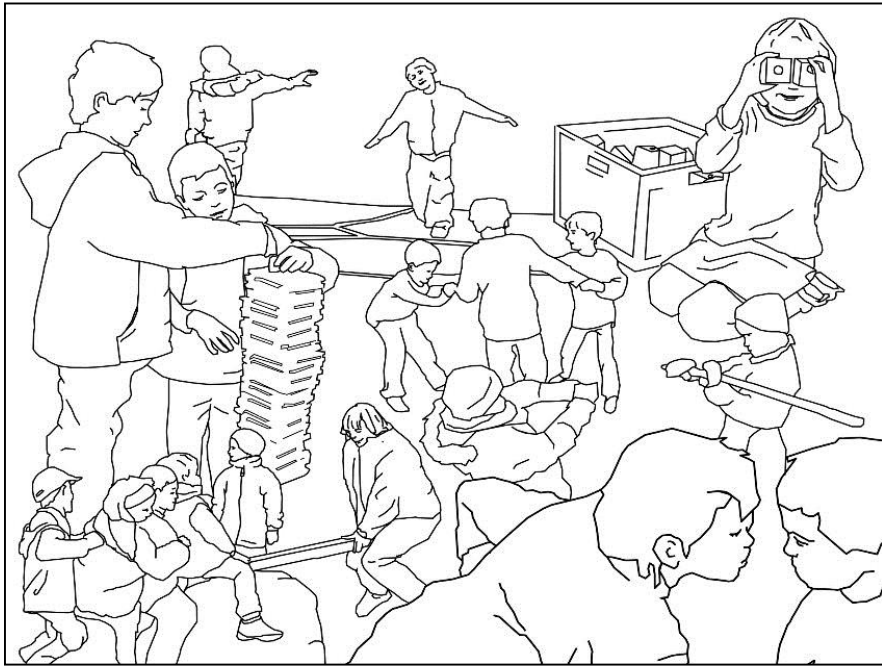


LEARNING AS A RELATIONAL FIELD

- experiences from Reggio-inspired early childhood education in Sweden



LEARNING AS A RELATIONAL FIELD

Focusing the exploring approach

- children and ethics
- the tree-project

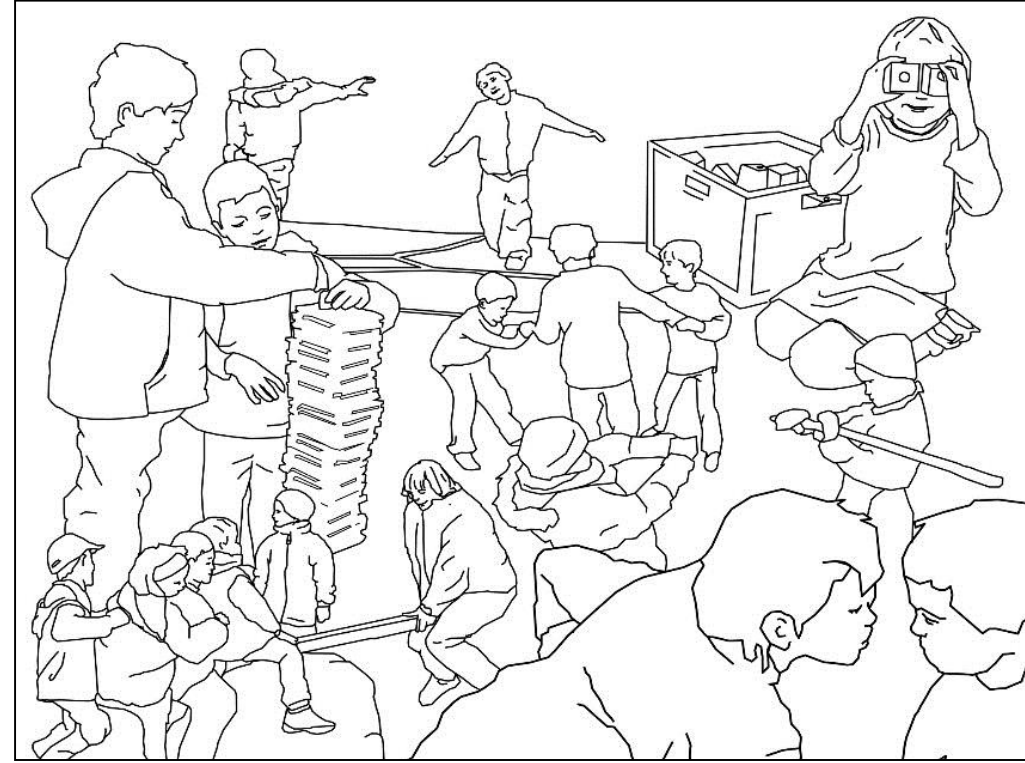
AN EXPLORING APPROACH - FROM A PRESCHOOL DIDACTICAL PERSPECTIVE

- starting point: children's own questions
- the aim – subject content *and* didactic focus
- the teacher's continuous research
- enable an aesthetic learning process
- cooperative/collaborative learning
- harbour and challenge the children's emergent working theories and their new questions
- the pedagogical environment - material
- the pedagogical documentation
- the teacher's approach – co-exploring and listening



CHILDREN AND ETHICS

- an ethnographical study
- 2 preschool classes during one year
- Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), French-Lithuanian and Jewish philosopher
- the ethical encounter
- rules, frames and order - “why should you do as you should?”
- children’s encounters in play
- children’s encounters with the Nature



MAPPING THE TREE-PROJECT AS A RELATIONAL FIELD

- an ethnographical study
- 2 preschool classes during one year
- analysis – *learning as a relational field of potentialities*
- mapping clusters and connections

MAPPING CLUTSERS AND CONNECTIONS

- from the own body to the body of the tree
- to the family and relatives
- to the trees and their lives
- to the places
- to the animals
- to the creepy-crawlies
- to the micro world

TAKING CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS SERIOUSLY

- Children's own questions and working theories about trees
- Relations children establish with the trees
- What does it mean to take children's questions seriously?
- Starting with children's questions – which conditions enable an exploring approach?

EXPLORING TREES

bars, fir and pine cones, a coconut, a lemon, acorns, a branch from an oak, maple seeds, chestnuts, all different kind of seeds, nuts and pits, pieces of bark, witch's broom, sticks, a stick with lichen, a granola packet, splinters from a beaver, a sheep skull...

- telling the other children
- thinking together about the link to the tree
- describing – using all senses
- observing closely
- sketching – again and again

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE TREES AND THEIR OWN BODIES

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE TREES AND THEIR OWN BODIES

- The leaves of the tree are like the human hair.
- The leaves are like hair. Some trees have holes, they look like mouths.
- The roots are like legs. The resin is like the blood.
- The bark is like the skin.
- I think the seed of the tree is like the heart.

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE TREES AND THEIR OWN BODIES

"The resin is gathered inside the tree, and it is pumped out throughout the tree. The place where the resin is gathered is like the human heart. The branches are like arms."

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE TREES AND THEIR OWN BODIES

CONNECTIONS TO FAMILY AND RELATIVES

- The same kind of trees belong to the same family. I think a family consists of about eight trees.
- The mother- and father-tree are taller than the child-tree. The father-tree is the tallest.
- I think that the spruces are dads and the birches are moms. The other trees are children.
- Some trees drop seeds that become children, the others grow by themselves.
- When the wind comes and the branches move they [the trees] talk to each other.

CONNECTIONS TO PLACES

THE URBAN TREE

A town has been built in the tree. Ordinary people live there. There were people who did not have a place to stay, so they built a town in the tree. They live on different tree-floors.

CONNECTIONS TO PLACES

THE THORN TREE

The thorn trees usually grow in meadows. At night the trees are alive. If an enemy appears the tree let the thorns out and the enemy will be stung. In the daytime the trees stand still and pull the thorns in. At nighttime the trees can talk to each other.

CONNECTIONS TO THE ANIMALS

The water comes from the rain and runs down to the earth. The ants help the tree to collect the water and put it in tree-elevators. Then the water is brought up by the tree-elevator.

CONNECTIONS TO "THE UNDERGROUND"

It's raining and the rain runs down to the roots. The roots have gates. The gates open and the water goes up in the trunk, it is drawn by the air. The leaves in the tree draw air from the sky. Then the air goes down to the earth and bring the water.

CONNECTIONS TO THE ANIMALS

A black and white photograph of a snowy landscape. A long, straight line of animal tracks, likely from a caribou or reindeer, leads from the foreground towards a line of trees in the distance. The tracks are clearly visible in the snow, showing a series of hoof prints. The background is a vast, open snowy field with some faint tracks branching off. The sky is not visible, and the overall tone is quiet and serene.

CONNECTIONS TO THE BIRDS



WAITNING FOR THE BUDS

TO OPEN

SEEDS/PITS/NUTS

→ CULTIVATION

WHAT MAKES IT GROW?

Exploring growing power

THE BUDS – THE GROWING POWER

Cells, chlorophyll, chloroplasts,
sunshine, starch...

Oxygen is produced in the leaf. That's the green. When the leaf becomes brown, there is not enough of oxygen in the leaf. The oxygen comes from the leaf and assimilates in the human body. Then it's possible to breathe. The leaf even gives oxygen to the animals.

THE COPPICE ABOUNDS WITH LEAF BUDS

UP IN THE TREE – NUTRITION

THE TREE IS HAPPY FOR THE SUN

THE TREE IS WAITNING FOR THE SPRING

trees → human beings → cultivation → seeds →
leaves → seasons → composting → earth-worms
→ roots → mushrooms → forest → animals →
birds → butterflies → micro world → buds →
photosynthesis → growing power → cycles →
ecosystem → ecology

MAPPING - ANALYZING:

- The mapping visualise the children's meaning-making
- The children explore and systematize their surrounding world
- The connections extend, the relations grow, the children add-on...
- The encounter with "the a-live" gives intensity
- The children's and the teachers questions emerge in correlation
- The questioning open up for an extended exploration about how everything is connected
- The children's questions concern complex issues with connections to ecology and sustainability
- Conclusion: the driving force of the tree-project is the questions that the children pose, while the teachers support in order to deepen and extend the potential learning

NEXT STEP: MAPPING THE CONDITIONS OF POSSIBILITIES

- The aim – subject content *and* didactic focus
- The learning environment
- The material
- The aesthetic dimension
- The teachers' co-exploring approach

NEXT STEP: MAPPING THE CONDITIONS OF POSSIBILITIES

but also:

- Dedicated and competent teachers
- Supportive organisation
- Pedagogical documentation
- Reflection - analysis
- Peer learning
- Continuous supervision
- The presence of the researcher

FURTHER QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS:

- How to enable an exploring approach in science and sustainability in preschool?
- How to make the children's voices audible and visible?
- As a child involved in the natural cycles – what can it be in the preschool praxis? Concrete examples!
- What is needed for a careful approach to life, nature and the environment to emerge in an exploratory context?
- Can education and knowledge change the world?
- What forms of participation do the children need to develop in order to face a world in an accelerating change?