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InSEA ART Education VISUAL Journal IMAG intends to provide a visual platform, which, in line with the constitution of InSEA, will help foster international cooperation and understanding, and promote creative activity in art through sharing experiences, improving practices, and strengthening the position of art in all educational settings. IMAG is an international, online, Open Access and peer-reviewed e-publication for the identification, publication and dissemination of art education theories and practices through visual methods and media.

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TRACES

Visual Arts Education in Sweden

Introduction

This special IMAG issue, Traces – Visual Arts Education in Sweden, is published by members of InSEA Sweden, and include 20 visual essays and articles. The aim of this publication is to map the field of Swedish visual arts education by describing, exemplifying and discussing some of the issues relevant in current visual arts education, also of interest to the international art educational field. The InSEA members who are contributing with their work are visual arts teachers in elementary and secondary school, art pedagogues in preschools and museums, doctoral students and researchers in universities, from the far north to the south of Sweden.

In this issue of IMAG the content and the current national visual knowledge field is divided into five themes: Environment & Sustainability, Educational projects, Art & Museums, Gender perspectives and Teacher Education. Through the themes, the reader meets different practices and theoretical perspectives on visual arts education. The visual essays and articles give examples of discusses educational contexts and situations involving children and pupils, as well as visual arts teacher students work, through a combination of drawings, paintings, photographs and texts.

With this contribution – with an aim to trace and depict the Swedish visual arts educational situation on an international map – we wish the reader a pleasant and informative reading.

March 2020

The editors,
Tarja Karlsson Häikiö & Annika Hellman

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Presentation of themes and contributions



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Photograph from visual essay Dissolving views, Anna Ramberg

Theme ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

In the first essay, *Art-based Environmental Education and Ecological Literacy as a Foundation for Sustainable Thinking and Acting*, Margaretha Häggström present a study with an attempt to explain the phases of ecological literacy in relation to art-based environmental education based on a life-world phenomenological perspective. This visual essay give examples of how teachers and pupils experience and use the aesthetic values of plants and natural environments. The study is an action-research study that includes

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video-taped, participative observations and interviews, where art-based environmental education is used in order to achieve sustainable sensibility and plant awareness. The results of the study contribute with knowledge about ecological literacy development.

The unexpected, risk-taking and creative actions are core pedagogic concepts in a second-year module in a visual arts teacher BA course at a university in southern Sweden. In the article *From Non-site to Sustainable Design Challenged by Material Transformations and Oral Receptions*, Helena Malm present and discuss the work processes of three second-year visual arts teacher students. The students' processes are about sustainable site-specific design through visual and ethnographic methods which includes documentation and sketching processes in different materials. During the process, the students challenge each other through oral reception analysis, inspired by social constructivist semiotic analysis. This pedagogic design is based on interweaving theory and practice, and the idea that students should develop knowledge in, about, and through images.

Theme SCHOOL PROJECTS

Oskar Lindvall's contribution is a visual essay called *Notes on lifting art - A creative school project*, that describes a collaborative project between a compulsory school in Sweden and two artists, focusing on strengthening the arts curriculum in secondary school. In the project pupils in school year 9 and the artists, with experience of working with collaborative site-specific street art projects, creates art works in the school environment. The project, that was financed with money from the Swedish Arts Council, was part of Creative school, a national investment in art in schools by the Swedish government. The art project is based on the curriculum for the subject visual arts for years 7-9, where the learning goals encompasses directives on meaning-making through art in society.

The authors of the article *Additional Adjustments in Visual Arts Education*, Lisa Öhman and Barbro Johansson, reports from an ongoing participatory project carried out in an upper secondary school in an Art program in visual arts. The two researchers and a

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visual arts teacher have jointly developed professional knowledge about additional adjustments in visual arts education. The overall aim for the project is to investigate how different additional adjustments can develop the didactic design in the classroom of visual arts. The documentation gathered in the study offers critical reflections on how the teacher can reorganise and provide new and different support structures for learning.

In the article *Performing Otherwise - The Classroom as a Nomadic, Material Space*, Paul Resch and Ulla Lind engages in what the production of differences can mean for pedagogy in knowledge-generation, meaning-making and educational creativity. The aim is to exemplify how open-ended ambiguousness can cross boundaries, propose newness, and unfold knowledge as something playful. An assignment involving an imaginative story used to introduce a Sloyd (Handicraft) classroom assignment for 10 year-olds. The authors argue that by engaging with classroom experience as nomadic, material and performative, we gain intriguing passages into learning where the unexpected, uncertain and ambiguous have the potential to un-fold learning activities in relation to everyday life.

The research by Elin Låby involves the phenomena of how child art intervene with different ideals of schooling and childhood in a historical Swedish context. Her article is called *Interventions of Time – Child Art Competitions in the 20th Century*. It starts with a discussion on the phenomena of child art competitions, where the images from the 1940's to late 1970's are analysed. In the end of the article, the author also discuss how children in the municipality in the city of Eskilstuna worked together with artists in an art project in 2017, creating a sculpture together.

Ulla Lind and Annika Hellman writes about young people's visual and verbal becomings through fabulations, in their article called *Visual Fabulations and a Thousand Becomings in Media and Art Education*. The empirical material draws upon two educational research studies from visual arts and media practices, conducted by the authors. They contribute with knowledge about the potentials of visual arts and media education to fabulate, speculate and thus generate future becomings, that might be realised. By analysing

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pupil's fabrications, the potentiality of visual arts and media education becomes visible; for example unleashing creativity through experimental and open ended learning processes.

Malena Wallin and Charlotta Gavelin present a study called *Teacher Students Meet Their Intended Target Group - Aesthetic Work on Tweenies as a Phenomenon*, with the purpose to investigate how visual representations of identity are created and perceived by future leisure-time center teachers. In the leisure-time center there are opportunities to focus on interdisciplinary, value-based work, not least through aesthetic and creative processes through use of storyline. Through using storyline as a method, the students dared to experiment with other inputs than the ones in traditional teaching. The storyline method helped the students to approach and deal with problems like how to take up difficult subjects in the teaching activities.

Theme ART & MUSEUMS

In the visual essay *Children and young people meet the art at Moderna Museet*, Maria Taube, Ylva Hillström and Pernilla Stafeldt writes about young people's encounters with art, and methods for children and young people to meet art. Moderna Museet was one of the first modern museums in Sweden to set up a workshop where children and young people could paint and draw inspired by what they saw at the museum. Since then, the pedagogical activity has developed further. Here three recent projects are presented, based on the museum's exhibitions on climate change, photography and guided art tours for parents with babies.

The visual essay *Project at Svandammsskolan Involving the Artist Marie-Louise Ekman* is written by Margareta Abenius Eriksson. The essay consists of images made by pupils in school years 3-6, as paraphrases on the expressive and colourful art by the Swedish artist Marie-Louise Ekman. In the autumn of 2017 the art project started from an exhibition with the artist at Moderna Museet in Stockholm. Some of the pupils were acquainted with her art works, but for some of them the art by Ekman was intriguing. With inspiration from the painting *Lonely lady*, the pupils talked about what the artist – but

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also themselves – could long for. As a comment to the visit at the museum the pupils painted pictures of what one can long for, which were presented in a school gallery.

Bitte Fossbo writes about a school project with two high school classes in the visual essay *Learn from the Artist!* In the project, the students followed a guided tour at the art museum Moderna Muséet in Stockholm. The students participated in art talks and worked with the museum's collection of 20th century art. The visual essay describes how artistic expressions can be used for creating an understanding of what the world was like in the time when the artists were living. In this way the art talks also functioned as an example of visual arts educational activities outside of school, where the museum functions as a societal arena for knowledge acquisition.

In the article *Acts of Performance - as Research Method and Entangled Ethics*, Camilla Johansson Bäcklund explore how specific processes of art-based research can be described as method using concepts from posthuman theory. She explores boundaries between acting and performing that also grapples with wider ethical aspects produced from, and connected to, artistic practice. She discusses the act of performance in relation to the role of artist, but also as a way to approach the role of teacher through "research led-practice". This, claiming art to be useful within the usually text-dominated context of educational science, and as a comment to how teachers can approach roles, frameworks and learning spaces through Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical theory.

Author Anna Ramberg explore and present the course of events of children performing as guides at guided tours at an annual visual arts degree exhibition in Stockholm. In her visual essay *Dissolving Views - Re-Visualizing the Art Exhibition* the participants made paper fortune tellers to guide visitors through the exhibition. The aim of the essay is to show how both gallery exhibitions and guided tours can be re-visualized, thinking with children. Magic Lanterns, contemporary art, researchers and paper fortune tellers enabled dissolving views and creative ways of looking and learning. The study shows that art is not only about the artefacts; it is about the continuous making of the space, becoming together with the art

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and other visitors.

In this article, *Art Pedagogy – Contemporary Visual Art Studies*, the authors Anna Widén and Hans Örtengren describe a collaboration between a university and an art museum. The Contemporary Art Museum in Umeå in northern Sweden is one of Sweden's largest art galleries for contemporary art. The collaboration involves a course called Art Pedagogy, where an art-pedagogical project is planned, conducted and presented. Two projects collected in the spring of 2018 were selected for analysis. The result show that a win-win situation may occur when actors with different competences and resources participate in a project. For this to happen the schools and teachers need to have an interest in, and be prepared for a project, with an initial understanding.

Theme GENDER PERSPECTIVES

An image says more than a thousand words, but what does these words mean? Katarina Jansson Hydén gives examples of how art works can be analysed in upper secondary school, with and without a norm-critical perspective. Her essay *See more queer! to enable a broader perspective on existence through a norm-critical analytical thinking*, concerns notions pre-conceiving knowledge and the need of developing understanding through norm-critical image analysis in relation to a social gender context. Through examples with young people, the author discusses how image analysis is colored by normative pre-conceptions, often perceived and staged by gestures or choice of clothing, as well as glances of positioning, gender and spatiality.

The article *Perspectives on Equality and Assessment: Boys' Responses in Visual Arts Education* is written by Lova Palmér, and is centered around conditions for creating equivalence in assessment in the school subject visual arts. The study is informed by a socio-cultural perspective on learning, and the material presented is based on tasks in Palmér's own visual arts classroom from the study year 2017-2018 in the school years 7-9 in compulsory school. One of the main directives in the curriculum in Sweden is that school should be imbued with equivalence. According to previous studies, the

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subject visual arts has a strong female connotation, and according to national evaluations in Sweden girls have better average grades than boys in the subject. The aim of the study was to test and improve teaching practice, pupils' activities and assignments, and to improve the professional skills of the teacher.

Theme TEACHER EDUCATION

In the visual essay *What happens to image teacher students who work with conceptual contemporary art methods and processes?*, Ewa Berg describes the use of conceptual, contemporary art methods in visual arts teacher education. She shows how visual arts teacher students' critical thinking and active agencies has been developed and empowered by working with contemporary conceptual artistic methods. Equally important is the presenting of students' art work in public spaces. The author further argues that since art-teacher-student inevitably will re-enact their experiences to pupils in secondary school, and thus are able to also carry over processes of empowerment to these pupils, it is of a vital importance to provide well thought-through learning process in higher education.

In the visual essay *Sketching and Drawing as Part of the Learning Process - Showing Ideas and Presenting Projects*, Anneli Martin describes sketching as a part of the learning process in different kinds of teaching contexts with university students at three different faculties and programs in higher education. In the essay, case studies are presented from design courses, teacher education and engineering courses at three universities. Pen and paper, as well as charcoal and coloured crayons, were introduced to the students as analogue tools for sketching and presenting ideas. The essay is a summary of a five-year long study where results are presented of the similarity and difference on use of sketching and drawing as means for thinking and expression in different kind of studies.

Maria Stam discusses the possibility of using artistic role models as a way of understanding Modernism in visual arts teaching in her visual essay *Modernism - Historical Perspectives in Visual Arts Teacher Education*. The author shows examples from several students' duplications and paraphrases of art work from famous

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artists. The visual essay is a narrative description of how modernistic art works can be used as tools in visual arts teacher education to create understanding of how artistic trends affects the society and the ways of seeing in society, creating an insight of art historic, artistic and educational knowledge through the students' art work and pedagogical reflection.

In the article *A/r/tography in Visual Arts Teacher Training Program Examination*, Annika Hellman and Tarja Karlsson Häikiö discusses degree projects in visual arts teacher education. Through the concept a/r/tography the authors aim to reflect and discuss the positions as artist, researcher and teacher, that are interlaced in the future position as, and becoming a visual arts teacher. One student's visual and textual degree project is selected to investigate the exams from artistic, research-based and teaching practice perspectives. The authors highlight and discuss the benefits and limitations of merging these three positions, and what implications these processes might have for visual arts education in general.

ENVIRONMENT

&

SUSTAINABILITY

Experiential Learning through Art-based Environmental Education in a Storyline - a Foundation for Sustainable Thinking and Acting

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Abstract

In the light of human impact on the planet's ecosystems and concerns for children's decreasing direct experience of nature, this essay argues that experiential learning through aesthetic tools may play a potential role for sustainable development. This essay takes its part of departure in a pilot study with pupils in grade 6 (age 12-13). The pedagogy is underpinned by the ideas of art-based environmental education. An interpretative phenomenological analysis is used together with theories of experiential and affective learning. Findings show that student-centered approaches that include experiential learning through aesthetic pedagogical work have the potential to enhance pupils' interests in the nearby natural environment.

Keywords: Art-based environmental education, affective learning, experiential learning, sustainable development, storyline



Introduction

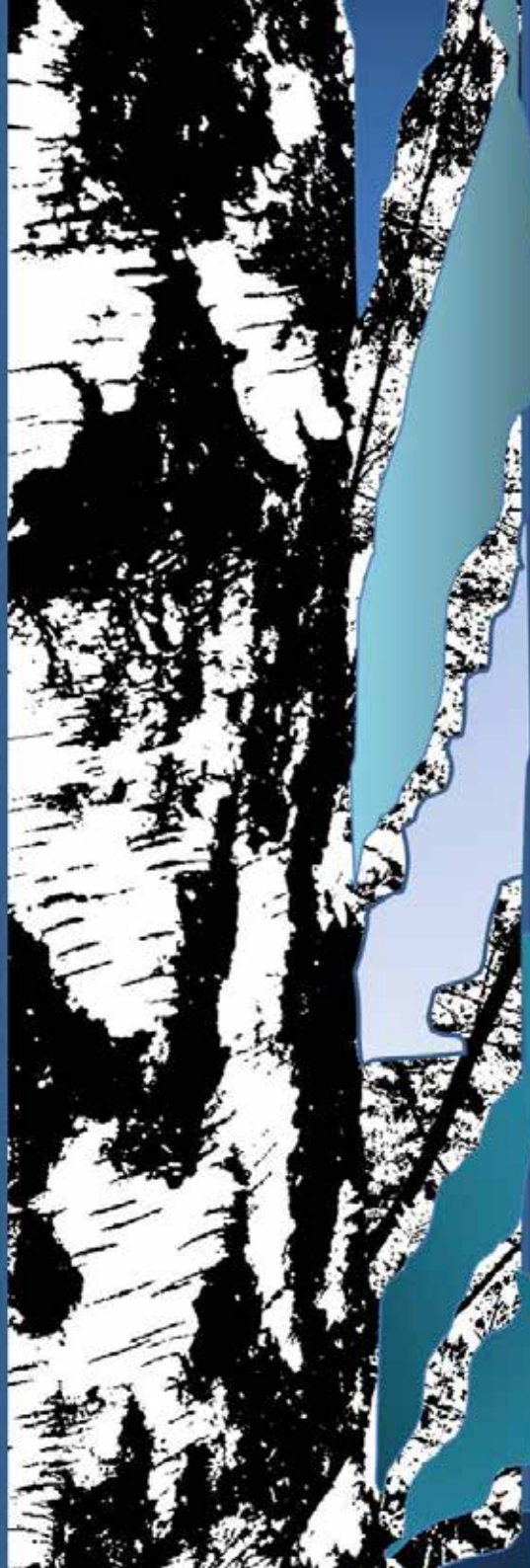
Transformations of natural areas, loss of biodiversity, overexploitation of the planet's resources are three examples of the impact of human beings on the ecosystems of the world (Head, 2016; Nakagawa & Payne, 2019). Excessive consumption, overpopulation and pollution have presumably caused climate change. The modern way of living has launched the earth into the recently formulated geological epoch, the Anthropocene (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000;), i.e. a new geological era dominated by human activity, an era that is immensely unpredictable and unsafe, and a time when humanity is subverting the planetary life-support structures (Rockström et al., 2009; Olvitt, 2017). However, the Anthropocene is still a concept in development (Lövbrand et al., 2015) and critics argue that attention has been diverted away from social and cultural practices and power relations (O'Brien, 2012), and that research on global change has focused on environmental change rather than on social change (Malm & Hornborg, 2014).

The Anthropocene has hitherto been presented as a narrative of crisis and a matter of urgency (Steffen et al., 2007; Lövbrand et al., 2015; Head, 2016). Climate change is one of the issues that children and young people are most worried about (Ojala & Bengtsson, 2019; UNICEF, 2019), and Hickman (2019), who has interviewed children's understandings on climate change talks about eco-anxiety. This has also been apparent by the weekly strikes Fridays for Future, started by the young Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg (Thunberg, 2019). How then can we make the unbearable and

impossible seem imaginable and possible? Lövbrand et al. (2015) argue that research needs to create opportunities to reason differently about the planet's future and I would argue that we need to take account of real people's life-worlds and lived experiences in addition to looking at how a changing environment is understood and experienced, and how these experiences are entangled with values such as belonging, inclusion and identity (O'Brien & Barnett, 2013).

In this quest for inclusive and more optimistic environmental research, I would like to highlight the role of education and in particular the process of experiential learning through work with art as a didactical tool. One approach which highlights art in order to evoke compassion in relation to the more-than-human world is Art-based environmental education (see e.g. Coutts & Jokela, [2015] who bring together and examine the intersection between art, environment and pedagogy, based on case studies from around the world).

Art-based environmental education was coined by Mantere (1992). This pedagogical approach is based on environmental considerations and is designed to sustain embodied and sensory experiences through artistic activities and methods. One aim is to facilitate meetings with nature and to reflect on and discuss environmental issues (van Boeckel, 2013). Art-based environmental education aims to engage students in ethical issues concerning natural environments, and to open their minds to nature (Mantere, 1992; van Boeckel, 2013; Häggström, 2019). In this essay, art-based environmental education was included in the pedagogical approach of Storyline. The aim of the Storyline, described by the teachers, was to create relationships with trees, and thereby to counteract plant blindness, i.e. the inability to perceive plants, understanding their functions and appreciate the aesthetic values of plants (Wandersee & Schussler, 1999).





The study

This visual essay is based on a one-year-long action-research project in a compulsory school in Sweden. The specific empirical material presented here was collected in one class, grade 6 (age 12-13) with 25 pupils and one teacher on one particular day. The text is composed of vignettes from being in the forest and in the classroom. The essay also includes narratives written by pupils and some of their drawings and photographs. The text is organized in a narrative way, inspired by auto-ethnography (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). With the intention of elucidating the knowledge potential of working with art-based environmental education and bringing meaning to my experiences, the vignettes are briefly reflected through the lenses of aesthetic learning processes and experiential and affective learning (Bruner, 1996; Ballantyne & Packer, 2009, Gurewitz, 2000). The data production is interpreted through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This approach lays stress on the researcher's personal experiences and puts emphasis on creativity regarding research methods, and underlines that no method is complete. Methods should "justify the best route for your purposes" (2009, p.41). Analysis and interpretation alternate between whole and part, between preconceptions and understanding, emerging from students' subjective experiences, and thus the students' life-worlds are in focus. A prerequisite for this interpretation is context awareness. In this case, it means understanding students' statements in relation to forest, trees, plant blindness, and didactics of science and art.

Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC)

All the following vignettes are taken from field-notes on 30 May, 2016, and are translated from Swedish. This study follows the core ethical principles described by the ERIC approach (2018), namely respect, benefit and justice. ERIC requires critical reflection, context-specific problem-solving and openness. Both the students involved in this essay and their parents have approved participation and confirmed their consent in writing. Names of students and school are anonymous. Photographs showing students' faces are avoided or have been modified.

Storyline

Storyline is a pedagogical teaching and learning approach based on narration that is created by the teacher and students (Bell, Harkness & White, 2006). Key questions, planned incidents, episodes and activities are the engine of the emerging story. Theoretically, Storyline is grounded in constructivism, focusing on learning as a "process in which knowledge, abilities and attitudes are actively acquired by the pupil" (Schwänke & Gronostay, 2006). However, the theoretical basis of Storyline is quite eclectic and integrates educational philosophers such as John Dewey, Jerome Bruner and Lev Vygotskij amongst others. The specific Storyline in this study includes ideas from the phenomenological theorist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962/2002), which underlines a corporeal approach to learning. It also embraces post-humanistic views from for example Carol Taylor and Christina Hughes (2015), which addresses a critical rethinking of human relationships with the more-than-human world.

Tree-mutants

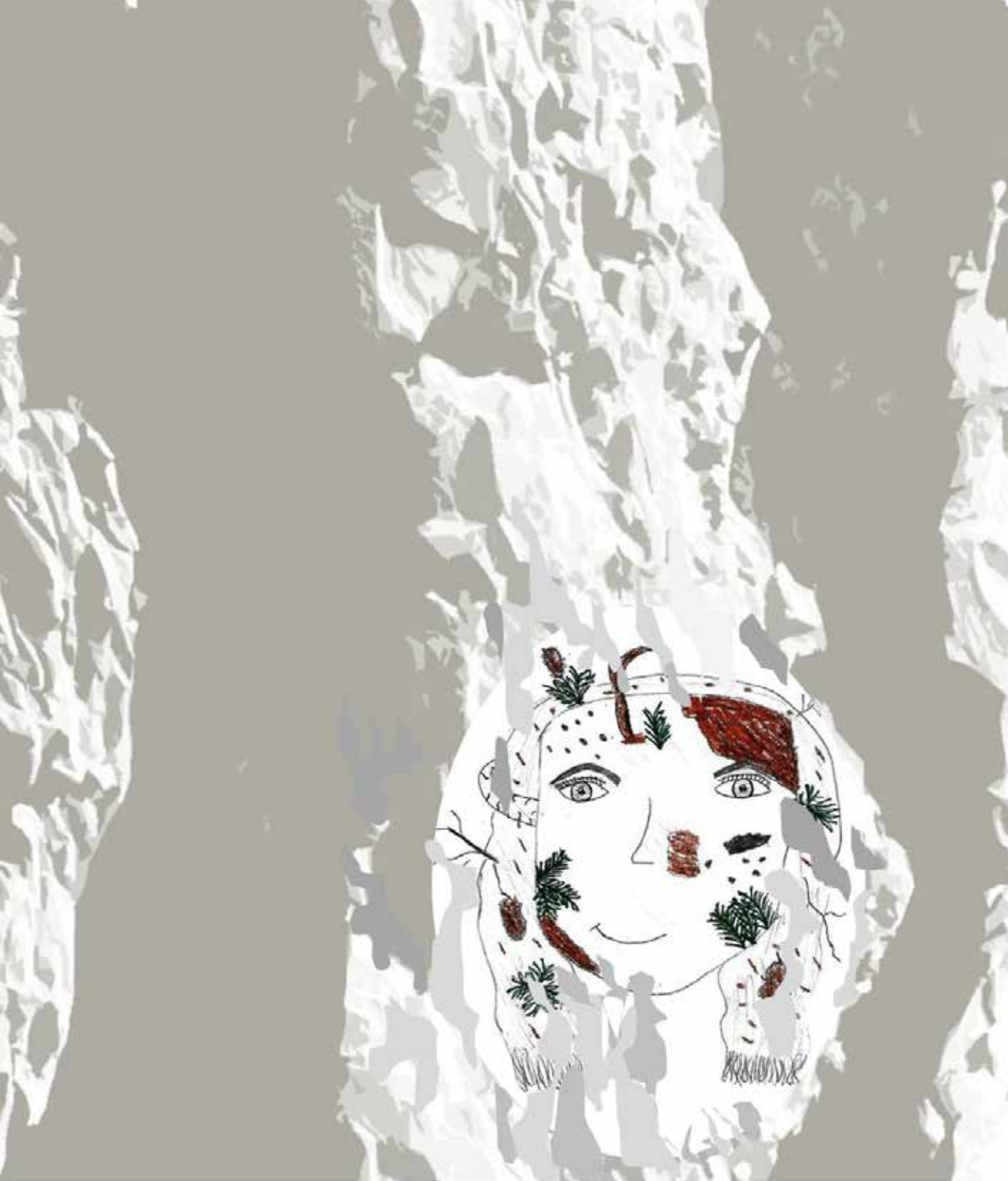
In order to counteract plant blindness, two teachers and one student teacher in the western part of Sweden, planned and conducted a Storyline, called Tree-mutants, grounded on art-based environmental education. The aim was to create relationships with trees. By extension this could be a start for sustainable thinking and acting. Accordingly, this Storyline included foremost the school subjects Visual Art and Biology, but also Swedish. This encompassed biological content knowledge about plants, in specific trees. Working with visual art was both a way of experiential learning in the environment of a forest, and a way to develop artistic skills. Fantasising and aesthetic learning processes was intertwined with subject knowledge. Generally, Storyline includes characters who will encounter challenges they need to solve. In this Storyline, the students were turned into the characters of trees. The created characters have feelings about everything that occurs to affect their lives in the fictive story. This enables an affective learning opportunity which emphasizes sensory experiences and emotional connection with nature (see e.g. Gurewitz, 2000) which in turn is crucial to engage pupils – and others – in environmental concerns.

Affective approaches to environmental education are often influenced by Cobb's texts (1959, 1977) about children's experiences of nature. In these texts, the importance of the aesthetic qualities of nature is highlighted: "The child's ecological sense of continuity with nature is not what is generally known as mystical. It is, I believe, basically aesthetic and infused with joy in the power to know and to be" (Cobb, 1977, p. 23). Cobb's writing goes beyond the realms of romanticism and visions of the child being at one with nature (Gurewitz, 2000). The teachers in this study seek to combine affective and scientific learning.



A one-day Storyline structured around tree episodes

The teaching team conducted a one-day pilot study in order to try out photo-elicitation, a visual method using photos to elicit views, narratives, personal meanings and values (Collier, 1987; Lapenta, 2011). The teachers decided that photo-elicitation was an appropriate method that could attract students' attention and that the students had most likely already had experience of using smart phones and of taking "selfies". The teachers also wanted to prepare and try out key questions. The role of key questions is essential in a Storyline (Omand, 2017). Pupils are encouraged to reflect, explore, elucidate and to take a stance. The teacher may, in teaching situations, notice the individual as well as the collective current level of knowledge regarding a phenomenon, a subject and other issues connected to the key question. Additionally, pupils' pre-understandings, personal views and biases can be exposed and discussed, and thus pupils are given the opportunity to rethink and change their opinions. Hence, Storyline stimulates learning through interaction. As mentioned earlier, the Storyline approach combines learning theories such as constructivism and social learning theories. This implies that learning is both individual and collective. Falkenberg (2006) explicates the Storyline learning process as a subjective and active process that takes place in a social and meaningful context. She stresses that reflective learning is connected to affective learning and can be facilitated by pleasure and desire in a motivating atmosphere. Photo-elicitation was presumed to be an affective learning method.



Vignette one: "A tree".

To pass through the doorway into the classroom, all pupils had to walk through a drapery made to create an atmosphere of an imaginary forest. Strips of fabrics in various green colours hung together with rustling wrapping tissues, yarn, lace and pearls. In this way, the pupils could understand that something unusual was going to happen. Once inside the classroom, they were greeted by birdsong from hidden speakers accompanied by the sound of a rippling stream and the whisper of wind playing in the treetops. The teacher displayed a picture of a forest on the wall and asked: What can you see here?

- Forest.
- What is a forest?
- Many trees standing close to each other.
- And bushes, too.
- In a large area.

To evoke the pupils' attention and interest, the outset of a Storyline is crucial (Bell et al., 2006). The teacher in this study is aware of that, which is shown in the way she integrates various senses through the episode, described in the following.



The teacher leads the discussion further and talks with the pupils about who lives in a forest, what a forest entails and how to behave in the forest according to the Swedish Legal Right of Public Access (Naturvårdsverket.se). Then it is time for collaborative writing using a four-columned piece of paper, worked on in pairs. Each pupil writes the first two columns by themselves, then swaps the piece of paper with another student and writes the third column, swaps back again and answers the classmate's comments in the fourth column.

- Close your eyes, the teacher says, envision a tree in the forest. What kind of tree is it and how does it look? Where does it live? Smell the scents of the surroundings. What can you hear? How does it feel?

Right of Public Access

In Sweden anyone have access to the natural environments such as forests, lakes, rivers and mountains. This right includes e.g. camping, picking flowers, berries, mushrooms and to go swimming, boating and paddling. The right also entails accountability to take care of nature and the wildlife.



An Example of collaborating writing

1. The birds are warbling. I hear rustle of leafs and animals wandering about. The smell is flowery and moist. I feel the warm air and the solid coat of the tree. It feels pleasant. The grass is green and there are many colourful flowers in the grass. I scent freshly cut grass.
2. The tree-trunk holds up the tree-crown. Leafs are clothing the tree. It needs water and sunlight. Take away one part and it won't function, like the bark which protects the tree or the roots that spread the nutrition further up.
3. I agree with all that you say! Did you think of the tree giving nourishment to others?
4. Perhaps to animals and flowers and other plants. To the grass and to humans.

The teacher-team chose Storyline because of its learner-centred approach and explorative methods (Harkness, 2006). An articulated aim was to open pupils' eyes to plants' inherent value by creating relationships with trees and by discovering aesthetic qualities of plants. This first episode contributes to "pushing" the pupils in this direction by asking them to use their senses while describing their imaginary tree. Aesthetics is here influenced by art-based environmental education, which implies that aesthetic activities energize and invigorate sensory experiences of natural environments. Art may lead to knowledge based on emotional and affective involvements (Mantere, 1995). Such sensitive, grounded knowledge could promote relationships with plants.

Vignette two: "In the forest".

Now the teacher is telling a story about dryads, i.e. wood nymphs. The next assignment is to go out in the woods, find a tree to identify with, become a dryad and finally to be photographed together with the chosen tree. Expressing oneself through images may have an impact on the understanding of the expressed phenomenon (Eriksson, 2009; Harper, 2002). This is deliberately used here through the process of identifying with a tree, finding three characteristics and positioning oneself together with a chosen tree.

We walk together into the woods opposite the school. The pupils are divided into groups of three and each group is instructed to go in a certain direction by the teacher. The groups are told to help each other to find appropriate trees for each pupil.



Here, pupils are looking for kinship, which according to previous research on human-nature relationship, is important in engaging pupils' empathy for plants and more-than-humans (Olivos et al., 2011; Mayer & McPherson Frantz, 2004; Balding & Williams, 2016). I therefore suggest that this approach could also include discussions of otherness and the more-than-human-world and how to interact in a respectful way (Hägström, 2017).





Theories about aesthetic learning processes stress that knowledge develops through an individual's senses (Austring & Sørensen, 2006). It is also highlighted that learners need to embrace facts and information, not just memorize it (Marner & Örtengren, 2003). In this study, this is ensured through creativity, reflection and embodiment and by meeting pupils' need for identification (Ziehe, 1982). Through involving emotions and direct meetings with trees, a deep knowledge can be activated. Direct meetings with nature are, according to Wilson (2011), an effective way to engage pupils with nature. This episode has a scaffolding function, i.e. the activity helps the pupils to acquire a sense of belonging and hence it promotes the idea of inclusion. Aesthetic approaches, such as those used in this study (visual arts, drama and storytelling) have been demonstrated to be an important way to facilitate affective knowledge, as it develops emotional connections to place (Dungey, 1989; Snow, 1991). Such connections are crucial for developing a sense of place and hence a sense of belonging. In turn, a sense of belonging to the natural environment may function as a precursor to sustainable thinking and acting (Blanchet-Cohen, 2008). In addition, aesthetic work has been recognized to be fruitful with regard to creative problem-solving, self-reflecting and critical thinking, all of which are needed for making a sustainable world now and in the future (Inwood, 2010).



Vignette three: "Me and my tree".

Back in the classroom, it is time to create a presentation including the photo of "me and my tree" together with three qualities or characteristics.

It gets quite energetic when the pupils prepare their presentations. It looks like they are excited and anxious at the same time; it is scary having to present in front of the others and it is difficult to come up with common features with a tree.

- If you can't think of three shared things, it will be fine anyway, the teacher declares. Examples of common characteristics:
- Me and my birch – we need each other.
- Me and my tree are both rather tall and a bit odd.
- Quirky, happy and handsome.

According to Ballantyne and Packer (2006), the best learning opportunities to facilitate environmentally informed and active citizens are obtained when classroom learning strategies are integrated with the natural environment, like for instance forests or a city park. This is something the teacher in this study has planned for. She started in the classroom, supervising all steps in the classroom, went into the forest and came back to the classroom again. She made the activities personally relevant, bringing the local context of the nearby forest into the pupils' lives, letting them explore and experience the surroundings. This is a way to develop a sense of place and a sense of wonder, which according to Athman and Monroe (2001), may connect pupils to the environment which in turn might develop their action competence. This is essential for emotional response and responsibility and, in the long run, for engaging in environmental issues as adults. In order to empower pupils, it is crucial to encourage people "to make their own decisions about problems and critically evaluate the opinions of others and by providing opportunities for people to apply action skills successfully" (ibid., p. 46).



In the light of the Anthropocene, it is important to provide an optimistic faith in the future in order to meet pupils' belief in their ability to make a difference (Blanchet-Cohen, 2008; Wals, 2015). The approach of affective education emphasizes the importance of sensory experience and emotional connection with nature (Gurewitz, 2000). The assumption is that emotional values guide our actions concerning environmental issues. Getting to know a tree in the way pupils do in this study may possibly evoke distinctive feelings that are unlike other approaches to learning about trees. This art-based approach may also lead to a learning process which deeply engages pupils to achieve not only knowledge of facts, but changes in attitude, through the experience and learning process (Christie, Carey, Robertson & Grainger, 2015). This requires time for critical thinking, the opportunity to share the learning process with other pupils and to act in harmony with the new experiences (Howie & Bagnall, 2013), that is, to act in accordance with any feelings that have affected the pupils in one way or another. In this study, the teacher's intention was to make a change from plant blindness to plant awareness. The different episodes stimulated discussions that could possibly contribute to such awareness.



Concluding thoughts

A one-day Storyline does not give enough evidence to act in a certain way as a teacher. However, it was not the intention to make an evidence-based study, but to depict this specific teaching and learning situation and how to relate it to art-based and affective learning. Instead, the main argument here is that student-centered approaches that include experiential learning through aesthetic pedagogical work, like Storyline, have the potential to enhance pupils' interests in the nearby natural environment.

The role of working with art-based environmental education in this study is manifold; it recognizes the sensory experiences as knowledge, it welcomes and values the affective and subjective involvements, it encourages identity work and it entangles the surrounding world with the life-worlds of pupils. In addition, work in visual arts with aesthetic activities has the ability to engage in existential concerns along with pleasurable experiences, which is the exceptional feature of art, I would contend. According to Noddings (2006), school education could give challenging and demanding questions a greater recognition; questions that raises emotions and encourages pupils to questioning themselves. Ziehe (1982) reason similarly submitting that pupils need to be challenged in order to look outside their life-worlds with curiosity and interest in the unknown. Aesthetic learning processes might be a proper starting-point for such challenges, Ziehe claims.

In respond to the demand for a comprehensive and more hopeful research (Lövbrand et al., 2015; O'Brien and Barnett, 2013), this study reveals a teaching and learning practice which has great potential to encourage pupils to reason differently about trees, forests and other natural environments. Through continuing work, based on the approach the teacher in this study utilizes, a positive view of the future may be feasible, despite the problems created by human behaviour in the Anthropocene. The unbearable may thus be bearable.

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