it melted the snow on the rock. Fjellfina was lying on the moss in the sun. Can you feel on the moss? Where can you find the softest moss on the rock? There it is, now smell the moss, what does it smell like?
>
> Me: Moss?
>
> A: Yes it does! Now you have to go as quietly as you can to number 3…There is a little animal called a lemming, a little mouse-like creature. He likes to go under the earth. He is Felfina's best friend. Can you find a hole here where he might live?
>
> Me: Ah! Here is a hole in the tree!
>
> A: Now can you run like a little mouse to the next station? It was a big bird flying high up in the blue. Fjellfina saw him, a *fjellbrook*. Can you hug the highest tree? Is it needles or leaves on this tree?
>
> Me: Needles.
>
> A: What is the name of this tree?
>
> Me: *Furu*!
>
> A: Yes now you must flap your wings like a bird to the next station...A fox as white as snow was hiding behind some stones. Can you find a stone you can hide behind? How many hands do you need to get around this stone? (we count with our hands the circumference of the stone maybe about 24). Now can you guess what we do next? We have to do a quiet walk like a fox—tip toe between the stones to the next station... Can you climb up on the big stone? Can you see somewhere where Fjellfina would want to sleep? Somewhere soft? Yeah maybe up there is nice, in the bed of lichen? Maybe if you want you can try yourself in Fjellfina's bed. Now you have to take some sticks and make like a reindeer to the next station. Good! Ha ha, many reindeer "antlers" here!...Fjellfina has a nice hair band of white flowers. Can you find the flowers? What are they called? (They are glacial crowfoot). Can you feel the leaves? What do they feel like?...

> They are thick. And they stay all winter. And if you see underneath there are many small holes. When it is cold they close, when it is warm they open. (2012)

This exemplifies how the teachers can use Skogsmulle and friends to teach about the different Scandinavian ecosystems. Their unique clothing, homes, beds, and best friends are fabricated from materials in their specific environment. Teachers often make reference to this when the children encounter the species named in the stories. These comprise an ecology of stories (as highlighted in section 3.4.1.2) to introduce young children to the Scandinavian bioregion. Teachers introduce the main ecological "actors" of the ecosystem, which help children remember and navigate through their environment with more awareness. The emphasis in this pedagogy on exploring the world through senses—to touch, to smell, to listen, to watch, to taste—also helps a child deepen sensory development and become more attuned to their outer (environment) and inner (body) worlds. This discovery process builds bit by bit into an early ecological understanding (Linde 2012).

Humberset stresses that besides sensory awareness, Trollsletta aims to encourage much physical movement and body awareness. He feels this is important because modern life is becoming more sedentary. A value for and enjoyment of being physical in the body may continue to be a value later in life. This is cultivated through free play in natural playscapes. Trees and boulders are climbed, mountains hiked, rocks hopped upon, natural ropes courses tied between trees, natural teeter totters and toys carved out of fallen trunks. The diversity of natural jungle gyms and the challenge of the variable terrain help cultivate a strong body awareness, balance, energy and strength (Koen 2012, Linde 2012, Humberset 2012).

5.3 Free Play

One of the most important and yet simplest techniques of this pedagogy is simply to allow children to experience uninterrupted free play outside. Stine, a teacher's aide at Hjellbakkene notes that children are never forced to go outside if they do not want to (2012). However, this is rarely the case. Sometimes, though, she has observed that some of the new children are a bit apprehensive about stepping off the pavement into the woods.

Skogsmulle can help in these situations. "Skogsmulle is a lovable playful creature," Siw Linde says. (2012) The character helps the children establish an initial good feeling and comfort in wild nature that leads to an affinity for the outdoors and a desire to play outside.

Humberset sees much more latitude for the students' outdoors. Some children like to play by themselves, some like big groups, some have one special playmate, some are builders, some are balancers, some are actors, some are very physical, some are very social, some are quiet observers and reflectors. Their moods and play preferences can change and evolve. Humberset also has observed that their play becomes more social outside and there is less conflict (2012).

Teachers described many variations within the children's fantasy-play. Often the children play animals. Typical pretend play includes a "house" including moms, dads and babies. But outside the "house," where they must make their own little shelter and find house props from the environment, play is more vibrant and varied (Stine 2012). Stine from Hjellbakkene declared that in the past 15 years, play more often includes characters from popular movie or television shows such as Kung-fu Panda and Disney princesses. She reasons that this is because there now are numerous children's TV programs and movies are a click or touch away. Teachers also reported that they do not know all of the stories that children play because they are not asked all the time to join in as a character. They stand back and allow the children play as they want with their peers. This freedom outside gives the children's own stories space to grown unencumbered by designated playthings that are inside and by establishing an early peer-culture.

5.3.1 Creativity

Linde holds that children need to engage in fantasy play in order to cultivate the creative processes (2010:2). In nature, as stated in section 3.4.1.1, this creative potential is heightened. The child is able to be in dialogue with the living interactive stories of nature, which deepen the possibilities of their own imaginative ventures.

The teacher's I spoke with reflected a higher creativity of play when they children are outside. In an interview with Rune Humberset (2012), he reasoned that while inside, the children have fixed toys at their disposal such as dolls and Legos. So the play will stay pretty similar throughout time. Outside, they have to use their inventiveness to make their own toys out of sticks, stones, leaves, feathers, flowers, bugs and snow. Not to mention that the natural "toys" and their settings available constantly change with the seasonal cycles, topography and weather. Therefore, the children make unique creations that lead to more unique play (Humberset 2012).

Another teacher, Max, from Hjellbakkene said, "Our philosophy is, anything that you teach inside, you can teach outside." Teachers can introduce the basic building blocks of

knowledge such as shapes, numbers, colors, alphabet, sizes, textures through utilizing what is within the outside environment (Koen 2012; Källström 2012; Stine 2012).

5.3.2 Child-led Discovery, Questioning and Wonder

One of the most important elements of this pedagogy, says Humberset (2012), is the ability of the teacher to respond any type of question a child has. The pedagogy stresses letting the children find their own answers. The teachers themselves must have ecological knowledge, creativity and genuine sense of excitement and wonder in order to apply this pedagogy. This is done in a variety of ways.

Stine, a teacher aide of 15 years at Hjellbakkene, said she realized early in her career how important it is to have local ecological knowledge. She often called upon Skogsmulle, asking, "What do you think Skogsmulle would say?" Then together she and the child would investigate the question further by exploring with their senses. If neither she nor the child could generate an answer, she would suggest, "How about we ask Skogsmulle next time we see him?" This gave her time to research the question or to ask another pedagogue. Over the years the children have challenged her to study the local ecology, and the variety of questions has generated a genuine curiosity herself and inspired her to think about the natural world in a new and intimate way (Stine 2012).

The hike up Rosethornet with Berit Koen yielded further insights. While walking down the mountain, the open, high pine forest intermixed birch abruptly gave way to a dense, dark, and damp environment of fir trees, many of them toppled. Berit remarked that many years ago much of the native forest was cut to plant a type of fir tree as a monoculture timber crop. It is not a native species and does not have a root system that can grow as well in rocky terrain. Winter storms uproot these trees down more easily, making them something of a hazard. I asked, "So let's say I am a child at Hjellbakkene and I ask you why this area of the forest differs from the last, how would you respond?" She said that first, she would respond with wonder as well, to encourage the questioning. Berit would then engage the child in exploring the differences with his or her senses—what does this place look like, feel like, smell like, and sound like? How is it different from before? I answered with, "It's darker, more wet, more green and mossy. Thus it smells, musty with decay. It feels cooler because its darker, it is still and quiet, I don't feel or hear the wind anymore as I did up in the high pine forest. The trees are all the same, and the

branches are thick." After engaging sensory observation, she would motivate the child come up with his or her own answer. She stressed that it is not about finding the "right" answer at this age but rather engaging curiosity. She said that often in her experience children come up with creative and more imaginative answers like, "These trees are like the umbrellas of the forest! I bet this is where Skogsmulle comes when it rains." For her, this is a perfectly valid answer at this age. Other children, depending on their minds and their curiosity, will seek out a more scientific understanding. Then, she would follow the child's curiosity until he or she comes up with an answer that satisfies them, whether scientific or imaginative.

My visit to Mulleborg kindergarten in Lidingö, Sweden provided another insight into how Ur Och Skur teachers incorporate Skogsmulle and friends. Teacher Kasja Källström had planned to walk down to the closest beach with the *Skogsnytte* group, the youngest children (age 1-2). We were to look for a certain type of bird which nests on the shore at this time of year. What followed was a demonstration that the important thing is the journey, not the destination. We set out along a path through the woods, where we got quiet and were asked to listen to the birds around us, and to look for them. One child lost interest and meandered towards a small birch tree, whose hanging branches were just beginning to open their buds into vibrant light-green young leaves. A teacher noticed this, and gathered all the children at the birch tree. She had all the children touch the leaves, smell the leaves and then commented that they look like moose ears. This was followed by a song about birch trees and moose ear leaves, engaging the children in rhythms aligned with kinesthetic movements. We moved on to a paved path toward the sea. It had rained heavily the night before and the path was covered with worms, slugs and snails. One child stopped walking and began to investigate the snails and wiggling worms. As the children gathered around, one teacher picked up the snail, pointed out its spiral and had them all touch its slime. They then reached into their archive of songs and began to sing a song about snails.

During this time another child began to poke at a worm with a stick. A third child immediately intervened and saved the worm from the stick-wielding child and took it over to the grass. All the children, even the stick wielder, began to pick up worms and "save" them, as Skogsmulle no doubt would have suggested. We began to walk as slowly as a snail, saving every wriggling and slimy creature in our path. The lesson became one on blossoming birch trees, snails and worms, and we never did make it to the sea. Instead we paid attention to what was

right in front of us and became engrossed in that. Because the teachers were competent in both worms and birds, this mattered little. This, they explained is an essential part of the Ur och Skur pedagogy, "to follow the child's curiosity, to be able to teach them what they want to learn." (Källström 2012) These teachers had the ability, artistry and expertise to adapt to what engaged the children's attention.

The meeting with Skogsmulle in the forest in mid-May with Trollsletta Kindergarten was another example of child-led discovery. The adults who play Skogsmulle act in an energetic, friendly, and childlike manner. This energy engages the children to be playful and present. Though Skogsmulle asks the children questions about nature, the children begin asking Skogsmulle their own questions. Sometimes Skogsmulle answers playfully and in an imaginative way, while other times it suggests a scientific understanding.

5.4 Cultivating a Sustainability Consciousness

Skogsmulle pedagogues hope to cultivate in their young students, sustainably minded individuals that above all else treat nature with care. They reason is that a foundation of love for the natural world must be nurtured as a prerequisite for these values to flourish. Linde describes Gösta's initial philosophy as, "If you can help children love nature, they will take care of nature, because you cherish the things you love." (2010:1) They further hope this will spread out into a wider love for life. This links to E.O. Wilson's *Biophilia* hypothesis, and Edith Cobb's notion of "compassionate intelligence." The latter, as the founders of Rain or Shine pedagogy would attest, arrives through early playful and joyful immersion in the sensuous natural world.

Trollsletta's Rune Humberset confirmed that goal. His hope, he said, is to establish happiness within the child when in nature and a curiosity for our natural world that later would develop into an adult who values and respects nature. But he also saw this possibly evolving to a wider respect and value for not just nature, but all of life—a life in which one becomes a bit of a role model and can help teach these values to others (2012). Many teachers confirmed this. In addition, there is also a focus on sustainability and environmental stewardship. Skogsmulle, being directly affected by pollution, degradation, and deforestation, is one of their most effective teachers. The children are often observed to pick up litter in the forest, and tell people not to leave their cars running because Skogsmulle directly told them that this hurts his home (Koen 2012; Linde 2012; Stine 2012).

The teachers hope a sustainability-oriented mentality, planted early and nourished in the soil of an ecological connection, will generate adults who are engaged, sustainability-oriented citizens well versed in the art of enjoying and respecting nature. This, they believe, is the key to protecting and preserving Earth. This is represented in the *I Ur Och Skur's* "The natural flight of Steps":

Figure 3. Natural Flight of Steps: Handout from Mulleborg Barnehage (2012)

This visual outlines the pedagogues' beliefs that an engaged and sustainable citizen starts small with the essential love for and enjoyment of the human and more-than-human world. The result can be an adult who influences society by living in alignment with green or sustainable values and actions.

I asked numerous teachers, whether over their 15 to 20 years of experience, they have seen proof of this hoped-for effect. Did they know of any examples among their "alumni" of adults now making positive change in their communities? How do the adults who experienced Skogsmulle in childhood influence their society as expressed in the top flight of the stairs? How do they today "understand nature"? How do they speak about Man's place in and impact on nature? What are the adults' current positions on "environmental care"? The teachers said they have no concrete evidence yet—no specific surveys or research.

5.5 Concluding Discussion

In summary, the Rain or Shine kindergartens apply the narrative Skogsmulle concept through child-led discovery play and sensory exploration to help introduce an ecological understanding of the environment within its natural seasonal rhythms. Skogsmulle and friends exemplify an ecology of stories within geographic and cultural context, providing a high potential to effectively introduce an early sense of place and ecological understanding.

That is especially important because this story is a story of its place. A Swedish child can better connect to a story set within same environment, encountering the same flora and fauna that the child has or will encounter in the natural course of events. The songs and poetic language that are used are also an expression of that place. Strauss notes the importance of the geographic element in stating, "When a landscape becomes peopled by story, human beings begin to develop a sense of reverence for it. Stories give humans a sense of place and a sense of homeland." (1996:16) The stories help the child see a living and meaningful natural world. Although Volda pedagogues made some adjustments to fit the Skogsmulle Concept to their own cultural and environmental context, it should be noted that these were slight variations within a shared cultural history.

Several questions arise when this is considered within the context of Education for Sustainable Development. If the Skogsmulle Concept were to be used without alteration in 17 different countries, would the character rise to the level of a cultural hero? What if the pedagogues in each cultural environment altered the character to fit their particular place? This research is too geographically and culturally limited to provide answers. The Skogsmulle stories may not resonate as deeply within a Japanese child who has no association with these animals and plants. Further, the beauty of the stories and songs may be lessened or lost in translation. Still, the Skogsmulle pedagogy might be considered for future trans-cultural endeavors in which similar characters, rhymes, songs and stories are imagined to fit new environments.

There are two further points concerning the application of this pedagogy elsewhere in the world. It would be an injustice to the memory of Skogsmulle's creator Gösta Fromm, and to all the dedicated pedagogues who have worked so hard to create this successful pedagogy, to remove Skogsmulle completely from similar ventures in another culture. One way to honor this would be to have Skogsmulle, Laxe and Fjellfina visit once a year as intercultural ambassadors.

In addition, and more importantly with regard to the overarching theme of this thesis, such visits would teach the children about interconnectivity of the world's forests, water bodies and mountain environments. This interdependence of beings is highly relevant to the globalized, interconnected planet. An early introduction to the planetary ecosystems and cultures through play and fantasy characters might cultivate both *biophilia* and an early understanding of global interconnectedness. The application of Skogsmulle and narrative approach uplift a child's mythic imagination. This gives teachers tools to integrate nature, scientific rational understanding and a systems-based ecological approach into multi-modal sensory elements that are comprehensible at the three age groups. Child-led discovery through play helps cultivate a sense of wonder, which leads to a questioning curiosity. As noted in Chapter Three, such curiosity can be vital for later learning and to instill the love of the natural world essential for stewardship.

Finally, it is pertinent to ask whether this concept affected children's observable behavior at the time and in later years. My meeting with Skogsmulle in the forest with the current children showed me that the children were engaged and excited by the scenario. The potential long-term effects are difficult to assess because of the innumerable variables in individual lives, but some anecdotal information can be gathered. The next chapter presents summaries of interviews with "alumni" of Hjellbakkene kindergarten who are all now 26-31 years of age. They were asked which, if any, elements of this pedagogy had a transformative and/or lasting effect. Did the Skogsmulle and Friends stories transform how the alumni as children experienced nature? What aspects of this early childhood experience have made the most lasting impressions on the alumni? Does their development from an early love for and enjoyment in nature lead to sustainable actions within as represented in the pedagogy's "Natural Flight of Stairs"[figure 3]? Chapter Six presents these findings.

Chapter 6: Once Upon a Skogsmulle

The Wonderer wondered about the Children of Skogsmulle who were now grown... what did they remember from their time in the Forest with Skogsmulle and friends and who are they now? She was offered introductions to one group of the Children of Skogsmulle, now adults, living in the Northland. When she talked with them, they had stories to tell. (McDonnell 2013)

There is reality. There is our experience of reality. And there are our stories about reality. What I have written so far is my telling of a personal experience conducting research with a particular set of stories that arise out of a specific temporal and spatial dimension of reality—the Swedish Rain or Shine pedagogy practiced in the late 1980's in the small town of Volda, on the Norwegian western coast. I have sought and presented an ecology of stories that make up this phenomena. I sought the stories of Skogsmulle, of this pedagogy, of Volda, of Lida Recreational Area and Mulleborg, of Sweden, and Norway. I sought to understand stories within the theoretical world- of hermeneutic research, of play, of pragmatism, of narrative learning, of nature, of children playing in the woods. As I sought, I experienced—my own story was enacted along side this growing understanding I received from the research.

This chapter presents the final story of research—my interviews with 9 adults, ages 26-31, who experienced the Rain or Shine pedagogy at Hjellbakkene *Barnehage* in Volda, Norway, in the late 1980s to early 1990s. My compilation of their collective story, unfortunately, can include only a greatly simplified version of each individual's vast story. Each narrative is an individual representation of an experience, which they all shared. What I received in total was a kind of slow unfolding of a painting for which each interviewee gave me additional description of its particular parts. The varied themes and categories melded into clearer, richer details on the canvas. My role is to present my synthesized representation (a painting) of what they said about being part of that early story and what they learned from it. For the sake of clarity and to stay within the theme of stories, I ordered the results within categories of characters, settings, plot, and outcome.

Two main questions will be addressed. In which ways, if any, do the alumni speak of their childhood experience with Skogsmulle at Hjellbakkene that would indicate that the Skogsmulle story transformed how they, as children, perceived and experienced the natural

world? Moreover, do the interviews indicate that this experience at Hjellbakkene played a role in how they, as adults, now experience, frame, and value nature?

I wondered whether the Skogsmulle values—a wonder, respect and love for nature—would be expressed in my conversations with them as adults. If so, how would it manifest itself in their mindsets and actions as they went about their daily pursuits? Subtly? Overtly? How would the adults "act" today if their childhood theater was played out in the woods with a fantasy nature spirit who taught them the values of preservation, respect, curiosity, seasonal knowledge, practical survival skills? Would these alumni have become leading environmental community "act"ivists? Would they be "acting" out sustainable lifestyles? Would they be cultural creatives as in Edith Cobb's thesis? Would they all express similar lifestyles, interests, and values? Would these be any different from their micro Volda culture or their larger macro Norwegian culture? I was not expecting answers to all of these questions and the sample of interviews is too small to draw statistically significant conclusions. But these were preliminary questions I had about what I might find with the interviews. The scope of the research at the time of these interviews was much wider than my current focus on narrative learning. This led to more in-depth conversations about the lives of the interviewees, during which many themes were touched upon. Much of that material does not fit this presentation of results.

My focus on the effectiveness of narrative learning became sharper. If kindergarten children experience nature in the context of stories which are used to introduce wonder, respect and love, does that now influences an adult's life? If so, how? Could a reliable answer even be found, knowing how many stories influence the stories, productions and theater of our adult lives? I acknowledge that Skogsmulle is only one small story in the lives of these nine individuals. Nevertheless, I sought out these individuals, and asked them about their stories—of their childhood, of their time with Skogsmulle, of their experience in nature, now and in the past, of being parents, aunts, adults, and participating citizens in their local, national and global community.

I knew it was highly unlikely I would draw from these interviews a singular cause or a specific answer to a hypothesis. My research was a journey to understand a story. I hoped to better understand the power and relevance of stories in learning settings through storied interviews with these alumni. I was looking for major actors, settings, themes, motives and

values that have been held collectively for this shared story. The story I found is one of culture at different levels—the *barnehage,* their families, their community, their country and their world—and which is intimately connected with their direct experience in nature through time.

6.1 Introductory Synthesis:

Across the board my interviews revealed Norwegians who were educated, thoughtful, friendly, healthy and were very present with me during our interviews. Many had a genuine interest in my fieldwork and had their own questions about the role of early childhood experiences in shaping adult life—especially the role of deep experiences in more-than-human nature. This made many of the interviews lively and engaging interactions.

I interviewed four men and five women. Two currently lived in Alesund, six in Volda and one in Oslo. I had contact with two other alumni, but unfortunately was not able to coordinate meetings. Three of the alumni, Frigg[10], Odin, and Vidar, were kindergarten teachers. The others were Idunn, a physical therapist; Eir, a hospital manager; Thor, an electrical engineer; Skadi, a sales associate for a local shipbuilding company, Freya, a lawyer and mother of three; and Baldur, a self-employed electrician. Four were parents, two spoke of being an aunt and all brought up stories of concern for their children's generation's changing lifestyle that, as they put it, is threatened by Nature Deficit Disorder (Louv 2005) mainly through the influences of technological toys and digital entertainment.

All spoke of the character Skogsmulle with fondness and many provided direct memories, stories and responses of how Skogsmulle and his stories sat deep within their imaginations as pre-schoolers. Some also said they feel Skogsmulle is directly affecting them today. I tried to determine the processes involved. Were the values in the Skogsmulle stories transmitted or transformed by the individuals? How? Half of the alumni spoke of a "return to nature" after an adolescent time of disinterest in *friluftsliv.* This return for them was motivated by a yearning for well-being, for peace, renewal, and connection that they receive from the more-than-human nature. The alumni spoke of their relationship to and experience in nature through their descriptions of *friluftsliv*. Themes of enjoyment, freedom, peace, embodiment, and

[10] The names of the Interviewees are alias to respect their anonymity. The names are selected from the gods and goddesses of Old Norse mythology. Each name was chosen as a playful metaphor for the individual's personality.

psychological health came up through the answers. Can any concrete conclusions be drawn from these interviews? In all academic honesty, all I can point to are themes, connections, and relevant questions for further study.

6.2 The Characters

6.2.1 Skogsmulle

I asked each to recall memories of Skogsmulle, their feelings about the character, their opinion or reflection on the use of the character at Hjellbakkene. In each case I received a number of revealing responses. Two of the kindergarten teachers, Frigg and Odin, had especially insightful responses because they were both kindergarten teachers still residing in the area. Frigg worked at a kindergarten in neighboring Ørsta, but had once been an assistant at Hjellbakkene and Odin was currently a teacher at Hjellbakkene. Both were passionate about the uplifting role nature can play in early childhood education.

Across the board, the alumni spoke of "good feelings" about Skogsmulle the character and their time at Hjellbakkene. Baldur said, "He was like a nice Santa, like a mystery man. If we dropped our food into the ground it was like a Mulle spice for him. It's a nice character. I liked him." Idunn, Freya, Eir and Skadi spoke of being excited about meeting Skogsmulle in the forest. They always looked forward to it. Thor added, "He knew the forest better than anybody. Taught us how to respect it, how to learn from it. It was a better day than your everyday when you got to meet him ... it's like a happening: you've been calling him for months and finally you hear him in the forest." Skadi continued, "I also can remember about Skogsmulle, mainly that he had friends, Fjellfina and Laxe. I remember that he taught us about taking care of the nature, not throwing garbage in nature."

Eir said, "Skogsmulle helps keep the children safe because he helps them become known with the forest and not to be afraid of it. I also remember Skogsmulle...We sat in the forest and yelled for him. We were just a little bit nervous." This response reveals that the story sat deep within her at the time. Idunn also recalled her memories of Skogsmulle:

> I remember that we went to the woods and would call for Skogsmulle and we were always excited when he came...We would sometimes play Skogsmulle without the kindergarten. Like pretend we are Laxe, Fjellfina, and Skogsmulle...He taught me to take care of the forest and I think be excited about the forest.

But Idunn mentioned that in one of the meetings with Skogsmulle, she was disheartened:

> I remember going up in the forest where there is a small cabin and we often would go up the trail. Skogsmulle, he came one time and I found out that Skogsmulle was my mother. I was shouting at my mom. I was so angry and sad. She said that she believed in Skogsmulle, So I was very disappointed. I think she tried to trick me, though, and say she had to dress like him because he was busy somewhere else.

Freya, Frigg, and Eir remarked that they also believed in Skogsmulle and his friends. Eir recalled:

> I remember once I found a dead mouse in the forest and I thought, doesn't Mulle watch over the mouse? If Mulle's there then why would this mouse die? I truly believed that he was a good person. But I believed he was a person, not like a troll or something...I remember Fjellfina and Laxe, we didn't get visits from them, but we just learned about them. When we were up in the mountains or at the sea, we wondered if they were there.

I asked Frigg if she believed in him and his friends as real beings who lived in nature:

> I think so. I was 5. It's just at that age where you start to wonder about who is Santa Claus and all this. And I think we wondered who he was. But also I remember that we learned things from him. More we were learning from him. Like don't throw garbage in the nature. And we were very strict with our parents and friends telling them this, that Mulle has to come and clean this up with his tail. That's lots of work for him.

She included that still today she is becomes very upset about litterbugs, "Not to throw garbage in the nature, Yes, this sits good with me. When you are on a trip, when we sit down and eat we always have to clean up after ourselves. I am very angry with the people who just throw and leave their garbage. It really annoys me." Freya similarly responded, "When someone throws garbage in the forest, I was and still am like "No! Skogsmulle will have to pick that up!" and if someone stood with the car running, I would say, 'No! You have to turn off the car!' Skogsmulle taught me that! This, I remember."

This reveals that the stories of Skogsmulle were active in their imaginations at that time. They became upset upon finding out the truth about Skogsmulle and questioned his role as the protector of nature. They also retold the stories to their parents and friends to convey why they must respect and not pollute nature.

Did the story of Skogmulle transform how they perceived nature? Some said yes. They spoke of the story as integrated into their reality. These creatures, Skogsmulle, Laxe and Fjellfina lived in nature. Many articulated that they believed the characters were there, somewhere close by. Their experience in nature therefore was transformed by this story. Eir mentioned that these creatures helped her, and other children, feel safe in nature knowing that these guardians of

nature were close. Frigg and Freya said they directly learned from the stories of Skogsmulle and friends and spread the stories to their family and friends to rationalize why they should also stop their polluting ways.

All but one interviewee spoke to how Skogsmulle deeply ingrained a message of respect for nature that they still hold. Many spoke of their environmental consciousness—as defined by actions rather than ideals—this was little more than what they learned at Hjellbakkene. They highly value a "clean nature" and take this very seriously, as expressed through the above responses of Frigg and Freya. This is precisely what the Skogsmulle stories most convey—to preserve pristine wild nature, be respectful of it and above all else to keep it clean. Idunn elaborated the above, along with other elements of respect for wild nature that she learned at Hjellbakkene:

> When I am outside on a trip or something. I don't throw trash. I take it back. Also, when we cook on the grills, you pick it up, or doing a fire you use from the trees, but not from just one tree. You don't cut all the way around the [birch trees], that harms them. You respect the nature and leave it as much as you can how you found it or better. I think that's important because I myself and everybody who is interested in *friluftsliv*, we want it to be like this. If we don't take care of it then we lose it.

Idunn told me a story of her respect for the elements of nature and her recognition and ability to sense the weather. She continued:

> I was going on a trip with other people and clouds were coming I wanted to turn around, so I did and they didn't. They didn't see anything at the top. I was very angry because they did not have respect for the nature; it was very dangerous and stupid. You have to learn these things, and many people that are new to *friluftsliv*, do stupid things that are dangerous to their life. I have more the sense of the weather and how to know when to turn around. I think I learned this early.

Why might Skogmulle serve better than a parent or other adult as the instigator of this value? Odin, also now a teacher who practices the Skogsmulle Concept at Hjellbakkene, shared this insight:

> The thing about Mulle is you have kind of a person, or creature that can teach you [about nature, to love and respect nature]. It's not your regular teacher in the *barnehage*, it's someone from the nature. You remember something extra this way. Because he's from the nature—he lives there, he knows it. You can sense that. He's kind of an authority on the nature. I think its good to have that character to rely on for the protection of the nature. Mulle lives in the forest, but still he gets excited about a little yellow flower, it's good for the kids to experience this and also be in awe of what's around them. You remember those images. Mulle has a friend in the water: Laxe. And you remember when you are near water that Laxe lives here, and to treat this place with respect.

6.2.2 The Parents

All of the alumni except Baldur noted the role of their parents in cultivating their values for an outdoor experience. Five children from the six families that created Hjellbakkene, were among the interviewees. These parents created the kindergarten as a reflection of their own values, and what they desired as early learning for their children. This is one reason that so many of my interviewees have vivid recollections of their experience. This kindergarten was more than a convenient place to drop off their kids on their way to work. In the beginning it was a cooperative effort of friends and neighbors to create an alternative early learning experience for their children, and the children of Volda. It became apparent from the interviews that I could not separate the role of the parents from the role of the kindergarten in cultivating this love and respect for nature. It was a combination. However, the Rain or Shine pedagogy supported the parents in their desire for their children to develop personal connections with their more-than-human nature.

6.2.3 The Teacher

Many interviewees spoke of a fondness for their teacher at Hjellbakkene, Berit Koen. Eir remarked, "And one of the best memories is Berit. She really stayed in our hearts. We made a song for her...I still remember it." Freya added that throughout her life, Berit has been part of helping the town engage in *friluftsliv.* Since helping found Hjellbakkene, she has shifted her career towards community health and activities and now works for the *Volda Kommune*. Freya and Frigg mentioned that Berit has put together an annual running race around the lake and created a woman's ski night at the local ski hill, where she offers lessons and tips for women of all levels while her husband runs the small lift. Berit had a wider role in their early childhoods than that of a teacher. Most of these children came from the same neighborhood and played together outside of kindergarten. Most of their parents were family friends with each other. Therefore Berit also played a role in their lives as neighbor, family friend and mother of their friends.

6.3 The Setting: Living Playscapes

Some of the interviewees spoke of the setting of their early play both at Hjellbakkene and their neighborhood woods. Said Baldur, "After I went to kindergarten we would come back and play

in the kindergarten's woods. It's a fun place to play with all the trees, and the *lavo*, and little shelters. It's natural—with the ropes you can walk across and all of that..." Frigg told me of an emotional story about a tree that taught her the lesson of perseverance:

> I remember there was a tree in the middle of the forest of Hjellbakkene that all the children climb. I didn't manage to climb the tree and I looked at all my friends in the tree and I was so jealous and frustrated. All the time I would try to climb the tree. I never gave up. I finally made it up one day and I was so happy! I stayed up in that tree all day. I didn't want to go down. Oh, that tree, so strongly I really remember this. It was my big mountain to summit. That tree is my biggest memory.

Idunn spoke of the Ash-lad inspired learning of "tumbling and stumbling" at Hjellbakkene:

> I don't remember being bored. I remember doing lots of things. We didn't have any boundaries. Now everything is more prohibited…we were climbing trees, rocks. I think you learn a lot more and what to do and not to do and you develop yourself. It's learning by making mistakes and getting hurt.

Thor relates:

> We were spending lots of time outside, exploring nature. There's not that many barnehage that have such big forest to play in. We were allowed to go very much on our own. The teachers were there, but they weren't guarding us, we could play independently. We could explore the trees ourselves I think we learned from it.

I asked him: What was it you learned from this? He replied:

> I think it is a respect, I mean you respect the fact that you can get injured and you learn how to behave in nature from an early age. I think it's also about the body. Now [Odin and I][11] are both outside in nature. We like to go skiing. We like to be active and be doing things in our body. I think this is something that is grounded in us from that time. I think we respect nature.

Odin, when speaking of the Hjellbakkene forested playscape, noted, "You could compare a steel bar on a playground with a branch on a tree. You can find so much more in the tree—the texture, ants, its movement. Much more wondrous."

Many respondents spoke of their childhood play beyond the boundaries of Hjellbakkene's forest. Thor and Eir, siblings, lived on a small farm and often played at their cabin, a 40-minute walk up the hillside from their farm. All interviewees other than Baldur had families who were very passionate about the outdoors and encouraged outdoor play, hiking, and ski touring. Baldur, Skadi, and Idunn spoke of their play in the woods behind their homes. I asked them what specifically they would play. Skadi gave a vivid response:

[11] This was a co-interview with his friend Odin, so when Thor speaks of we, he speaks of both him and Odin.

> I had a fantasy friend when I was very young! We used to make a ski land, like cities out of snow and save orphans, make little stories out of our little winter city. My parents used to say it's healthy to be bored because then you have to make yourself unbored! Go outside! We didn't have more than half hour of [kids] TV a day on the national channel...This was very good for us...Because we used to play a lot outside in the woods by my parents' house, we would pretend to make soup out of rabbit poop. Ha ha, we pretended a lot of things. Like if the trees were hurt we would try to heal them. We used our imagination a lot. There is a lot that you can imagine and play with out in the forest… The forest behind my house is gone now and it hurt to see it go.

Idunn and her friends would sometimes play Skogsmulle outside of kindergarten:

> We played in the woodsy area in our neighborhood. We played there all the time. I remember lots of hide and seek. I remember having a fantasy shop with customers and sellers and we would sell the trash that we picked up in the neighborhood. We would sled on inner tubes of tractor wheels. We had a river close by and we would fish.

Vidar told me he played mostly outside:

> You can do anything you do inside outside. Just being outside, playing with sticks, running around having fun. The same way you would play and have fun inside. But why be inside? I never played with video games or TV as a kid. Just being outside all the time...building forts and things.

6.4 The Plot: Beyond Skogsmulle

Besides their vivid recollection of the character Skogsmulle, which was interwoven into the plot of their kindergarten experience, the alumni spoke of other significant memories and stories from their time at Hjellbakkene.

Eir recalled a time that the kindergarten visited the museum in Volda to learn the ways of their ancestors, "Our grand-grand mother, Åsa, was baking lefse down in the museum in a very old house where we went down for baking *lefse.* So we learned at Hjellbakkene also about traditions. I can remember many of stories of [her great-grandmother] Åsa, , hearing about when she was young and what life was like...taking with us old traditions that maybe would die out if we didn't learn it."

Baldur, Skadi, Eir, Idunn and Freya all spoke of the ecological activities I had become familiar with through my interviews with teachers and observations with the kindergartens such as looking at bugs with their magnifying glasses, finding frog eggs in ponds, watching them grow in an aquarium, then releasing them in the woods and charting flowers, and leaves in the classification charts. Baldur recalled, "It was very fun ... I remember that we used to get leaves

from the trees write down the names and put them in categories. Also with bugs we would collect bugs with magnifier glass."

Freya added, "Every child had a *loopa*, a magnifying glass to put bugs in. I remember that! The small kids like to lift up the rocks and see the worms and bugs." Skadi added, "And we were looking at trees, plants, bugs and animals... Now I have forgotten a lot. I still know the most common like *bjorke*, *furu*, *gran* trees, and *veitveis blaaveis*, the buttercups for example." Idunn agreed:

> It's something that I know I learned it in *barnehage*, but it was not followed up in the school. So I feel a lack in my knowledge. I really want to know this. But now I am relearning. My mom knows, so when I am with her I ask her when we go for trips. That is something that I want to know so I can teach it to my children someday.

Eir mentioned that her biggest memory from Hjellbakkene was "to go outside with the little magnifying glass. I really enjoyed that to look at little things study them, like a little scientist." She added that this ecological knowledge was followed up in their school immediately after Hjellbakkene:

> Much of us went to the same class afterwards—six of us in a 14 children class. So, I think we took our interest into the school. We had the same teacher for 6 years after Hjellbakkene with the same class. She was very interested in nature. We had many projects. We made a herbarium. We took flowers, pressed them and made charts with the Latin names. And we did this with animals. I remember this. When I was bigger I studied biology at university. That is my interest.

Frigg, as she was one of Eir's schoolmates after Hjellbakkene, elaborated:

> I was very lucky after Hjellbakkene I went to a very small school where my teacher was very very interested in the nature and birds especially, flowers, too. I remember this...When we go up to the cabin and we hear a bird I can go to my son, "This is a dododo..." I appreciate that I can teach him that. Otherwise, it's just sounds. When you go on a walk, and you see a *tjeld,* a type of bird here, and you think oh, it's quite early for a *tjeld.* It's something I know.

Frigg's response points to her intimate knowledge connected to the rhythms and cycles of nature. Eir mentioned a similar response to her current local ecological knowledge, "I know the early signs of the spring is coming when this bird comes, and this bird... and then these birds in the autumn—it flies to Africa in the winter. It's not just the birds and plants. It's the poo, too. "Oh this poo is a bear." This is very interesting for a child, I remember." Freya also commented on this theme, "[Local ecological identification] has stayed with me. My mother said I always would lie down and look at the little bugs and flowers. I was very interested in flowers. I am able to identify still, yes. My oldest child is also like this. It's good to know this. It's nice."

Vidar and Odin did not remember any specifics from their time with Skogsmulle and Hjellbakkene, but spoke of flashes of images and a recollection of feelings from these early memories. Odin recalled, "I don't have so many memories, it was so long ago. But I started working there again a year ago and being there again often brings back flashes of images. Nice images, good feelings. But I don't remember real any stories. Or specifics." Vidar offered insights into how difficult it truly is to speak, to put words upon feelings, especially in his non-native language:

> My memories, it's hard to say, but my memories from being a student are more like pictures or scenes, but also the feeling of learning in nature. It's hard to say it in English—the feeling to have nature in yourself. Because it is so natural for me. My friends the same age as me, I mean it's not the knowledge of trees and things, I've got that as well. They don't know anything, they are not afraid of nature, but they don't feel it.

I then asked: "So, when you are in the forest you think that you experience it differently than your friends? How so? Can you tell me more?" He replied: "Yes I think so. I know for me its like I get a calm. So then [with the calm] I can feel the nature in some kind of way." Vidar spoke to some kind of quiet, content internal state of mind that allows for him to open up to experience through a heightened sense of awareness for the natural world that his friends appear, at least to him, to lack.

6.5 The Outcomes: A Transformation?

From the conversations I had with the alumni, the story of Skogsmulle appears to have transformed how they experienced nature as a child—they perceived the forest, the water and the mountains as the homes of their ecological guardians. These places became more animate and personal for them. The stories introduced them to nature in a playful and engaging manner. The stories sank in, as they retold them to others in order to curb their polluting ways. Some mentioned that they still think about Skogsmulle while they are in the forest today.

How has this story—the characters, the setting, and the plot influenced the adult lives? There may not be a direct answer, but I gained insights from asking them all about their current conceptualization, value, and experience of *friluftsliv* today. *Friluftsliv*, as marked in my key terms, is a Scandinavian cultural lifestyle and philosophical concept based upon subjective immersive experiences in nature, practical survival skills, and ecological knowledge. I thought this question would reveal more descriptions of their personal nature connection—to ask them

how personally define and experience *friluftsliv* as an adult. I also asked this question in my interviews with adults of the same age who grew up in Oslo. A more insightful comparison could be drawn from more interviews of Volda adults who did not go to Hjellbakkene, or even a wider sample from different areas of Norway. However, this did not occur to me at the time. What the Oslo interviews revealed for me were many instances of children who did not grow up with a strong early experience and connection to nature. Their responses to their definition of *friluftsliv* greatly differ from the alumni of Hjellbakkene. For the most part, the Oslo interviewees spoke of *friluftsliv* as "activities" in nature, while the Hjellbakkene alumni spoke of friluftsliv as "experiencing" and "feelings" within nature. These interviewees were asked, "What is *friluftsliv* to you?" or "How do you experience *friluftsliv*? Do you value f*riluftsliv*? Why?" The following are excerpts from these interviews, and a summary of my findings[12]:

Thor:

> The first thing that comes to mind is freedom—to not do something you do every day; to spend lots of time outside moving your body. Of course once you move away from urban places the smell and the air changes. Also, it's like a challenge with yourself—like on high peaks. You have to be with yourself intimately. You have to be completely present, it's dangerous not to be. You get rewarded with challenging yourself—with the experience on top of a high peak, the view, and the sense of accomplishment. There is something about reaching the summit and pushing yourself through discomfort and pain. You don't really remember the pain—you remember what's up at top.

Odin:

> For me it's a kind of calm. Getting away from the noise. I can walk 5 minutes and I am in the forest and can be with the birds and the wind in the trees. It calms me, de-stresses me. The point isn't to be at the top, it's getting there. At least for me… I like it very much to be alone. It clears your mind.

Skadi:

> I become very happy when I am outside in nature. Either it's with my horse, or friends or by myself because it's, I don't know, maybe a little bit of something about the silence, and the sceneries. Where you get such a beautiful view. It's a feeling, and it's also the feeling you get afterwards when you return home. Refreshed maybe or renewed. It's also about the body. Being in the body.

Freya:

> It is to be outside in the nature. Like to ski, or go in the mountains. I like the fresh air and light. And there are no sounds. The silence...And just there is something special about standing on a mountain, to get up—like the high, and then you go so easy down…to be able to see your home from above. Then you better understand distance when you are down below. That is part of the feeling is being on top and looking around…it's not just for health. It's for everything, for

[12] Appendix A provides the full responses by all interviewees, including my interviews from Oslo.

conversation, for stress, for silence. Sometimes I am very tired and I don't want to go, but then I am glad I did because I feel so much better afterwards.

Baldur:

It is outside activities in the nature. It's nice to walk up. It takes only half an hour to an hour to a top (peak) and then you can go to another top only half an hour more. I *like* to walk in the mountains. On a nice day like this I like to go up and just enjoy the nature.

Eir:

For me it's happiness. I am absolutely at my most happiness when I have a trip in the mountains in good weather and can sit there and experience the peace and the quiet. It is the best thing that I can do. It's bliss. I can't think of anything that is better. Absolutely, from the bottom of my heart. It's the mountains.

Vidar:

It's going into the nature, and experiencing the nature. It's the calm I feel from a walk in the woods or the open feelings on top of a peak. Yes I value it, more than anything I value this. It has to do with my mind, or sanity—my inner peace.

Frigg:

Peace, I don't think about bills, the cleaning, and the house. It's just me and the children. You don't have to plan it. Yes, it's the peace.

Idunn:

For me it's the experience to go up...you feel the physical, and the surrounding, the stillness, the quiet...its kind of a freedom feeling... *Friluftsliv* is more the psychological aspects—for mental health not for physical. It's for the experience.

On this theme, the interviews indicated that the alumni all had a personal and intimate connection with nature. *Friluftsliv* was their primary leisure pursuit, and many expressed a passion for and a need physically, mentally and spiritually to regularly access nature. The responses also revealed that they valued the sensuous experience—the silence, the wind, the birds, and the feelings that exist in less-corrupted nature.

Similarly, the Hjellbakkene alumni spoke of love and respect for nature. However, beyond a desire for a pristine environment, this did not translate to a significant concern for, or actions to promote sustainable lifestyles. There was a general concern for worldwide green issues but they expressed indifference, frustration and helplessness *vis a vis* what they saw as monolithic power structures both global and national that deter movement towards an environmentally sustainable society. Most interviewees rationalized a lack of commitment to more sustainable lifestyles by saying the Norwegian system and infrastructure does not fully support it. Moreover, their own community of Volda does not have a strong or even visible culture of transition or green activism. Environmental destruction, global recession and social

hardship have not directly and significant hit their particular neck of the woods. Those problems seem far away and less urgent. Many saw a paradox between the Norwegian ideals and their country's actions. Some felt powerless and unmotivated to make daily changes because they felt that in the bigger picture, their actions were miniscule and insignificant. They cared about their immediate place, because that was what they could influence. However, they showed no signs of "leading their community to practice sustainable lifestyle" as the figure "The Natural Flight of Steps" in Chapter 5, page 96 outlines as a possible, and hoped-for, outcome of the Rain or Shine pedagogy. It is worthy of note that five out of nine alumni are in caring professions (teachers, physical therapy, hospital work). This is central to the Skogsmulle ethos: to love and care for nature—humans included.

Within every interview, the theme of future generations arose—specifically their own children, nieces, nephews and future children. They spoke with concern for the changing Norwegian childhood experience, in which their children play less outside and are more interested in high-tech toys and digital entertainment. All but two mentioned their desire for and value of their children having a similar experience to their own at Hjellbakkene to help cultivate an early connection and enjoyment for nature. Two of the four respondents who currently have children said they have told them stories of Skogsmulle.

6.6 Concluding Analysis

I sought to understand if and how a specific story (Hjellbakkene and Skogsmulle) and learning through stories played a role in the storied lives of these adults. What did I find?

Based on these interviews it is apparent that upon reflecting on their formative years at Hjellbakkene the alumni were indeed influenced by the character Skogsmulle. The depth of this is somewhat of a challenge to articulate. Nevertheless it is obvious from their responses that Skogsmulle was active in their imaginations in the past, and for some, still is. It is evident that stories of Skogsmulle transformed how they viewed nature while they were in kindergarten at Hjellbakkene. The Skogsmulle stories brought their local nature more alive, and made it less intimidating and more intimate through belief that these guardians (Skogsmulle of the forest, Laxe of the water and Fjellfina of the mountains) were living close by and were watching over all of nature.

The value they stated most often inspired by Skogsmulle was an enduring respect and reverence for the natural world and a desire to keep it as pristine as possible. As the Skogsmulle stories originated out of the 1970's environmental movement, the value they articulate is wilderness preservation. It is now spoken among scholars that this value is outdated, because separates the human culture from the natural world and its focus does not help our cultures transition into sustainability. I recognize this while also observing that this argument within the Norwegian is somewhat different. They do not have to plan excursions to national parks or wilderness reserves to have an intimate experience in the "wilderness". The Norwegian culture of only 5 million inhabitants has less-human altered wild nature only minutes from their doorsteps. Therefore their value of pristine nature is not abstracted from their everyday experience. It relates to their daily lives and *friluftsliv* lifestyle.

The environmental value of wilderness preservation was present in their responses of their current environmental ethic and this was the main value Skogsmulle shared with them. However, their environmental ethic and actions did not go much beyond this into cultural sustainability for a variety of factors. I deduce that these early values were not expanded upon in their later education or supported by their immediate rural Norwegian culture. Interviewee's also articulated hesitation to change their lifestyles because they lacked trust, or disappointment in the state to set up better sustainable infrastructure. More in depth interviews and a wider sample would help draw out more themes and specifics.

Did the ecological knowledge and discovery of nature through play at Hjellbakkene transform these children in any way, either substantially or subtly? The alumni spoke of their outdoor playscape as an affective experience in their childhood. They articulated that they gained independence and confidence from learning directly from and in nature through self-directed free play. Therefore, they were also influenced and transformed by the story of nature. Besides Skogsmulle, the Earth's ecological story helped instill in them a connection with , and understanding of the natural world, and a respect for it that persists to this day. Though again, further research would be beneficial to draw deeper examples and descriptions.

For some, the ecological knowledge was not fully transmitted, and much of it was lost. For others, it was remembered, then compounded in later studies and now plays an intimate role in how they experience nature—as evident in the responses from Eir, Frigg and Freya. Vidar

spoke of special feelings, ability to sense nature (like Skogsmulle) and a present calmness in nature as the main benefit from his early childhood experience. The most common value the alumni expressed was a lifelong respect for the natural world and a commitment to preserve it—even if in only a small way—in their locality. This arose through the influence of learning from nature, in nature, from their parents who valued this themselves, and through the aid of Skogsmulle. The most overt response from the alumni about the story of Skogsmulle's direct influence upon their personhood is a respect for nature and a desire to keep it pristine.

Across the board, with the exclusion of one response (Vidar), Hjellbakkene alumni approached *friluftsliv* in terms of feelings rather than activities. I asked everyone I encountered about *friluftsliv*—how they defined *friluftsliv* for themselves, how they think it might be more widely culturally defined, how they experience it, and what they value in it. Overwhelmingly, I received descriptions, stories, simple words that expressed deeper feelings of their inner experience in nature. As we know, these feelings are hard to articulate, but to do so we can say: calmness, peace, quiet, silence, tranquility, bliss, happiness, and stillness. Why can and how does an immersive nature experience provide one's being with these feelings? Frigg, Idunn, Skadi and Eir articulated a "return to *friluftsliv*" after a disinterested adolescence. Did their early friluftsliv experience with Hjellbakkene sway this? They observed that as they get older, these four alumni are more called to return to nature for health, leisure and the sensuous experience it provides. Was it the feelings—the sensory connection cultivated early in the forest with Skogsmulle that brought them back? In their busy modern lives, the interviewees expressed a *need* for nature, to kind of plug them into the outlet of the living earth—to connect to something there that is not in our modern technological and industrial lives. To connect to nature provides them with something that is hard to describe. Yes, they valued a pristine environment, not as a spectator but to be a living part of it. It is something fundamental to their own nature *in nature: To be part of nature.*

Did their early experience play a role? Many of the respondents replied that it was not just kindergarten, but their families that played a significant, if not larger part in their current interest in nature. But not all of them grew up in extreme *friluftsliv* families and those persons had parallel responses about *friluftsliv* and their connection to nature. Is this a specifically Norwegian cultural phenomenon? Yes. As Jerome Bruner argues, education creates culture and culture creates education. It is impossible to untangle one from the other. As presented in

Chapter Four, this pedagogy is an intimate expression of the Scandinavian culture. So an important question is: does this pedagogy operate in more of a transmission rather than transformative mode? One might look at these results and see a reproduction of Scandinavian values. Do these interviews articulate any transformative qualities in the former students? My reply to this links back to a transformation that many elucidated from their childhood of how they perceived nature to be the homes of these fantasy creatures. Their responses about their personal connection to nature through the cultural concept *friluftsliv* also leads to an interesting discussion, of which further research is necessary to draw out secure conclusions. Still, immersing themselves in nature transforms them, as they say, for the better. The reason that they go into nature is for transformation: to rejuvenate, to get into the body, to relax the mind, and to de-stress. And they learned the benefit of this early from their parents, from their kindergarten, and from their local culture for their physical, mental and spiritual health. Further research may best focus upon the influence upon adulthood from deep early childhood experiences *in general,* rather than trying to draw out one early childhood experience influence from the rest. In this respect, my results on how this pedagogy affects adulthood are inconclusive.

Another related element is the small age group of 3-6 in which this experience took place. In later years, the research subjects encountered many other influences on personalities and lifestyles. The Rain or Shine kindergartens aspire to create the nourishing soil for a sustainably acting human to grow out of. In many ways it fits within the definition of transformative learning that underpins the ESD. However, it is my conclusion that it cannot do this without a wider culture of education that continues to support a sustainably transformative learning.

Are these students' attitudes different from their peers? My interviews with Norwegians of similar age in Oslo revealed differences in lifestyles, relationship with and experience in nature both in childhood and adulthood, and their environmental consciousness. However, I recognize there are significant differences between an urban experience and a rural one and decided such a comparison would not be relevant or enriching, given my now narrowed focus. Interviews with adult alumni of non-*friluftsliv* kindergartens in Volda would have provided a more viable control group.

Our stories are a combination of our direct sensory experience combined with our cultural models, our representations, and our horizons of perception. Culture is not the only

determinant of action or value, but it plays a role in our behavior in complex and powerful ways. Norwegians in general place high value on living an active outdoor-oriented life. The preservation of nature and their experience in it is a national priority. Therefore this value is transmitted through many means. Hjellbakkene is another expression of this value, one that that has been transformed into a narrative learning approach. It is possible that this transmission of the cultural value was "transmitted" in a transformative manner, through stories, by the Rain or Shine pedagogy. This pedagogy appears to have been a vibrant experience for the participants. It seems to have had a unique and lasting effect on their personal expression of *friluftsliv*, which more research could provide deeper insights. Likewise, these cultural values are basically to *play in nature.* So it is a combination of transmission of cultural values with the transformative effect of having a personal experience in nature. Therefore the value is to experience and learn from the natural world—to be part of it, not separate. And this transmission is transformative in itself.

Chapter 7: An Odyssey of the Imagination

Imag·i·na·tion (noun) \im-ˌaj-ə-ˈnā-shən\: an act or process of forming a conscious idea or mental image of something never before wholly perceived in reality by the one forming the images; also: the ability or gift of forming such conscious ideas or mental images especially for the purposes of artistic or intellectual creation. (Merriam-Webster 2012).

"It is the imagination that has led to our demise. It is the imagination that will lead to our fulfillment," remarked mathematical cosmologist Brian Swimme (1998). This thesis has revealed to me that the imagination is a key to transformation. As I became aware of that, this research project became much more than an academic exercise. It turned into a long and endearing odyssey—an odyssey of the imagination. My own *boundaries of the imagination* (my "horizon of understanding", or "lenses of perspective") were transformed many times. My own imagination was nurtured, uplifted, expanded, challenged, tested, and sobered.

The array of challenges we face today can be framed as a crisis of the collective human imagination. That is, the way in which we collectively imagine how life is to be lived manifests itself as the intention for our actions (Swimme 1998). Simply put: Thoughts become things. The path paved with our imaginings and intentions has dramatically contracted the evolutionary story of the biosphere. The human experience and the Earth's are linked. Today, both are threatened.

Humans have the capacity to creatively confront great challenges. Our paramount challenge, and duty, is to achieve a future based on environmentally sustainable practices. To do so, we might begin by imagining new ways of relating to the Earth, our fellow human beings and ourselves. We are seeing a slow shift in our willingness to imagine a sustainable modernity. But these changes are only slowly beginning to unfold, while monumental global destruction continues. Realigning this path is no easy task and there is no one answer. But we may benefit from focusing on our children.

How we help guide and uplift our next generation's imaginations is essential to cultural transformation. My own motivation has been focused on a fundamental shift of teaching strategies for our youth. The UN's Education for Sustainable Development is one remarkable manifestation of the intention to transform, on a massive scale, how we nurture our youth now and into the future. The UN recognizes that current educational practices, which primarily are methods of transmission rather than transformation, limit the capacity of the next generation to

imagine and create a sustainably flourishing future. Merely transmitting our past perceptions imposes boundaries upon the imagination and stagnation upon human ingenuity. But in my research I have seen firsthand how ecologically transformative learning methods such as play and narrative learning in outdoor settings may activate and nourish the imagination while grounding it in the ecological experience (Cobb 1977). Thus, this plays a role in cultural transformation.

A UN report for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development articulated a slow global metamorphosis in learning:

> Despite the continued strong presence of hierarchical top-down and instrumental approaches to education, teaching and learning, spaces are opening up for more process-oriented transformative or eco-pedagogical ESD approaches requiring higher levels of participation and self-determination. (UNESCO 2012:27)

Among the transformative methods mentioned:

> 1. Processes which stimulate innovation within curricula as well as through teaching and learning experiences; 2. Processes of active and participatory learning; 3. Processes which engage the "whole system"; and 4. Processes of collaboration and dialogue (including multi-stakeholder and intercultural dialogue). (UNESCO 2012: 27)

The UN outlines the importance of active participatory self-discovery of a learner's imagination. This comes through collaboration and dialogue within a holistic, systems-based exploration of our collective knowledge of life and the physical Earth. The objective of my research was to develop a theoretical framework describing how learning through play and stories relates to and supports transformative learning—such as the processes highlighted above by the UN. Then I set out to observe how this might manifest in *praxis* in the case of the Swedish Rain or Shine pedagogy.

I encountered the Rain or Shine pedagogy in Norway and Sweden, and came to see it as an example of the transformative learning methods outlined by the UN. There are two main and interconnected transformative approaches utilized by Rain or Shine: discovery play and storytelling within the more-than-human nature. I observed that the ESD transformative processes summarized above are inherently interpretive processes and integral to narrative learning. I saw that childhood play in wild nature was active, participatory, collaborative and dialogic and was by its nature essentially narrative. I wanted to understand whether, and if so, how and why play and storytelling are effective transformative learning approaches. I ventured

forth to deepen my understanding through a theoretical odyssey through the world of ideas and an experiential odyssey through the world of Skogsmulle.

In the course of my theoretical odyssey my imagination was opened to the transformative nature of play and its potential to expand understanding. In play, all is possible, and therefore it is one direct avenue into a unlimited world of possibilities that activates the imagination and nurtures our inquisitive nature. Furthermore, I recognized that play has been a catalyst of our cultural development and intimately connected to story (Boyd 2010; Huizinga 1950). This is because we make sense of our play—our interactions—through a narrative structure, which has evolved over the span of human evolution and has been integral to our cognitive development. Stories are how we have communicated our own imaginations to others and how we build upon this through the possibilities presented to us through stories of the collective.

Narrative's inherent interpretive structure can transform how we perceive and relate to the world through enlivening the imagination. Novel ideas that have been introduced to us through stories told by others instill wonder and questioning. Our boundaries expand through animating images and bridging connections never before thought possible. Thus our understanding continually widens. Human imagination can create unlimited meaning, in turn taking human activity in many directions. But without a grounded ecological imagination, the human imagination can remain grossly out of touch. The more we interact with the Earth, the more stories we will receive and the more deeply we will understand the Earth's ecological story. Children's stories are less encumbered by culture when they are discovered playfully in nature. We are all part of the Earth story and its story and survival is our own. A learning approach that incorporates play, narrative and ecological immersion has the potential to stir children's imaginations and widen their ecological understanding.

I saw that the Rain or Shine pedagogy's main philosophy was to follow the children's wonder—to help them discover the stories of the natural world through the avenue of play. In this way, the learner becomes an active participant, which is the main suggestion of ESD's transformative methods. Rain or Shine uplifts a child's early creativity through free play and storytelling in wild nature, as they create their own pathways to understanding. This links to the above ESD process of stimulating innovation. I reason that an early nurturing of children's

creative imagination inspires creativity in later learning. A creative mind is an innovative mind, so transformative education is wise to allow diverse avenues to divergent thinking.

ESD suggests learning processes that include "whole systems" learning. The Rain or Shine program operates within the "whole system" of the living Earth and it teaches a systems-based approach. Children are opened to the cyclical processes of life and death, seasonal changes, and interconnections of their local nature and culture. The Rain or Shine pedagogy also parallels the collaborative and dialogic learning processes cited by ESD as transformative. The pedagogues use stories, songs, and questions in a dialogical play to help the children arrive at their personal answers.

The Skogsmulle stories play in all these areas. They cultivate values of love, wonder and respect for life. I discovered that the Skogsmulle character had been inspired by its Swedish folkloric history, the ecology at its place of conception—Lida Recreational Area outside Stockholm. Its published stories, which focus on wilderness preservation, are now considered outdated. They reflect the environmental values of the 1970s. Skogsmulle International could benefit from reassessing the themes and values in the stories and consider widening the scope to include cultural sustainability. For instance, a new friend of Skogsmulle, a human child, could be born in the city. Her stories would describe innovations that help her community lessen its consumptive impact and create a "clean and pristine" human culture—without sacrificing the values of nature preservation. However, the stories of Skogsmulle and friends focus on much more than wilderness preservation. They portray values of the Scandinavian outdoor culture—*friluftsliv*. This culture promotes practical survival skills, respect, health, enjoyment and spiritual or meditative connection and immersion in the vast wild nature of Scandinavia.

I found that this pedagogy used stories of Skogsmulle and friends to engage the children's budding imaginations and open them up to seeing the natural world in another way—a transformative way. Skogsmulle and the pedagogues told stories of a nature that was inviting and alive with wonder, an environment in which friendly magical creatures lived and took care of the natural world. Interviews with adult alumni of this kindergarten experience from Volda, Norway, revealed that these stories had transformed their earlier imaginations into a view of nature as animate with these nature guardians. This helped the children feel comfortable in the natural world, to enjoy it, want to protect it and to regard it as an integral part of their home. The

environmental value of wilderness preservation was present in their responses of their current environmental ethic and this was the main value Skogsmulle shared with them. For a variety of reasons their environmental ethic and actions did not go much beyond this into cultural sustainability. However, they may have been transformed in other ways: nature to them is home and they speak of an intimate sensory connection. The alumni all seek nature in order to be transformed—to de-stress, relax, gain clarity, breathe and become more physically embodied. However, it is difficult to separate the influence of this early childhood educational experience from their culture of *friluftsliv* as they are embedded within each other. My wider contextual research leads me to acknowledge that this also is a reflection of their cultural history of intimate contact with nature. Norwegians in general see their vast and pristine nature as home and the general absence of "in your face" environmental destruction leaves them disconnected, generally speaking, from the planet-wide environmental issues that concern other cultures. Further studies would be needed to tease out possible specific effects of this experience upon an adult's worldview.

This research was essentially an account and interpretation of a collection of interrelated stories and an investigation of why stories can be an uplifting element in a learning setting. I found that stories, which incorporate ecological and cultural wisdom have the potential to cultivate awareness, to instruct, and to transform one's imagination through widening possibilities of the imagination. I discovered that the Rain or Shine pedagogy provides an effective but contextual example of how to incorporate ecological stories to aid in the transformation of young imaginations. My recommendation is for Rain or Shine's pedagogy to live on as an inspiring example for other natural and cultural learning contexts to thoughtfully create their own stories, based within their own geological and cultural histories. However, I also recommend the current pedagogues to mull over Skogsmulle's current message and ask themselves if it might benefit from some new narratives—possibly more focused on cultural sustainability, which would incorporate more current planetary issues of cultural interconnectedness into their established stories of wilderness preservation. Does Skogsmulle need a new story? This inquiry draws me back to one of the first questions I encountered when I began this thesis: *Do we need a new story?*

My initial connection to my advisor was through reading a piece of her work that asked the question, "Do We Need a New Story?" (Witoszek 2007) I intuitively answered, "Yes! That is

precisely what we need!" "But why?" I pondered. I have grown and have been transformed through these questions: Do we need a new story? And why? In addition to the key role of the imagination, and the playful road to it, this thesis also opened me up to the integral role of stories in our lives and further, a world that is *storied*. What I found is we don't need a new story. We need *many* new stories: networks of stories, interrelated stories, and ecologies of stories that connect human to their integral place within their living communities—both human and more-than human. We need to imagine our stories, share them, listen to other stories attentively and learn from them, expand our horizons of understanding, and thin the veils that smother us within a limited imagination.

Our imaginations can let our compassion grow through recognizing that we all are in this together—part of one big, mysterious, and awe-inspiring story. Also, maybe we could all benefit from re-evaluating our personal stories, our collective stories, and the stories we pass on to our youth. And maybe we need some stories that can inspire us to write our own stories, and live them. Maybe the most important thing we can really do in the face of this dire planetary story is to start living our own *New Story*. Does our future as a human race depend on our ability to transform our own living stories? Are we up to the task? What I've taken from this thesis is: Stories matter. Maybe more than we currently can imagine. It may even be possible, as a Hasidic parable told by Elie Wiesel (1995), suggests, "God created man because [God] loves stories…"

References

(2011): *Framework Plan for the tasks and content of kindergarten.* Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. [online]. -URL: http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Barnehager/engelsk/Framework_Plan_for_the_Content_and_Tasks_of_Kindergartens_2011.pdf (Retrieved 11 March 2012).

Abulad, R. (2007): What is Hermeneutics? *Kritike* 1(2): 11-23 [online]. -URL: http://www.kritike.org/journal/issue_2/abulad_december2007.pdf (Retrieved 4 March 2012).

Abram, D. (1996): *The Spell of the Sensuous. Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World.* New York: Pantheon Books.

Abram, D. (2005): *Storytelling and Wonder: On the Rejuvenation of Oral Culture.* [online]. -URL: http://www.wildethics.org/essays/storytelling_and_wonder.html (Retrieved 10 March 2012).

Barrows, A (1995): The Ecopsychology of Child Development. In Roszak, Gomes and Kanner (Eds). *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind.* New York: Sierra Press. Pp. 101-110.

Beery,T. (2011): Nordic in Nature: Friluftsliv and Environmental Connectedness. *Dissertation.* University of Minnesota. [online]. -URL: http://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/107691/1Beery_umn_0130E_11804.pdf (Retrieved 26 June 2011).

Berry, T. (1988): *Dream of the Earth.* San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Borge, A., Nordhagen, R. and Lie, K. (2003): The Child in the Environment: Forest Daycare Centers Modern Day Care with Historical Antecedents, *The History of the Family*, 8(605-658).

Bourdieu, P. (1993): *The Field of Cultural Production.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Bowers, C. (1995): *Educating for an ecologically sustainable culture: Rethinking moral education, creativity, intelligence, and other modern orthodoxies.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Boyd, B. (2010): *On the Origins of Stories: Evolution, cognition and fiction*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bringhurst, R. (2009): *The Tree of Meaning: Language Mind and Ecology.* Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint

Bringhurst, R. (2008): *Everywhere Being is Dancing: Twenty Pieces of Thinking.* Berkeley: Counterpoint Press.

Bruner, J. (1986): *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bruner, J. (1990): *Acts of Meaning.* Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

Bruner, J. (1991): The narrative construction of reality. *Critical Inquiry*. 18(1):1-21.

Bruner, J. (1996): *The Culture of Education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bruner, J. (2003): *Making Stories: Law, Literature and Life*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Brynner, W. (1986): The Way of Life According to Laotzu. Translated by Witter Brynner. New York: Berkeley Publishing Group.

Burgess, D. and Mayer-Smith, J. (2011): Listening to Children: Perceptions of Nature. *Journal of Natural History Education and Experience*. 5:27-43.

Carson, R. (1998): *The Sense of Wonder.* New York: Harper-Collins.

Charles, C. and Louv, R. (2009): Children's Nature Deficit: What We Know–and Don't Know. *Children and Nature Network.* [online].-URL: http://www.childrenandnature.org/downloads/CNNEvidenceoftheDeficit.pdf (Retrieved 11 November 2011).

Chawla, L. (2002): Spots of Time: Manifold ways of Being in Nature in Childhood. In: Kahn, P. and Kellert, S. (eds.): *Children and Nature: Psychological, Sociocultural and Evolutionary Investigations*. Cambridge: The MIT press.

Chawla, L. (2006): Learning to Love the Natural World Enough to Protect It. *Barn* 2:57-78

Chipeniuk, R. (1995): Childhood foraging as means of acquiring competent human cognition about biodiversity. *Environment and Behavior.* 27:490-512.

Cole, A and Knowles, J. (2002): Transforming research: Possibilities for arts-informed research. In: O'Sullivan, Morrell and O'Connor (eds.) *Expanding the boundaries of transformative learning.* New York: Palgrave.

Cobb, E. (1977): *The Ecology of the Imagination in Childhood*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Connery et All (2010): *Vygotsky and Creativity: A cultural approach to play, meaning making and the arts.* New York:Peter Lang Publishing.

Eder, D. (2004): *Life Lessons through Storytelling: Children's Exploration of Ethics.* Indiana: University of Indiana Press.

Deloria, V. (1999): *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria Jr. Reader*. Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing.

Deloria, V. (2001): *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*. Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing.

Drengson, A. (2008): Introduction: A Life and Work of Arne Naess: An Appreciative Overview. In Allen Drengson and Bill Devall (Eds.) *Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess.* Berkeley: Counterpoint Press.

Dockett, S. and Perry, B. (2007): Trusting Children's Accounts in Research. *Journal of Early Childhood Research.* 5:47-63.

Egan, K. (1989): *Teaching as Story Telling: An Alternative Approach to Teaching and Curriculum in the Elementary School.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Calaprice, A. (ed.) (2011): *The Ultimate Quotable Einstein.* New Jersey: Princeston University Press.

Ewert, A., Place, G., & Sibthorp, J. (2005): Early-Life Outdoor Experiences and an Individual's Environmental Attitudes. *Leisure Sciences*, 27: 225-239.

Faarlund, N. Dahle, B. Jensen, A. (2007): Nature is the home of Culture- Friluftsliv is a Way Home. *USDA Forest Proceedings.* [online].-URL: http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_p049/rmrs_p049_393_396.pdf (Retrieved 22 June 2011).

Faber-Taylor, A. and Kuo, F. (2006): Is Contact with Nature Important for Healthy Child Development? State of the Evidence. In C. Spence, & M. Blades (Eds.): *Children and Their Environments* (pp. 124-140). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Farban, N. (No Date) Bechuanaland. In Steichen, E. (1955). *The Family of Man.* New York Museum of Modern Art. New York: Maco Magazine Corporation.

Frohm, G. (1970): *Skogsmulle.* Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt and Söners Förlag.

Frohm, G. (1978): *Laxe*. Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt and Söners Förlag.

Frohm, G. (1971): *Fjellfina.* Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt and Söners Förlag.

Frohm, G. (1998): *Nova.* Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt and Söners Förlag.

Frohm, G. (2002): When Skogsmulle was Born. *Gösta Frohms Skogsmullestiftelse Internationella Skogmullesymposiet.* [online].-URL: http://www.friluftsframjandet.se/skogsmullestiftelsen. (Received 28 April 2012).

Gadamer, H. (2004): *Truth and Method.* 2nd ed. London: Continuum Publishing Group.

Geertz, C. (1973): *The Interpretation of Cultures.* New York: Basic Books

Gelter, H. (2000): Friluftsliv: The Scandinavian Philosophy of Outdoor Life. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 5, 77-90.

Gregory, D. et al., eds. (2009): *The Dictionary of Human Geography.* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Gurholt, K. (2008): Norwegian *Friluftsliv* as Bildung- A Critical Review. In Peter Becker & Jochem Schirp (Eds). *Other ways of learning.* Germany: Marburg Publishing.

Hammond, D. (2003): *The Science of Synthesis: Exploring the Social Implications of General Systems Theory.* Colorado: University Press of Colorado.

Heidegger, M. (1971): *On the Way to Language.* Translated from German by Peter D. Hertz. New York: Harper and Row.

Heerwagen, J. and Orians, G. (2002): The Ecological World of Children. In: Kahn, P. and Kellert, S. (eds.): *Children and Nature: Psychological, Sociocultural and Evolutionary Investigations*. Cambridge: The MIT press.

Heidegger, M. (1996): *Principles of Reason.* Translated from German by Reginald Lilly. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Heiman, B. (1945): Lila, the Divine Play. *University of Ceylon Review* 3(1): 29-34 [online]-URL: http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/899 (Retrieved 1 Dec 2012).

Holling, C. S. (1973): Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, 4:1-23.

Huizinga, J. (1935): *In the Shadows of Tomorrow.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Huizinga, J. (1950): *Homo Ludens*. New York: Roy Publishers.

Huizinga, J. (1969): *Dutch Civilization in the 17th Century and Other Essays.* New York: Harper and Row.

Imagination [Medical Definition] (2012a). *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. [online]. -URL: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imagination (Retrieved on 11 March 2013).

James, W. (1981): *Pragmatism.* Hackett Publishing. Indiana, U.S.A.

Jensen, A. (2007): The Value and necessity of Tumbling and Fumbling. In *Nature First: Outdoor life and the Friluftsliv way*. Hendersen and Viklander Natural heritage books: Toronto, Ontario.

Joyce, R. (2012): *Outdoor Learning: Past and Present.* Open University Press: New York, USA.

Kahn, P. and Kellert, S. (eds.) (2002): *Children and Nature: Psychological, Sociocultural and Evolutionary Investigations*. Cambridge: The MIT press.

Kellert, S. (2004): Experiencing Nature: Affective, Cognitive and Evaluative Development in Children. In: Kahn, P. and Kellert, S. (eds.): *Children and Nature: Psychological, Sociocultural and Evolutionary Investigations*. Cambridge: The MIT press.

Kaarby, K. (2004): Children Playing in Nature. *Center for Early Childhood Development and Education: Department of Education-Ireland.* Pp.121-128 [online].-URL: http://www.cecde.ie/english/pdf/Questions%20of%20Quality/Kaarby.pdf (Retrieved 11 November 2011)

Kinsella, E. (2006): Hermeneutics and Critical Hermeneutics: Exploring Possibilities within the Art of Interpretation. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research,* 7(3) [online].-URL: http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0603190 (Retrieved 22 August 2012).

Kirkby, M: (1989): Nature as Refuge in Children's Environments. *Children's Environments Quarterly*, 6(1): 7-12.

Kane, S. (1998): *Wisdom of the Mythtellers.* Ontario: Broadview Press.

Koen, B. (1987): Vi Vil Ta eit Steg Tilbake- til Naturen. *Hjellbakkene Barnehage Document.* [online].-URL: http://www.voldaskulen.no/web/(F(AQJSaWzRwYbPCP5S0TAzyobPCAAGYQBuAG8AbgB5AG0AAAEvAP_T8SUVJ1Tgcur3NkipBfELHbnapA2))/NettskoleRessurs.axd?id=51556105-d912-46df-ae19-8d4bbd4f0164 (Retreived 12 February 2012).

Koen, B et. al (1988): *Naturstudier, Friluftsliv og Miljøvern: Forsøk med Pedagogisk Tilbud til 6-åringer* .Norway: FAD:KUD.

Koen, B. (2006): *Skogsmulle paa Norsk. Hjellbakkene Barnehage Document.*

Krauss, S. (2005): Research Paradigms and Meaning Making: A Primer. *The Qualitative Report*.10 (4):758-770**.** [online].-URL: http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR10-4/krauss.pdf (Retrieved on 22 January 2012).

Kvale, S. (2008): *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Kvaloy-Setreng, S. (2010): The Ash-Lad. *Norwegian Journal of Friluftsliv.* [online].-URL: http://norwegianjournaloffriluftsliv.com/doc/sigmund_kvaloy_setreng_the_ash_lad.pdf (Retreived 8 May 2012).

Lackoff G, and Johnson, M. (1980): *Metaphors We Live By.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Leopold,A. (1966): *Sand County Almanac.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Linde, S. (2010): The Skogsmulle Concept.Friluftsframjandet. [online].-URL: http://www.friluftsframjandet.se/guest/357 (Retrieved on 10 September 2011).

Louv, R. (2005): *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder.* North Carolina: Algonquin books of Chapel Hill.

Margulis, L. and Sagan, D. (1986): *Microcosmos: Four Billion Years of Microbial Evolution.* California: University of California Press.

Margulis, L. and Sagan, D. (2007): *Dazzle Gradually: Reflections on the Nature of Nature.* Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing Company.

Mathews, F. (1991): *The Ecological Self.* Great Brittan: Routledge.

Mayer, S. and Frantz, C. (2004): The connectedness to nature scale: A measure of individuals' feeling in community with nature. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 24:503-515.

McDonnell, L. (2013) The Wonderer. In Leslie McDonnell (2013): Playful By Nature: Transforming the Ecological Imagination through Play and Narrative Learning: The Case of Swedish Rain or Shine (*I Ur Och Skur*) Kindergartens. *Master's Thesis Dissertation.* Universitet for Miljo og Biovitenskap.

Mishler, E. G. (1986): The analysis of interview –narratives. In T. R. Sarbin (Ed.), *Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct*: 233-255 New York: Praeger.

Moore, R. and Wong, H. (1997): *Natural Learning: The Life History of an Environmental Schoolyard.* Berkeley: MIG Communications.

Nabhan, G. and Trimble, S., (1995): *The Geography of Childhood: Why Children Need Wild Places.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Narrative (2012). *In Oxford Dictionary Online.* [online]. -URL: http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/narrative (Retrieved 10 September 2012)

Nielsen, R. (2008): Children and Nature: Cultural Ideas and Social Practices in Norway. In James, A., James, A.L. (Eds.). (2008). *European Childhoods. Cultures, Politics and Childhoods in Europe*. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan

Naess, A. (1987): *Ecology Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy.* Translated by David Rothenberg. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Nanson, A. (2005: *Storytelling and Ecology.* UK: University of Glamorgan Press.

Nanson, A. (2011): Words of Re-enchantment: Writings on storytelling, Myth and Ecological Desire. England: Awen Publications.

Objectivity [Def. 1, 2] (2012b): Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. [online]. -URL: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/objectivity (Retrieved on 4 May 2012).

OECD, (2001): An Overview of ECEC Systems in the Participating Countries: Norway. [online].-URL: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/44/14/1942347.pdf (Retrieved on 11 November 2011)

Orr, D. (1999): *Beyond Ecophobia: Reclaiming the Heart in Nature Education* (Nature Literacy Series, Vol. 1). Great Barrington, MA: Orion Society.

Orr, D. (1992): *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World.* New York: S.U.N.Y. Press.

Orr, D. (2004): *Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

O'Sullivan, E., Morrell, A. and O'Connor, M. (2002): Introduction. In: Edmund O'Sullivan, Amish Morrell & Mary Ann O'Connor, (eds). *Expanding the Boundaries of Transformative Learning*. New York: Palgrave. pp.1-19.

O'Sullivan, E., Morrell, A. and O'Connor, M. (eds.) (2002): *Expanding the Boundaries of Transformative Learning*. New York: Palgrave.

Palmer, R. (1980): The Liminality of Hermes and the Meaning of Hermeneutics. *Proceedings of the Heraclitean Society: A Quarterly Report on Philosophy and Criticism of the Arts and Sciences*,Western Michigan University Department of Philosophy 5: 4-11.

Pringle, H. (2013): The Origins of Creativity: New Evidence of Ancient Ingenuity Forces Scientists to Reconsider When Our Ancestors Started Thinking Outside the Box. *Scientific American*. 308 (3):37-43.

Ricoeur, P. (1981): *Paul Ricoeur hermeneutics and the human sciences.* (J. B. Thompson, Ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ricoeur, P. (1986): *Fallible Man.* USA: Fordham University Press.

Robbins, T. (2006): *Wild Ducks Flying Backwards*. New York: Bantam Dell.

Reed, P., and Rothenberg, D. (1992): *Wisdom in the Open Air: The Norwegian roots of Deep Ecology.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Schiller, F. (2004): *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. New York: Dover Publications.

Sebba, R. (1991): The Landscapes of Childhood: The Reflections of Childhood's Environments in Adult Memories and in Children's Attitudes. *Environment and Behavior*, 23: 395-422.

Selby, D. (2002): The Signature of the Whole: Radical Interconnectedness and its Implications for Global and Environmental Education. In Edmund O'Sullivan, Amish Morrell & Mary Ann O'Connor, (eds). *Expanding the Boundaries of Transformative Learning*. New York: Palgrave. Pp.77-93.

Sobel, D. (1996): *Beyond Ecophobia: Reclaiming the Heart of Nature Education.* Great Barrington, MA: The Orion Society.

Plato, (2006): *Theaetetus.* Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Middlesex: The Echo Library.

Rubenstein, M. (2008): *Strange Wonder: The Closure of Metaphysics and the Opening of Awe.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Stamatellos, G. (2007): *Plontinus and the Presocratics: A Philosophical Study of Presocratic Influences in Plotinus' Enneads.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Strauss, S. (1996): *The Passionate Fact: Storytelling in Natural History and Cultural Interpretation*. Colorado: North American Press.

Swimme, B. (1998): *Earth's Imagination Video Series.* Center for the Study of the Universe. [video] ISBN -9650365-3-7

Swimme, B. and Berry, T. (1992): *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era: A Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos.* New York: Harper-Collins.

Tilbury, D. (1994): The Critical Learning Years for Environmental Education. In Wilson, R. *Environmental Education at the Early Childhood Level*. Washington, DC: North American Association for Environmental Education, pp. 11-13

Transform [Def. 1] (2012b): Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. [online]. -URL: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transform (Retrieved on 4 September 2012).

Transmit [Def. 1] (2012c): Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. [online]. -URL: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transmit (Retrieved on 4 September 2012).

Tuan, Y. (1977): *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Unesco, (2012): *Shaping the Education of Tomorrow: 2012 Report on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.* United Nations. [online].-URL: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002166/216606e.pdf> (Retrieved 21 August, 2012).

Vilhauer, M. (2010): *Gadamer's Ethics of Play: Hermeneutics and the Other.* Maryland, USA: Lexington Books.

Vygotsky, L. (1978): *Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University: Cambridge.

Wells, N. and Lekies, K. (2006). "Nature and the Life Course: Pathways from Childhood Nature Experiences to Adult Environmentalism." *Children, Youth and Environments* 16(1): 1-24.

Wiesel, E. (1995). *The Gates of the Forest.* New York City: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

Wilson, E.(1984*): Biophilia.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Wilson, R. (1994): *Environmental Education at the Early Childhood Level.* Washington, D.C: North American Association for Environmental Education.

Witoszek, N. (2009): Do We Need a New Story? in: Nina Witoszek (ed.). Sustainable Development and the Challenges of the 21st Century: Perspectives on Cultural, Political, and Industrial Dimensions of Sustainable Agenda*. Ceres21 Report nr. 4.* [online].-URL: http://www.ceres21.org/media/UserMedia/Ceres%20reports/Brundtland%20report%20revised.pdf (Retrieved May 1, 2011).

Witoszek, N. (2011): *The Origins of the "Regime of Goodness": Remapping the Cultural History of Norway.* Oslo, Norway: Universitetsforlaget.

World Commission On Environment And Development, W.C.O.E.A., (1987): *Our Common Future* G. H. Brundtland, (ed.). Oxford University Press. [online].-URL: http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm. (Retreived 11, November 2011)

Young, Hass, and McGowan (2010): C*oyote's Guide to Connecting with Nature.* Shelton, WA: Owlink Media Corporation.

Interviews

Anstrell, M. (2012): Interview with Swedish-English translator.

Arne (2012): Interview with Oslo Barnehage Alumni.

Arnehed, R. (2012): Interview with Swedish storyteller.

Baldur (2012): Interview with Hjellbakkene Alumni.

Borghild (2012): Interview with Oslo Barnehage Alumni.

Eir (2012): Interview with Hjellbakkene Alumni.

Frigg (2012): Interview with Hjellbakkene Alumni.

Freya (2012): Interview with Hjellbakkene Alumni.

Halstein (2012): Interview with Oslo Barnehage Alumni.

Humberset, R. (2012): Interview with Head Pedagogue of Trollsletta Barnehage.

Idunn (2012): Interview with Hjellbakkene Alumni.

Ingeborg (2012): Interview with Oslo Barnehage Alumni.

Jelena (2012): Interview with Oslo Barnehage Alumni.

Källström, K. (2012): Interview with Mulleborg Barnehage pedagogue.

Karin (2012): Interview with Oslo Barnehage Alumni.

Koen, B. (2012): Interview with Former Head Pedagogue and Founder of Hjellbakkene Barnehage.

Kristen (2012): Interview with Oslo Barnehage Director.

Linde, S. (2012): Interview with Co-Founder of Mulleborg Barnehage and Director of Skogsmulle International Foundation.

Linnea (2012): Interview with Oslo Barnehage Alumni.

Max (2012): Interview with current Hjellbakkene teacher.

Odin (2012): Interview with Hjellbakkene Alumni.

Skadi (2012): Interview with Hjellbakkene Alumni.

Stine (2012): Interview with current Hjellbakkene Teachers-aid.

Oslo Teacher A (2012): Interview with pedagogue at Oslo Barnehage.

Ranghild (2012): Interview with Oslo Barnehage Alumni.

Repp, G. (2012): Interview with *Høgskulen i Volda Friluftsliv* professor.

Siggurd (2012): Interview with Oslo Barnehage Alumni.

Stigberg, A. (2012): Interview with Lida Recreational Area Volunteer, interpretive trail guide and Skogsmulle Actress.

Thor (2012): Interview with Hjellbakkene Alumni.

Vidar (2012): Interview with Hjellbakkene Alumni.

Appendix A: Full Interview Responses on *Friluftsliv* from Volda and Oslo Interviewees

Hjellbakkene Interviews:

Thor:

> The first thing that comes to mind is freedom—to not do something you do every day—to spend lots of time outside moving your body. Of course once you move away from urban places the smell and the air changes. Also it's like a challenge with yourself—like on high peaks. You have to be with yourself intimately. You have to be completely present, it's dangerous not to be. You get rewarded with challenging yourself. With the experience on top of a high peak—the view, the sense of accomplishment. There is something about reaching the summit and pushing yourself through discomfort and pain. You don't really remember the pain, you remember what's up at top. Of course there are so many things you can do. Around here you can hike one day and go swimming or paddling another day.

Odin:

> For me it's a kind of calm. Getting away from the noise. I can walk 5 minutes and I am in the forest and can be with the birds and the wind in the trees. It calms me, de-stresses me. The point isn't to be at the top, its getting there. At least for me… I like it very much to be alone. It clears your mind. I walk almost every day to work through the forest instead of the road. And I am a *friluftliv* kindergarten teacher, so there is much *friluftsliv* for me. I go for tours in the mountains and high peaks like Thor, but I too enjoy the peace of a simple walk in the woods. Both are *friluftsliv* to me.

Skadi's description is best understood through the dialogue of our conversation:

> Skadi: Its maybe like when you spend a lot of time outside. You enjoy being in nature. I don't consider one day hikes *friluftsliv*. I think its more like longer trips, camping, staying the night or some nights out in nature. Mainly enjoying the nature, using the nature…
>
> Me: Using nature? What do you mean by that?
>
> Volda C: I don't know how to put words on it! Like using, or relying on nature, like making a fire from only nature, not bringing lighter, paper, or lighter fluid for instance.
>
> Me: Ok, I think I understand, and you said it's also about enjoying nature. So you do this because you enjoy it? Or what does *friluftsliv* do for you?
>
> Skadi: Yeah, yeah, I become very happy when I am outside in nature. Either it's with my horse, or friends or by myself because it's, I don't know, maybe a little bit of something about the silence, and the sceneries. Where you get such a beautiful view. It's a feeling. And it's also the feeling you get afterwards when you return home. Refreshed maybe or renewed. It's also about the body. Being in the body. I prefer being active outside rather than inside at a gym. That was the problem of my year in Singapore. I was nature denied. I sought out the nature reserve in the area, and its not the same, you don't get the silence in the city.

Freya:

It is to be outside in the nature. Like to ski, or go in the mountains. I like the fresh air and light. And there are no sounds. The silence. I don't listen to music when I go outside. I don't train inside in a gym, but outside in the fresh air. And just there is something special about standing on a mountain, to get up- like the high, and then you go so easy down. To be able to see your home from above. Then you better understand distance when you are down below. That is part of the feeling is being on top and looking around…When I am inside too much, I have to get out. Some of my friends meet regularly to go up in the mountains. It's not just for health. It's for everything, for conversation, for stress, for silence. Sometimes I am very tired and I don't want to go, but then I am glad I did because I feel so much better afterwards.

Friluftsliv has changed now that I have three young children. But at least every Sunday we go out. I also often walk around the lake with the stroller… I wouldn't really call that *friluftsliv,* but right now it's *my friluftsliv*. I also go out with a group of women. It's like a hiking group…I think its fun to go out with my family. I think it's exciting for my family. When the kids get bored or are fighting, going outside quickly fixes and they need to use their energy. They don't like to sit still. Also my partner loves to be outside. For us it's important. *Volda is a frilufts town.* It's easy to go a mountain. There are many close mountains. You can just walk out your door. It's easy...I think it is important for the Norwegian people but I don't think everyone goes outside. I think less are going outside than in the past.

Baldur:

It is outside activities in the nature. Volda is much outside culture. It's nice to walk up. It takes only half an hour to an hour to a top (peak) and then you can go to another top only half an hour more. And good drinking water up there too. It's a great view of both volda and orsta. There are some nice walks very close. The forest is just behind my house. I go up there for walks often instead of on the roads.

Me: Why do you walk in the mountains and forest instead of the roads?

Baldur: Well to get a little exercise and I just like it. I *like* to walk in the mountains. On a nice day like this I like to go up and just enjoy the nature.

Eir:

For me its happiness. I am absolutely at my most happiness when I have a trip in the mountains in good weather and can sit there and experience the peace and the quiet. It is the best thing that I can do. It's Bliss. I can't think of anything that is better. Absolutely from the bottom of my heart. It's the mountains.

Frigg:

Peace. I don't think about bills, the cleaning, the house. It's just me and the children. You don't have to plan it. Yes it's peace...I have one 8 year old so I can't go up in the mountains as much now but I think I value just to think in the small for my two year old. You don't have to go very far to experience *friluftsliv*. Just over the road. We light a fire, grill sausage, just sit there and play—To get out of the house…I had a disinterested period in my teens, then I had children so my *friluftsliv* is not so much in the mountains because my eight year old gets tired quickly and my two year old is heavy on my back. It's so easy to be out in the nature. It's just the nature. You don't have to bring a lot of stuff. Maybe water, an apple, a diaper for the little one. Maybe in the winter some coco. You keep it simple.

Idunn:

I go on trips when it's nice weather. For me it's the experience to go up and manage it, you feel the physical, and the surrounding, the stillness, the quiet and everyone around. It's kind of a freedom feeling. And when you stand on the top of the mountain and see the view and its so beautiful and big, and you feel so small. For me it's not just training but I also like to be training for health and physical. I myself am a physical therapist so it is important for me to be in good shape. *Friluftsliv* is more the psychological aspects—for mental health not for physical. It's for the experience.

Vidar:

Friluftsliv? It's going into the nature. It's the calm I feel from a walk in the woods or the open feelings on top of a peak. Yes I value it, more than anything I value this. It has to do with my sanity—my inner peace.

Oslo Interviews:

Jelena[13], who works for *Miljopartiet,* the Norwegian green political party:

When I was little I would go hiking with my dog in the Ekeberge Forest because it was so close. As I got older, it kind of dozed off. I don't really have the equipment and I am just kinda lazy. To define it, I think of *friluftsliv* as rock climbing, long over night tours, sleeping in a tent, and being extreme in nature…My nature experience is definitely not this. I like to hike and walk in the woods, but it's more of a religious thing and I am not extreme. To be honest though, I don't do it often! I think maybe because of advertisement we begin to associate it with this more extreme form—maybe this changes it for many people. I think they are persuaded that it is this, the extreme sports thing and that they must buy all the fancy equipment and look like a "*friluftsliv* person" to do it. Maybe this deters people from a simple walk in the woods. You don't need Norrona gear for a simple walk in the woods outside of Oslo. Most Norweigans think of *friluftsliv* as extreme sports, so if this is the case, then I don't *friluftsliv*. But I do find value in a simple walk in the woods from time to time.

Karin, a journalism student at *Høgskulen i Volda* from Oslo:

I lived in a big neighborhood where everyone knows each other, the parents would always force us to go outside together to play in the woods or go on hikes. We hated it! Every Sunday we went out when the weather was nice. We were forced to go out you know, because of the 'beautiful' nature. Now it's different because I am not forced to do it. I go for walks and runs around the lake mainly. I go outside for training really. I like to work out and tan—lay out in the sun. Like in my 3 years here, I have not hiked up Rosethornet. It's a hard hike. Sometimes I go up to the lookout point to relax, breath. Like I did that the day before my exam just to get a clear head...I went to *folkehogskole*, and my course was *friluftsliv* and sports. So it was a lot of hiking. I think it means just different activities out in nature. Like we would go hiking and skiing. We did a lot of different activities outside.

[13] All names have been altered for the privacy of the respondents.

Borghild grew up in Baerum, in Western Oslo until age 14, then moved to Texas for 10 years because she has an American mother. She studied dance and now is getting a Master's degree in Choreography in Oslo:

> When I moved back to Norway from Houston I was expecting and hoping to come "back to nature". There was nothing really natural at all about Houston. I always had nice memories of my Norwegian childhood. I remember as a kid going to our uncle's cabin up near Lillehammer in the summers for hiking and winters for skiing. I loved it and I missed it while I was in the states. So I looked forward to coming back to this. Now that I am back, I do go out into nature with my family but not very often and my friends are more urban. I enjoy it but honestly not as much as I thought I would. I remember it being so much more fun as a kid! Like when I go with my uncle it is kind of superficial, its not really to necessarily 'be in nature' or enjoying it. For me that's *friluftsliv*—being in nature, or at least it used to be. Now that I moved back, its like it's more for training and sport. Besides fresh air, it's just like being in a gym. Like, we go skiing together but I am so pressured to keep up and go fast for the cardio when all I want to do go leisurely and look at the trees, watch the snow fall, hear the birds, maybe build a snowman, you know? But, of course it's still great to get out, and be doings something in the winter with my family.

Sigurd who works in Finance:

> What is *friluftsliv* to me?`It is everything! As soon as I check out from work Friday afternoon, I jump in my car and drive to our hytte near Finnskogen. In the summer I go hiking and fishing, and in winter I go skiing. Hytta used to be my great-grandfather's—he lived there during the war and helped people fleeing to Sweden—and of course therefore knew a lot about the natural environment and always had many stories to tell from his adventures. Going there is like going home, and it's the only place I feel at peace with myself and my roots. I escape the buzz and hassle of everyday life and can go for hours and hours in the nature.

Linnea, a theater Student from Oslo:

> Friluftsliv is when I am in the mountains in just a perfect moment…just seeing a perfect view or I have been walking so far—like ten hours in one day and finally seeing the goal…I really like to use my body. I like sports. I like holding on and on and on—endurance. And the combination of using my body plus watching the mountains change as I walk. Around every corner is something new. I am so fascinating at how long the feet can get you. I can walk forever! It's kind of like meditation. It's just feet and walking and on and on. I lose a sense of time. Often I don't think about anything. Many people I know think a lot when they walk but I just go blank. I am there. That is what I like. The challenge. And also doing it with other people. Because it's when you get outside that you get into people. Very often very good talks get started. And it's very easy to walk while talking or without talking. And it's connecting people in a very good way. To talk about what we see. I am so fascinated by all of life. If we see a bird its like, "woo a bird!" I love trees and flowers, high mountains, Jotenheimen, Hardangervida. Just feeling like you succeeded. It doesn't have to be long to feel like you succeeded.

Halstein who works for Norwegian Church Aid:

> Friluftsliv to me is a form of freedom that cannot be obtained anywhere else than in nature. Contemplating while walking among trees and shrubbery and lakes and birds—gives me an almost religious feeling. Living in the city now, I am not so good at bringing myself to nature, and nature seems far away sometimes. Growing up in the Baerum, the nature was very easy to

access and my parents took me out into the forest for skiing in the winter and swimming in the many lakes and Oslo fjord in the summers. Some of the most happy childhood memories I have is from being in the forest and exploring it, enjoying it...I'm not much of a mountaineer—it is too far away and getting there is troublesome, and my family doesn't own a *hytte*, and I don't have a car nor the equipment suitable for hiking in the mountains. And the environment feels strange, and does not offer me the same peace I can find in the forest. In order for me to enjoy *friluftsliv* it has to be accessible, it's like going to church, I wouldn't go to mass in Hardangervidda just to go to mass. I just take the tram up to Nordmarka to go for a nice Sunday tour, not so often these days, to be honest.

Arne, a Freelance Animator in Volda who grew up in Oslo:

I think [*friluftsliv]* is not really being with or experiencing nature, but being in nature. We have a major here at university but it is a focus on sports, survival and how to handle nature. I wish it were more knowledge there about nature. So it's how to handle nature rather than live with it, or be with. That's the typical way for most Norwegians…Personally, I didn't ever have a very close relationship with nature—pretty typical for a Norwegian: to *hytta,* going for boat rides. I think it's more now that I am recognizing the value of it, but I still am not really acting on it. I know the value, but I don't *know* it. I don't actually connect to it, though I want to. I just need to get my ass moving…I feel like not being in touch with nature has made me not be in touch with myself. I feel like I am missing a lot of the magic of this life… Basically all this madness we see or imbalance, I wonder, to what degree is it caused by our separation from nature. Or that combined with our alienation of ourselves with ourselves. There is something going on there.

Ingeborg, a Manager at a bar in Oslo:

I went to *folkehogskole* for surfing, down in Stavanger. I think a lot of people choose *friluftsliv* for *folkehogskole* because they want a break from studies...What does it mean to me, *friluftsliv*? I don't know. It doesn't mean anything to me really… Maybe going out to the lakes and beaches around Oslo in the summer with friend—grilling sausage, enjoying the long days. I don't [cross country ski], but sometimes I downhill ski. That's about it. I don't like, commune with nature or anything.

Ranghild, a Journalism student at Volda University College:

I would say "outdoor activity". When they have a subject *friluftsliv* here at university. Then I can imagine its like very big trips 3 days or something where you also test your boundaries. I think it's outdoor activity. I think for me it has to do with going UP a mountain or on a sailing trip, surfing, rock climbing. Its not sitting outside in a park—that's not *friluftsliv,* that's chillin. You have to be doing something outside...I get happy from being outside. And a lot of it has to do with self-mastering. Like to achieve something for myself. Like a climbing route that I can't get but then I finally get it. Or going on a new high peak even though I am scared of heights, but I am going to do. It's for the challenge. And also the feeling of conquering something. It's just for myself. It makes me feel like I can do anything! I think it also has something to do with coming back home. Like the carrot in the end- like when its so cold and you are so sore and you can come back to a warm home put warm clothes on and drink hot coco.

Appendix B: Sample Interview Guide for Teachers and Teacher's Aids

Themes and Examples of Guiding Interview Questions

1. Introductory Information

2. Friluftsliv:

What makes a Friluftsliv Barnehage different from a non-friluftsliv Barnehage?
What activities do you do outside besides free-play?
Why do you value outdoors as the learning environment. Please describe…
Do the children enjoy being out in the cold, snowy, wet and rainy winters? Do they ever protest this and want to stay inside?
Describe the *friluftsliv* (and Rain or Shine) as an early childhood pedagogy… How do you teach about nature?

3. Play:

Do you recognize any differences in the type of play outdoors verses indoors?
How do the children play outside? What do they play?
How often do you engage in play with the children?
How do you as teachers, and how do the students utilize nature in their play?
What do you see as the benefits of outside play?

4. Stories:

Do you have any particular 'popular' stories the children like to hear during story time? What are their favorite books?
Do you tell or read Norwegian/Swedish folklore? How often? Which stories?
Do you make up stories while playing outside with the children? Can you give an example?
What kind of stories do the children create while outside?

5. Skogsmulle:

Can you explain the Skogsmulle pedagogy to me? How is it used? How often?
What are the effects you observe from this method?
What is your opinion of the (Rain or Shine) skogsmulle method in general? How does it compare to any other methods you have used in your experience as a pedagogue?
Do the children often ask about Skogsmulle?
Do the children play "skogsmulle" with out the teachers' initiative? Please describe or give an example.

6. Concluding Questions:

Is there anything else you might want to add to this conversation that you feel might be relevant before we conclude?

Appendix C: Sample Interview Guide Hjellbakkene Barnehage Alumni

1. Introductory Information

2.Themes of Conversational Topics:

A. Memories from Hjellbakkene

B. Memories of Skogsmulle

C. Other childhood influences—parents, peers, other family members, media, community

D. Stories in Childhood—Skogsmulle stories, Norwegian folklore, TV, movies

E. Play in Childhood—outdoors, indoors.

F. Friluftsliv—Past and current.

G. Environmental consciousness and actions

H. Current community participation

I. Hobbies, recreational ventures, how do you engage in your free time?

J. Passions

K. Reflections on Norwegian education system beyond kindergarten

3.Questions to expand and deepen an aspect of the interview and to draw out narrative answers (Kvale 2009):

What circumstances led to this action?
Could you tell me more about that?
Could you clarify what you meant by_____?
Can you please tell me more about this experience?
What was this (experience) like for you?
What general feelings or memories come up about this (experience, concept, theme)?