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Into the Woods:

About the significance of wood and
wilderness for youth work in Europe

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PREFACE:

On a recent visit to Scotland, I travelled to the small village of Fortingall in Perthshire. In the churchyard stands an ancient yew (*taxus baccata*). At an estimated age of 3,000 years it is reputed to be the oldest tree in Britain. It marks a spiritual site for early Celtic people long before it was claimed by Christianity for church building. On that misty early morning I felt both uplifted and humble.

I walked up the nearby Glen Lyon, passed a road sign saying "Red Squirrels for 11 miles" and took a path into a tangled wood. Within minutes a red squirrel darted up a tree and in a nearby glade among the oak and Scots pines stood a red doe deer and its fawn. We watched each other for ten seconds before the deer moved slowly away casting an occasional backward glance. This was an intense woodland experience, heightening the senses, challenging my thoughts and far removed from the commonplace of modern life.

This experience reminded me of the rich encounters with nature we enjoyed in the woods of Finland during the EOE conference at Metsäkartano. There were opportunities to take part in outdoor workshops, explore the woods and lakes on guided walks, by canoe and on bikes, meet friends from many

countries across Europe and share ideas and good practice on youth work and outdoor education. There were many excellent presentations from delegates. This E-book is a small selection of papers and offers just a flavour of the diverse contributions on the theme of "Into the Woods: About the significance of the woods and wilderness in youth work across Europe".

Peter Becker's seminal paper was written as a precursor to the Finland conference. In it he sets the scene and points out how our cultural heritage strongly influences our attitudes to and relationship with the woods. Despite these differences woods provide opportunities for educating young people in two dimensions - through acquiring knowledge and through self-examination. He illustrates these dimensions emphasising the importance of new, sensory and challenging experiences which can lead to reflection and personal change. In conclusion he proposes a framework for the conference suggesting how delegates can contribute at four different levels to the field of outdoor education.

Geoff Cooper echoes some of these points by describing the reaction of diverse groups to the threatened privatisation of forests in England. He stresses that people in the UK have many deep cultural and emotional connections with woodland from folklore and literature. There are strong current educational interests through Forest Schools and Bushcraft. In addition, he

argues that woods can provide opportunities to learn about ecology and systems thinking and through personal connections can lead to more sustainable practices.

Di Collins clearly states her values for outdoor and environmental learning and focuses on the needs of a particular group of participants, women youth workers, who require a gentler introduction to the outdoors. Her research shows that they engage with the outdoors and nature through positive experiences of friendship and achievement and through simpler, less physical activities such as gardening and woodland walks. She demonstrates how experiences with her groups relate to and differ from Peter Martin's model of kinship with nature. Finally, she advocates the value of a creative medium, photography, as a way of encouraging some people to connect with nature and the outdoors.

There are strong links with Elena Presenza's paper. She describes a particular project, "Abenteuergarten", designed to give younger children confidence through adventure and environmental activities near their homes in the city of Marburg. Many of the children are under privileged and the project gives them opportunities to play and learn together through gardening, cooking and exploring nature. This provides a starting point for children who will go on later to enjoy the woods and wilder nature.

In contrast, Roger Duncan argues that for his groups, young people with special needs and challenging behaviour, wild nature itself can be therapeutic and educational. He points out the benefits of extended wilderness camps in transforming individuals. He describes how his work has moved into the fields of ecotherapy and ecopsychology and outlines a number of techniques in helping young people make the transition to adulthood.

Jure Marholt describes the work of outdoor education centres in Slovenia with reference to the programme of one particular centre near the primary virgin forest of Rajhenavski Rog. The forest offers a powerful setting for learning through sensory activities, creative play and encounters with nature. It is an antidote to the time young people spend indoors on computers and with TV.

Jan-Kåre Fjeld from Norway puts forward arguments for taking after school activities into the outdoors. He stresses the importance of physical activities and basic woodland skills such as chopping wood, collecting fungi, lighting fires and outdoor cooking in promoting healthier and more resilient children.

The EOE Board hopes that these papers will provoke both memories of the event and inspire further research and good practice.

Geoff Cooper

(On behalf of the EOE Board)

INTO THE WOODS
SOME REMARKS ON THE CULTURAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL
SIGNIFICANCE OF WOODS AND WILDERNESS IN YOUTH WORK¹

PETER BECKER

“**G**et on the ships”! the German philosopher Nietzsche recommended to philosophers in 1882, we call pedagogues and youth workers in 2011 to come into the woods with us.

At regular intervals the European Institute for Outdoor Adventure and Experiential Learning together with public youth work agencies organises conferences that systematically apply themselves to the importance of natural spaces for the everyday preventative and interventional work with children and young people. The last conference took place in September 2010 in Planica in Slovenia. It had been organised together with the CSOD, the Slovenian Centre for School and Outdoor Education, which we would like to thank here again for their excellent cooperation. The theme of the

¹ This contribution was written by the author in behalf of the EOE. It is an attempt to develop a frame of orientation, if the huge field of the wood is transformed into a space for pedagogical activities. Since this paper comprises also some of the impulses EOE wanted to give for possible discussions its original version has not been changed.

conference, "Encountering, Experiencing and Exploring Nature", which had been chosen by all of us together, comprised the different approaches to nature in youth work and school.

1

For 2011 - which, by the way is the International Year of the Woods - the Finnish Youth Centre Metsäkartano has agreed to organise the next conference on the topic of the woods. The choice of the woods, which often serves as a synonym for nature, seems an obvious one for Finland anyway, since the woods, besides water, or rather its lakes, are not only characteristic for its particular geomorphological physiognomy, but it also forms the background for the development of the outdoor concept of Erä, which is so typically Finnish. This cultural pattern, which is symbolically represented by the Pukka, is the practical, real-life answer to the obstructive conditions of the woods if one is driven to seek protection in them from powerful invaders and needs them as a survival resource. Independent from the original reasons for its creation, a cultural pattern, or rather an action model, has developed whose semantics embrace physical practices, interpretations and orientations that all relate to the intercourse with woods and nature. Although this pattern is a guiding force of action, it is at the same time open enough to allow further developments, as the example of the later generated forms of

Eränainen and Erämies, or the latest development of the hybrid form of Seikkailu show.

In other European countries the woods also became a place of origin for practices and interpretative approaches that are still today - obviously in a form changed by the course of history - part of the work of outdoor pedagogics. Let us take a brief look at this. It is true, for example, in Germany, that at the end of the 18th century nature and the woods became a place of retreat for members of the bourgeoisie that had gained some economic strength but continued to remain powerless politically. In the woods they believed they could experience the freedom and autonomy in a kind of close physical and sensory proximity which otherwise was denied them. Quite contrary to the emotional culture that was prevalent at that time at aristocratic courts, which was governed by a diplomacy of pretence and manipulation, members of the bourgeoisie by contrast believed that they could be in touch with their own sincerity and authenticity in unadulterated nature and in the depth of the green woods. Even though the Enlightenment had already divested the woods of their magic and woods mathematics had begun, on the basis of early considerations of sustainability, to put woods under economic management, the Romantic imagination as a counter movement restored their magic. The literary retrieval of innocence and sincerity allowed the members of the bourgeoisie to enjoy solitude. In natural spheres they found a mirror of their sincere souls and emotions, which were

just as pure as the clear water of brooks, the fresh air and the cool summer breeze.

Historically this kind of thinking found its expression in the practices of going for a walk, of walking long distances, of reading books on the banks of streams and in the shadows under trees, in the contemplative roaming of landscapes and in seeking out sublime and beautiful natural, especially wooded scenes, in being deeply touched by emotional natural atmospheres such as that of a full moon, a rainbow, of spring time, sun rise and sunset, the surge of the ocean breaking on the shore or in the sensory joy of attending to flora and fauna, for example, when tending one's own garden. This enthusiastic love and care lavished on nature was so strong that one of the best-known German Romantics saw a tribe of nature hunters develop who - in great awe and rapture - learned to seek deep emotions on high mountains and by waterfalls.

In the following, also in Germany, a cultural pattern developed from this context which, in contrast to the Finnish pattern, was looking for a leisurely, somatic involvement with natural scenes, landscapes and their atmospheres. It found its most dominant expression at first in that members of the bourgeoisie went for walks through the countryside in general and through the German woods in particular.

Different again, presumably, was the effect that, for example, the woods around Oslo had in Norway, which developed into one of the essential

traditions, namely of Friluftsliv, which has had also a very powerful influence on the international concept of the outdoors. Here, in the richly wooded area of Utmark, people who sought to escape temporarily the accelerated pace of urban life and their professional responsibilities, went to look for the simple, genuine and natural life away from the town and city that it seemed to promise.

2.

Today the woods are facing competition from other natural spheres such as the sea and its beaches as well as from mountains, which have become very accessible globally. They offer different forms and contents of experiences, and although it has been lamented that young people are losing their knowledge about the woods and nature, the issue of the woods, people's involvement with them, how they can be used, their condition and their future is still a politically, ecologically and culturally explosive topic which is widely discussed in Central and Northern Europe. The woods remain imprinted on the collective subconscious. The reason for this may be that the woods, as no other natural space, have always been more affected by the close fundamental connection between culture and nature. This can be discerned by the root meaning of the term *culture*, which goes back to the Latin verb *colere*. Among other things, *colere* is a collection of activities such as cultivating, ploughing, sowing, improving, maintaining, grafting, inhabiting,

which can primarily be connected with agriculture. (cf. Böhme 1996)

However, before the ground can be systematically worked on, the woods have to be cleared and people have to settle. According to the German scientist of cultural studies Hartmut Böhme (1996), the term culture also still contains the memory of this neolithic jump that marks the transition from nomadic to settled life.

3.

As every gardener knows, a cultivated field will quickly return to its wild state if one does not go on cultivating it. This is why culture cannot be reduced to a one-time event - as seems to be suggested by the canonization of cultural objects - but it is a continuous process of care which further develops what has been gained. It strives to control or push back the woods or the wilderness which are always ready to come back. The internal spaces of order with its institutions and traditions that are created along with culture, on the one hand, and the external spaces of disorder, of pathless and impenetrable wilderness, on the other hand, are clearly separated from each other and the borders are strictly watched. However, this border is an ambivalent and delicate area since, although it needs to be established it cannot completely cut the connection between the two separated areas.

German Romanticism, which counts the woods and the solitude therein among its key terms and symbols, has used this ambivalence of border-

crossing, growing wilderness in order to criticise the rationality of the Enlightenment as representative of a dominant culture that suppresses spontaneity, sensitivity and imagination. One nature-related symbol of such a rigid, stereotypical kind of rationality was the French garden, whose flower beds were constructed with rulers and compasses and whose box trees and trellises were cut most accurately and thus exemplified the controlling hand of cultural order. In the works of Eichendorff, for example, excluded nature comes back from the valleys and climbs "cheerfully over the garden walls from all sides" and "over the hedges and fences" and the wild flowers of the woods "cheerfully sparkle all over the round beds and paths, making everything splendidly wild." At another place "the woods, which the farmers had so long courageously pushed back", move "in again with prickles, thistles and thorns accompanied by the loud chorus of birds." (Eichendorff quoted in Pikulik 1979, 502) Especially the recurring renewing spirit of spring time, which makes the rigid tree lines of the avenues and the hedges "crackle and whisper" and the autumn, which dresses the world with an abundance of colours, could not care less about the disciplining work of cultivation undertaken by the order-loving gardener.

4.

This process of separation of the cultivated and cultivating area from external nature and the efforts that have to be made to protect what has been

gained against the attempts of nature to re-establish the wilderness, is repeated in every individuation process, where the aim is to develop a stable, self-asserted identity. One does not need to clear any woods for this process, but according to Freud the civilizational effort one has to make to control and discipline one's internal nature equals the extent of the work that had been necessary to reclaim the land of the Zuiderzee and put it under cultivation. (Freud 1990, 86)

All human beings also have the task of getting familiar with themselves. They have to learn to inhabit their bodies. Part of this is to give the unrestrained, natural phase of development of their early childhood, which is governed by amorphous drive potentials, by immediate strain relief and by freely flowing energies, a spatiotemporal order. The wild, drive-governed body has become a cultivated one when the expression of originally unchecked drives has become synchronised with, for example, table and bed, public life and privacy, morning, midday and night or with darkness and light, and when thus a border between cultivated and uncultivated life has been drawn. From now on, gratification of arising drives has to be postponed until the right place has been reached and the right time has come.

For Freud this chronotopology of drive satisfaction also marks the sharp border between the ego and the id, between wilderness and cultivation, between woods and fields, which is never a completely sure one, because the very drawing of the border is ambivalent. On the one hand, it is necessary in order

to establish oneself by distinction; on the other hand, the border must be permeable in order to survive. The woods, for example, must be cleared, nature must be excluded, but without their resources further existence would not be possible, as not only the many occupations show that are closely related to woods and timber, such as the names that mean carpenter, charcoal burner, rafter, lumberjack, hunter, shipbuilder, tanner ... - Würz (1999) lists 53 independent occupations - but as is also documented by the uncountable family names that, for example, in Germany exist which are related to the woods. The ego also has to permit border crossings after it has separated itself from its compulsive natural basis if it does not want to fossilize in rigid repetitions marked by sensuous impoverishment. Drawing border lines here also creates tension between cultivated reality and boundless possibilities, where the physical-sensory claims, the compulsive promises of happiness and the stubborn obstinacy of the id, remind the individual of his past ego and can turn either into a source of threat or, in fact, into a source of impulses that can stimulate development.

5.

Youth work which uses the media of body, movement and adventure to get involved in undiluted natural spaces is unavoidably bound up with this tense melange of collective culturally determined traces of memory and the willingness anchored in every individual by his own life history to give room to

his wild urges and to face strangeness openly. Border infringements, or rather border crossings can only fulfil their educational function if nature - here meaning woods and wilderness as a place where wild animals live (ubi sunt leones) - does not pose too much of a threat. Leaving what has been cared for, setting out into strange nature, can provide a multitude of opportunities to promote educational processes, but only if meeting the flora and fauna in all kinds of situations in all kinds of weathers that may occur can be perceived as a challenge. The large variety can roughly be reduced to two dimensions of education. On the one hand, the places in the woods that are sought out offer the chance to enrich already acquired knowledge with further experiences or to amend it. On the other hand, they offer individuals the scope to learn about themselves. Since the conditions of the present occasion do not permit me to go into great detail, I will only make a few remarks about the two dimensions.

6. THE WOODS AS A PLACE TO ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE

A practical example of this motivation to go into the woods are the many approaches encouraged by Scandinavian countries to early learning, where children leave the conventional rooms of the kindergarden in order to get involved with the different phenomena of the woods. In this context, at least three educational aspects come into view.

6.1 The Woods as a Space of Exploration and Challenge

First of all the woods with all their "equipment" are so strange and mysterious that they incite the curiosity to explore them in depth. That is, the phenomena and the atmospheres of the woods send out the invitation to penetrate deeper into them and to get involved in them. Trees want to be climbed, berries want to be eaten, mushrooms want to be picked and animal tracks want to be identified and followed, unknown flowers, ferns and mosses want to be identified, bushes are alluring hiding places, insects want to be studied at close range, animals assumed to be there want to be found, sounds want to be investigated and strange smells identified and the sudden outburst of colour in the autumn wants to be explained. There are innumerable examples of how early education through all senses can teach practical everyday knowledge in a playful way.

6.2 The Woods as a Sensory Space

If one takes a separate look at the sensual part of the complex experience of the world, one can see that the woods offer an enormous range of opportunities which demand an extremely fine-tuned perceptive ability of the senses. Roaming the woods in rain, snow, fog or wind requires increased attention, which creates greater sensory closeness to the natural phenomena. One looks more closely, listens more attentively, checks out smells more critically, pays more attention to finding the paths. The phenomena

approach more closely. The wind, for example, which in the open landscape is perceived especially through the sense of touch, can now, in the woods, also be perceived through the ear, when it gives the fir trees a soft voice, the oaks a deep, rustling one and the birches a lightly whirring one. It makes itself felt softly through the nose when it carries the sweet smell of lime blossoms or of the yellow calyxes of the honeysuckle through the air. The attention directed towards the sounds the wind makes does not only enhance the individual's own sensory ability to differentiate between such sensations, but it also enriches the outside world, whose complexity and diversity can be expressed more clearly.

The reasoning that justifies this kind of pedagogical utilisation of the woods borrows from the pedagogics of the Enlightenment, the philanthropes, who took the importance of physical and sensory elements in educational process very seriously.

"In the intercourse with nature all the skills and powers that God gave us can be practised most safely and most usefully. If you want to practice your sense of vision, look carefully at the design of a flower or of an insect, then study a spacious landscape. If you want to perfect your sense of hearing, listen to the songs of the birds and learn to distinguish them by their sounds. If you want to improve your sense of smell to near perfection, close your eyes and try whether you can distinguish the different herbs you have collected by their smell." (Salzmann quoted in Schmidt 2003, 65f.)

6.3 The Woods as a Space for Exploration

The curiosity, increased attention and alertness with which a child explores the woods, reflects its urge to get to the bottom of the exceptional features it discovers, such as the autumnal colours of leaves, the delicate mesh of the spider web, the glistening dew, the lightening and the slightly delayed thunder, the teeming ant heap, the drumming of the woodpecker, the galls of the various wasps, the life in the hedges and at or in the reedy edges of the pond. With their sounds, colours, shapes, their flowers and animals, their atmospheres and happenings, the woods form a topography of wonder (Daston/Park 1998), which as if by itself stimulates the urge for knowledge and discovery in children. The mysteries of the woods want to be uncovered and their riddles solved. It is not difficult to recognise in the way children turn their attention to the individual objects, in their wonder about strange things and the curiosity it kindles in them, the beginnings of an inquiring or rather aesthetic contemplation of nature, especially when wonder and curiosity lead to patient, concentrated attention to the task to be solved, lead to a testing change of the context conditions and when the matter in hand stimulates the children's imagination to look for appropriate interpretations of what has been observed.

7. THE WOODS AS A PLACE OF SELF EXAMINATION

If the individual goes into the woods because their natural condition and their atmospheres, their clearings and thickets, their secret springs and streams, ponds and swampy wetness create challenges that offer opportunities for self-examination and adventure, these woods are different from those that offer knowledge. Then they can appear in many guises that all seem to be familiar to us, because they all more or less belong to the images and tales of the European cultural canon. Then they may resemble the woods into which Chrétien de Troyes sends his knights in quest of adventure and in which Herzeloide and Parsival seek shelter, they evoke the memory of Dante's *selva oscura*, which is so thick and thorny that it obscures the right path, or they may resemble Shakespeare's woods, where in a balmy summer's night Puck causes so much confusion that even those endowed with a stalwart down-to-earth sense of reality can actually see the fairy world, or they may resemble the idyllic wood in the Ardennes, which offers a counterworld of a classless Arcadian life to the mores of the court. They may also take the shape of the woods which remind Wordsworth of his lost childhood when he hears the call of the cuckoo; they may turn into the romantic woods of loneliness, where the trees rustle spookily and one can hear the distant sound of horns; of those above which a cloth of stars is spread and in whose lakes, ponds and little streams Ondines, mermaids and Melusines have their homes, as in Eichendorff and Fouqué, and finally, they may occasionally also show their mythological

dimension as they are described in the Kalevala, as a blue wilderness with tall fir trees and pine trees with broad crowns, where trees and animals take on human features as in Grimms' tales from "the old times, when wishing still worked" and where the woods were wild, deep and dark, but they may also borrow from William Golding's island wilderness, where they provide the backdrop for the gradual breaking down and loss of civilised standards. What all these many dimensional layers have in common is their remoteness from everyday life. The woods turn into a counterworld, where issues figure that have been lost from everyday life and which have obviously been missed. For youth work this counterworld is an attractive place that offers opportunities for experiences not to be had in everyday life or that the latter's constitution do not allow.

7.1 The Woods as a Space of Estrangement

Those who trek for a certain time with their rucksack and a compass through dark fir woods and bright oak woods, through wet lowland riparian forests and clumps of hazeltrees that make them lose their bearings, those who walk through moor and tundra, through morning mists along slowly flowing, gurgling, but sometimes raging streams, those who look for a place to camp on a light clearing, sit by the fire with face hot and back cold, those who are on the go even if the rain has swallowed up the many sounds of the woods or when a gust of wind blows down the newly fallen snow from the fir trees into

their face, and finally those who put up their bed for the night when the owl sets off to hunt and when the evening noises and the fading light begin to prey on the imagination and to play havoc with the emotions, they all will lead for a short time a simple and exposed life compared to their usual way of life. Lighting conditions, weather conditions, physical strain, trying to keep one's bearings determine the day and put one's habit-driven urban daily life, which follows totally different rules, at a distance. What has been familiar so far becomes strange, what has been taken for granted becomes relative. The contrasting experiences of walking through the wilderness can be used to reflect on routine habits in a very illustrative way and can help to understand them better, and as the case may be even to correct them. What at first may appear to be civilizational regression, is in fact a cognitive gain, because by means of the woods the individual crosses the border to a place of provocation, which may provide the stimulus to come back from the woods a changed person.

7.2 The Woods as a Space of Proving Oneself and as a Place of Vitalization

The depth, thickness and sometimes impenetrability of the woods require considerable efforts to keep one's bearings if one wants to go through it. Searching and finding become a continuous issue. There is the constant threat of getting lost. This makes it seem eerie. Events and atmospheres that are typical of the woods tend to contribute to this perception. Twigs crack, an

owl hoots, there is an odour of decomposition and the musty smell of rotting woods, the sound of the roaring wind in the tree tops, prickling and scratching briar woods and thickets, fog that swallows up contours, the sudden cry of the jay or the fading light of dusk which transforms trees into bears and wolves and bushes into wild boar.

Given these conditions the woods turn into a place of emotions that resist being brought in tune with it the way it might be achieved in other situations or atmospheres. Instead, here the feeling of the other, of strangeness, is provoked and experienced, which has a disturbing effect also because it cannot be controlled or only with great effort. This puts a great strain on the challenged power of self control because its limits become apparent.

In such situations where problems must be solved and the individual is in the grip of confusing emotions, he becomes totally alert, he needs to resort to all his senses and cognitive abilities to find the right path for one and for another to deal with the emotions that test him to the limit and agitate his tamed inner world. This constellation offers attractive perspectives for youth work. On the one hand, many ludic and at the same time serious opportunities are created for young people to test themselves out, for processess of self-enlightenment and to prove themselves, which cannot be introduced here in detail. On the other hand, the psychological involvement absorbs attention and drives adolescent feelings of impotence, emptiness and boredom away.

7.3 The Woods as a Space of Reflection

The woods become a counter world for individuals who use it to seek its seclusion, solitude and silence, even if only temporary, in order to get rid of the moods and distractions of everyday life. Seeing the woods as a place of solitude does not only have a long tradition in Europe. (Macho 2000) It is especially the character of the hermit, who is also called Waldbruder (woods brother) in German (Arens 2010), and hermitage that are an epoch-spanning woods motif used by the those psychological techniques of outdoor pedagogics that ascribe catalysing powers of reflection to a stay in the solitude of the woods.

Being alone is meant to sensitise the individual and increase his self-awareness and being silent is meant to facilitate his dialogue with himself. However, it may happen that this brooding division of self into the enlightener and into the enlightened may be disturbed by uninvited guests, especially when the imagination is inspired by the loneliness and turns sounds and noises into a menacing backdrop. Then, through the back door, the technique of solitude (Macho) might mutate into a test of courage, which of course can also have an enlightening effect. Even if young people are thoroughly prepared for this woodland solitude, this kind of self analysis that goes with the retreat into the woods belongs more to the field of adult education.

8. ABOUT THE PLANNED CONFERENCE

As part of the conference planned from 7 to 10 October 2011 in Metsäkartano the topic of the woods in all its diversity and in its significance for youth work and work with children is to be discussed. We can safely assume that the topic of the woods is a topic of childhood and youth in all or most European cultures. But it can be supposed that the approaches to the woods vary according to nationals. Thus it is to be expected that the comparison of the various positions will lead to stimulating discussions. Therefore, we call on participants to report on their concepts of, their activities in and their experiences with all aspects of the woods as a place of their work - no matter whether the wood take the form of an adventure-bearing wilderness, an environment worthy of protection, an inspirer of tales, legends and myths or a provider of ideas and materials for artistic adaptations.

As was the case with our other conferences we hope that contents, presentations and organisations will give stimulating input on four levels.

- on the level of children and young people: confirmation of a holistic education which does not allow the physical, sensory and aesthetic aspects in the process of growing up to wither.
- on the institutional level: consolidation with regard to content of extra-curricular youth work and work with children

- on the professional level: qualification or rather further qualification of practices through intercultural contributions; extension and supplementation of the contents of the programmes of youth and recreation centres; international exchange of professional experiences
- on the conceptional level: further development of adventure pedagogics and experiential learning as well as of the concept of "learning through all senses".

translated by Gudrun Vill-Debney

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CONNECTING THROUGH CREATIVITY:
A REFLECTIVE ACCOUNT

DI COLLINS, JOURNEYING GENTLY, UK

I imagine I share with other outdoor educators an enthusiasm for being outdoors in nature. The opportunity for an adrenaline rush or the unexpected peak or frontier experience seals my passion. As I reflect on my many experiences in the outdoors, I am aware of their complexities. These experiences are the sum of an interplay of such features as the weather, the light, a sense of attachment to locations and the people around me, the cultural context, emotional responses and much more. Through these experiences I have come to appreciate the inter-related qualities of the outdoors – the strengths, balances, sensitivities and fragilities in a variety of ecosystems - and the power of nature to destroy, rebuild or evolve. The accumulated effects of these factors have driven my desire to be an effective steward of the environment, to have a positive impact on environments – to conserve, to encourage biodiversity and sustainability, and to take action to inform others of the values, qualities and inspiration of the outdoors.

In this paper, I first explore why a connection with the outdoors and nature is of importance. I reflect on research undertaken with women youth workers related to their perceptions of the outdoors, and the constraints on and supports for their participation in outdoor activities. I then consider the outcomes of research with 'outdoor' and 'non-outdoor' colleagues and relate my analysis to Peter Martin's (2003) pedagogic framework. Finally I explore ways photography might be an invaluable tool to enable some people to make a connection with the outdoors and nature.

I start from the stance that connecting with the outdoors and nature is of significance because:

- a) we are facing environmental challenges such as increased carbon emissions; the likelihood of global warming, which is still a contentious issue; and the permanent loss of some natural resources (Bunyard, 2004; Thomas and Thomas, 2004; Vidal, 2005; Vidal and Brown, 2005);
- b) sections of the British population feel alienated not only from the outdoors and nature, but also from British society, which may have a significant effect on the ways in which they develop their attitudes to, beliefs about and values about the environmental challenges (Black Environment Network, 2004; Countryside Agency, 2005);
- c) children are less likely to play outdoors and explore nature than the previous generation (Gill, 2007; Louv, 2009);

- d) part of the solution may be found in an understanding of issues related to the global environment and to feelings of inclusion and belonging (Moore, 2003; Norberg-Hodge, 2001; Shiva, 2004; Suzuki, 1997);
- e) and, some writers regard education, where people learn to care about the environment, explore the interconnectedness of environmental issues and are ultimately motivated to consider a global view, as critical for the continuation of societies (Leopold, 1949; Nabhan and Trimble, 1994; Thomas and Thomas, 2004; Wolf, 1989).

Peter Becker (2011: 4), in challenging us to consider the importance of woods and wilderness for young people, suggests that their significance may lie in the the fact that they are 'as no other natural space'. He explains that they 'have always been more affected by the close fundamental connection between culture and nature' .

He suggests that:

Leaving what has been cared for, setting out into strange nature, can provide a multitude of opportunities to promote educational processes, but only if meeting the flora and fauna in all kinds of situations in all kinds of weathers that may occur can be perceived as a challenge. (Becker, 2011: 7)

This I agree with. However, as a manager of youth work over twenty years ago, I at times struggled to encourage youth workers and the young people

they were working with to take up opportunities for outdoor adventure. Going into the outdoors, the woods and wildernesses, goes beyond the cultural beliefs of what is normal or acceptable behaviour for some groups of people.

To understand the impact of beliefs about the outdoors and outdoor education on the participation of women youth workers in outdoor activities, I undertook qualitative research with women youth workers, in the hope that I might find the key to increasing the participation of youth workers and thus young people. My purpose was to explore how outdoor education was viewed, and what it was that blocked participation (Ayland, 1991). Some of the women saw outdoor education as a purely physical and competitive activity, which was way outside their comfort zone. They were constrained from participating in activities by their time-consuming roles as carers within their families. They cited a lack of financial support as being a block to taking young people away. They identified a lack of positive role models within the broad spectra of outdoor activities and adventure education, who might introduce them to experiences with a degree of empathy. However, once offered an opportunity to take part in an outdoor residential experience, they were able to recognise its potential for the development of confidence; for an opportunity to re-affirm their identities in their own rights rather than as a wife, as a partner, or as a parent; and as a powerful learning experience.

Some of those interviewed continued to gain qualifications so that they could offer similar outdoor and residential experiences to the young people with whom they worked.

Whilst this research offered some insights, it failed to identify how people, who do not recognise the outdoors as being significant in their identities, could develop a connection with nature and the outdoors. I began qualitative research, interviewing play, youth and community development work colleagues who defined themselves as 'non-outdoor' and others who identified themselves as 'outdoor' (Collins, 2005). In analysing the results it became clear that the majority of people who initially denied having a connection with nature and the outdoors did in fact connect, but my use of terms such as 'outdoor education' and 'adventure' led them to consider these in more extreme ways, such as solo rock climbs and Himalayan treks. As they talked they identified a variety of ways in which they were engaged in the outdoors, ranging from gardening to taking photographs; from walking along the seafront to sitting with a view and listening to music; and to family picnics. Childhood experiences, whether positive or negative had helped to frame their current perceptions of what the outdoors was and how they were prepared to engage with it. I also analysed group poems written by participants on outdoor experiences, finding that their connections with

nature were related to friendship, achievement, and spiritual feelings associated with a particular happening or location.

Peter Martin (2003) developed a pedagogic framework related to stages in developing 'kinship' with nature, based on his work with outdoor education students (See Figure One). Martin had a hypothetical category, 'alienated from nature'. However, I argue that this is not hypothetical. People who have defined themselves as 'non-outdoor' may be alienated from nature until they recognise that their connections with it are legitimate. Working with people who do not consider themselves to be outdoor educators has enabled Martin's framework to be extended. Included are some of the more passive responses to being in nature, such as just sitting and observing nature and then watching the power of nature - perhaps waves crashing onto a beach or storm clouds scudding across the hilltops. Martin identified practical activities associated with caring for the natural environment. Again, my analysis suggests that this caring for the environment does not have to be physically active. People may not identify a 'oneness' with nature, but this does not mean that they are unclear about their role in relation to nature.

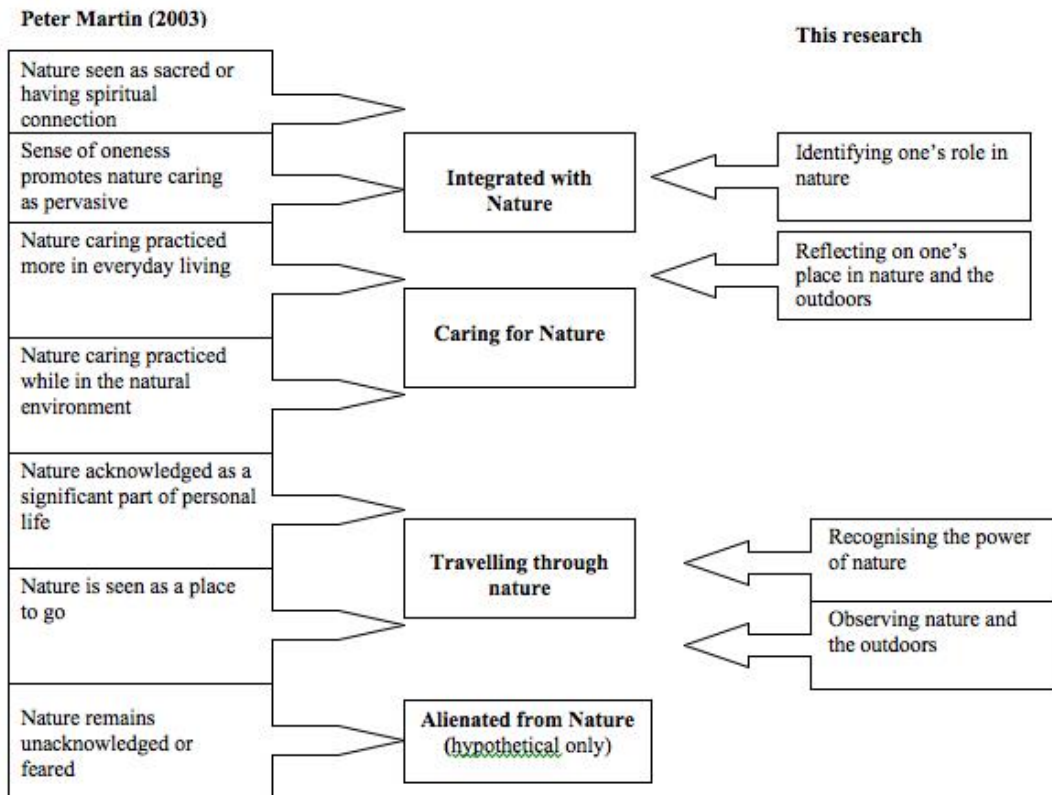


Figure One. Steps to Integration with Nature

Martin (2003) developed another framework to amplify the activities that might aid an increasing emotional kinship with nature. Through analysis of the interviews and group poems, I identified that initially there was a social dimension to this developing connection. (See Figure Two) For the people I

had interviewed, 'low key' activities were identified as entry activities, such as den building and linking stories to certain environments. One interviewee had stressed the impact that Graham's 'Wind in the Willows' had had on her interest. Others talked of the children's adventure stories by Enid Blyton. Having a special place to go to was of significance for some. Others spoke of habits and rituals such as picking berries every autumn or family walks at the weekend. Also significant was the impact of an open-minded mentor, who could encourage and explain things. This social dimension increasingly overlapped with the emotional dimension as more and more time was spent in nature. The importance of an inspiring landscape was apparent. Others talked of the significance of creative activities such as gardening, wildlife observation and photography. The emotional connection was associated with having the time and tools to reflect on experiences in nature and the outdoors, and recognising the restorative qualities of being in nature. Again, the activity of gardening was mentioned, but it now incorporated concepts of stewardship or bio-diversity. As my experience of interviewing progressed, I became increasingly aware that for some 'nature' had stereotypical connotations, and for others the word 'outdoors' had negative associations. This awareness I have transferred into my working practice. I now use a variety of words, hoping that the listener will identify positively with at least one word

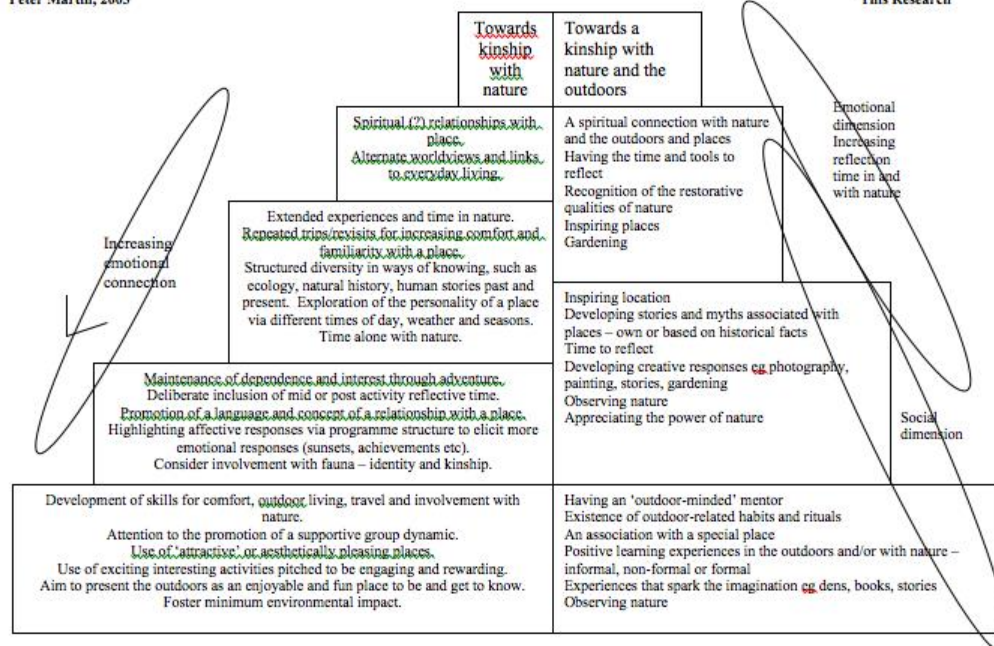


Figure Two A Pedagogic Framework

As a Leading Practitioner of the Institute for Outdoor Learning, I clearly see that my role is connected with promoting the image and potential of outdoor learning. Through my research, I have become more sensitive to and open-minded about the things that might trigger an interest in nature and the outdoors. Creativity can support the development of a connection with nature and the outdoors. Promoting creativity to connect has included supporting play and youth workers to create myths and stories about and in the outdoors. As digital cameras have become cheaper and more effective,

it has become clear that the camera can also enable people to go outside and to take time to observe. For landscape photographer, Charlie Waite, photography is 'a pursuit of some kind. I think it's probably based on a need to get closer to the divine essence of things' (Waite in an interview with Oliver, 2008). Photography can enhance the outdoor learning experience, drawing attention to aspects of the outdoors that we might otherwise rush past in our impatience to complete a journey. For people who are reluctant to engage with the outdoors in a physical way, photography can be the medium that enables and develops a connection with the outdoors, offering meetings with 'the flora and fauna in all kinds of situations, in all kinds of weathers' (Becker, 2011: 7).

Niall Benvie (2011: 32-33), nature photographer, photo-lobbyist and a director of *Rewilding Childhood*, believes that photography can support children in discovering nature for themselves, and can subsequently have a positive long term impact on their lives, developing into a lifetime passion for nature and environmental actions. Children's observations and photographs can also contribute to an in depth knowledge of the local area (2010: 53).

In its simplest form, photography may be described as 'an expression of our response to the world, in a particular place, at a particular moment' (Waite, 2009: 7). However, David Ward, who seeks the abstract in landscapes, has a

more elusive definition. For him it is 'chasing an unobtainable illusion' and is linked to a personal inner quest (2004:1 1). These words could also be applied to our intentions when exploring the environment in a more physical way.

Photographic experiences in the outdoors can be enhanced in a number of ways.

At the heart of developing photography beyond the mere capturing of memories are a number of possible actions:

- a) slowing down the process of taking photographs and photographing with intent;
- b) reducing the number of images recorded; encouraging the photographer to look and think, and
- c) developing a greater knowledge of a particular environment, for example, where the sun rises and sets at particular times of the year, the path of light across the landscape, the tracks of animals, the positions of particular flowers, the seasonal changes of tones and hues.

The act of 'slowing down' in the taking of photographs can result in us actually seeing more, rather than simply looking at obvious or superficial things. Photography can become a tool for increasing environmental awareness. If out with a group, members

can be challenged to record the unusual, to focus in on unusual perspectives
Images could be incorporated into a quiz. Group members could be
stimulated to start challenging attitudes by taking photographs of:

 rubbish versus beauty;

 a polluted versus a beautiful site.

In this paper, I have outlined why a connection with nature and the outdoors
is of significance. I have reflected on the outcomes of my research journey,
which has been closely related to the development of my career in the
outdoors. Finally, I have considered the role of creativity, and in particular
photography, in enabling some people to make a connection with the
outdoors and nature.

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SOUL AND NATURE,
EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION,
ECOPSYCHOLOGY AND INITIATION

ROGER DUNCAN

DARING TO THINK OUTSIDE THE DARWINIAN PARADIGM

My interest in experiential education began when I worked as a science teacher within Waldorf Education in the UK, an education system based on the teaching of Rudolf Steiner. Trained as a biologist, I was tried to teach the adolescents in my class all there was to know about environmental awareness and saving the planet, inspired by the teaching of Steve Van Matre (1990) and the newly published Gaia Atlas of Planet Management (Meyers, 1985). To my surprise the response was one of hopelessness and despair. They seemed overwhelmed by the scale of the environmental crisis and felt completely disempowered to do anything about it. After some reflection, I realised there was a mismatch between the need to deeply care for the environment and the culturally reinforced story of our relationship with nature. As a biologist I had always felt this. We are somehow shut out of a relational view of nature. It seems we were trapped in a Darwinian paradigm, a theory of relationship with nature that was

reinforced by endless TV wildlife documentaries and books describing the "survival of the fittest" and the triumph of selfish genes. It was not surprising that this world view did not inspire adolescents who often have a deep interest in exploring their relationship with the world. The value of multiple perspectives of the world has been addressed in the arts, sociology, psychology and even quantum physics through the ideas of post modernism. Biology, on the other hand, and evolutionary theory in particular, remained entrenched in a position of uncompromising modernism; there is only one view. We can think of Charles Darwin as an early systems thinker who enabled new thinking about the biosphere as an interactive system and challenged the Victorian fundamentalist Christian world view of his day. Our western cultural view of nature is now dominated by one modernist view point championed by, Neo-Darwin fundamentalists such as Richard Dawkins. Have we simply replaced one dogma with another? As Chellis Glendenning (1994) warns in her excellent book *'My name is Chellis and I am in recovery from Western Civilisation'* this view point comes at a price of alienation and ultimately addiction to consumerism.

"As human beings we have evolved over the course of some three million years and one hundred thousand generations in synchronistic evolution with the natural world. We are creatures who grew from the earth, who are

physically and psychologically built to thrive in intimacy with the earth".

(Glendenning, 1994)

Indigenous cultures tell us a similar story about the nature of reality; that the earth is experientially alive and deeply encoded with meaning. In the past, a great effort was made to lead young people to this experience through complex initiatory rites of passage. Only a few biologists have ventured down the post-modernist path such as Sahtouris (2000) who has developed evolutionary ideas using systems thinking and Lopez (1986) who is able to describe nature as a biologist and still remain connected to a sense of emergent personal experience. Gregory Bateson suggests that this separation of humans from the natural world, embedded deep within western culture, has its origins in the ideas of René Descartes, the father of modern philosophy and in the Cartesian split between mind and matter (Bateson et al, 2005). As I explored this issue, I was fascinated by Carl Jung's ideas on archetypes, the collective unconscious and world of synchronicity, and inspired by Rudolf Steiner's observations of the deep patternings within the forms in nature and what this might mean for an understanding of human development. I began to wonder how to facilitate adolescents, who were over stimulated by electronic media and information, to be able to experience nature for themselves, in the way that might have been possible for our indigenous ancestors.

NATURE AS TEACHER AND THERAPIST

It was with this question in mind that I attended a talk by a teacher from Sweden who described taking a class of teenagers on a two week, wild camping and walking expedition in Sarek National park in northern Sweden. What stuck in my mind was his description of the change that these students had undergone, they had somehow 'grown up,' become quieter and more reflective. He described one parent's comment:

"I don't know what you have done to my son, but he is changed"

More than twenty five years later, having been involved in wilderness work for many years, I accompanied a ten day wilderness program in Scotland with a group of young men with learning and behavioural difficulties. After gathering feedback from parents and carers their experience remains very similar.

"He appears more confident and grown-up. He has dealt with his moods in a more grown-up way and tried to solve problems without ringing his parents"

"He was 'standing taller' seemed more proud of himself, more adult, and more mature. He was certainly different".

My experience is that people change when exposed to wild nature. The change is subtle but seems to last a long time and seems to be systemic in nature. The question is why do they change? Interest in working outdoors led me to being involved in a project developing a pioneering therapeutic education program based on craft and land work. I worked for over ten years as a tutor in the woods carrying out daily woodland management tasks as an educational and therapeutic and experience with students. It was clear that being in the woods provided a safe environment for students with high levels of anxiety, in a way that the walls of a classroom did not. One young man with Aspergers and extreme anxiety and a deep knowledge of woodland birds was able to find a secure place for himself being outside in the woods within the context of woodland management contextualized in the cycle of the year and ecological sustainability of the work. Later he was able to transfer his interest to vocational work and the development of social relationships. What also became evident was that engaging in physical work, whether it was the gross motor work of woodland work or the fine motor work of the crafts activities, allowed the young peoples to work through their own difficulties so that they could be externalised, often non-verbally, in the way they worked and related. Another student with Aspergers syndrome I worked with was in a permanent state of anxiety and would constantly ask questions to find out if he was doing the right thing. By working slowing and repetitively, in this case moving fire wood, he was gradually able to quieten down and

regulate his own anxiety state without my reassurance. Over time this calmness could be transferred to other activities and social contexts. I found that working in the woods providing the right task, at the right pace, in the right context, nature became a teacher and therapist in one, and my role became that of a facilitator of a self generating process.

EDUCATION WITHOUT WALLS

In my late twenties I was taking groups of teenagers into nature on field trips and it was clear that simply being in nature had a profound effect on adolescents. I found the hidden social dynamics and anxieties of the group suddenly became visible if we worked outside and could be talked about in a safe way. Taking a class out into nature for a field trip or extended camping seemed to allow socially constructed relationship patterns to change, reluctant or disruptive students were suddenly able to show more positive behaviour and academically capable students showed social difficulties not previously apparent. However, the overall groups experience was generally positive and long lasting. This encouraged me to explore the use of extended wilderness camps, by taking groups backpacking in nature for up to two weeks. After three days the group would invariably relax and the pace of usual teenage energy would slow down. After ten days the group became so relaxed and content they often commented that they did not want to 'go back'. Returning was some sort of threshold experience perhaps bringing up

anxieties associated with transitions. The return threshold came to be marked with a ritual celebration breakfast, marking the end of the eating camping food and the return to 'the real world'.

Wilderness experience programs developed in the United States and South Africa have a practise of using nature as a therapeutic context for wide range difficulties, including the rehabilitation of offenders and militarised youth. Programs usually involve extended time in nature, camping and walking as well as physical challenges and reflective time. Although the academic review of the work has been positive (Russell et al 1998) there does not seem to be a shared clear theoretical frame work other than the work being described loosely as eco or wilderness therapy and involving exposure to nature. Greenway (1995) describing the '*wilderness effect*' comments that it only takes three or four days for modern humans in wilderness nature to forget their daily work life and begin thinking and dreaming archetypal images and suggested that modern culture is only '*four days deep*'. These observations are evidenced by Bird (2007) who describes three theories that support the idea of nature as a healing experience.

▪ **THEORY OF BIOPHILIA.**

This theory suggests we have an innate '*emotional affiliation*' with other living organisms (Wilson, 1984) and that we are evolutionarily predisposed to feel more content and function more effectively in a natural environment.

- **ATTENTION RESTORATION THEORY.**

(ART) is based on evidence that being in the natural environment is the most effective attention restorative experience for the brain, relaxing the prefrontal cortex. The area of the brain involved in understanding social cues, and there are now over 100 studies showing that how simply looking at a natural environment can relax the brain and restore our ability to direct our attention. There is evidence the symptoms of children with ADHD engaged in outdoor activities of reducing the by 30% compared to an indoor environment. (Faber et al, 2001)

- **PSYCHO-PHYSIOLOGICAL STRESS RECOVERY THEORY.**

This theory is based on an activation of a stress reducing reflex in the limbic brain after exposure to views of nature. The limbic system is one of the oldest parts of our brain and is connected with our autonomic nervous system and implicit memory, where preverbal traumatic experiences are 'remembered' in the body. Fishbane (2000) describing the link between behaviour and the brain details the importance of the integration of the prefrontal cortex with the limbic system in helping to regulate impulsive behaviour and an essential prerequisite for emotional and relational wellbeing. It is just this effect that seems to be brought about by being in nature.

LEARNING IN THE LAND OF LOST BORDERS

After worked for many years with adolescents in nature, I still felt there was a further transformative healing threshold to be explored. I had read about indigenous, initiatory practices such as Vision quest and in the autumn of 2001 I joined a group of trainee vision fast guides to train with Steven Foster and Meredith Little, founders of The School of Lost Borders, in California. This work uses a contemporary form of wilderness vision quest or vision fast based on an integration of Jungian archetypes and oral teaching learnt firsthand from of a Native American Elder. Aware of the sensitivity of perceived cultural theft, Steve Foster rigorously researched and indentified similar, pan culture, archetypal initiatory practise in European alchemy and literature that describe the phenomena he had experienced himself during vision quest (Foster *et al* 1998). Vision quest or vision fast is a wilderness experience that includes a careful period of preparation followed by a four day ritualised solo time without food. The practise also uses reflective and narrative practises to bring about changes in patterns of behaviour and somatised habits. Many participants on the vision fast return from the solo time with a 'remembered' connection to nature, a renewed and enriched experience of the context of their lives and often a personal experience of the sacred. Bill Plotkin, vision quest guide, graduate of the School of Lost Borders and founder of the Animus Valley Institute in Colorado, calls this peak experience, usually experienced during Solo time in nature as '*soul encounter*' (Plotkin,2008). He

describes how human beings have shared a nonverbal language with nature for millennia, in the form of patterning or '*image*'. It is this experience of the '*imaginal world*', that can show us patterns that connect us to nature and our own meta narrative. What makes vision quest a transformative is still unclear, but it is recognised as valuable by an increasing number of people who have shared this experience. My training in California during September 2001 coincided with the attack on the Twin Towers. As the shock of this event reverberated through the United States and the wider world, I spent four days fasting alone in the high desert of Inyo mountains close to Death Valley, California. Exposed to the ancient ecological patterning of nature, my own constructed reality gradually peeled away and I came back from the edge of the world with a deeper narrative and a delicate new sense of self. On returning to the UK, I began to set up a transition program for students in their final year of college as well as leading groups on vision fasts. It was also a turning point that led me to begin training as a family therapist and a recognition of my desire to integrate this work more fully into a contemporary therapeutic paradigm.

There a number of techniques and practises characteristic of this work that can be useful in ecotherapy, ecopsychology.

- **THE DEVELOPMENT OF 'INTENT'; A WISH WITHOUT DESIRE.**

This practise often used before ritual solo time is to frame a positive and neutral 'I' statement to help address a current situation. "I am a man who is needing to make a decision about ..." this can help someone inhabit their own story from a new perspective and lead to clearer grasp of the real nature of the question.

- **THE USE OF STORYTELLING.**

Story telling can be used in any setting and not only has the potential to engage and create a reflective mood but can also provide a bank of metaphors and archetypal narratives and can help scaffold an understanding and make sense of our own narrative. The story may be personal, contemporary or archetypal depending on the context.

- **THE USE OF RITUAL.**

The use of appropriate ritual can be used to mark transitions as well as to open and close reflective time and mark boundaries between reflective time and down time outside of the clinical context. The ritual might be as simple as lighting a candle, reading a poem.

- **THE USE OF 'MIRRORING STORY'**

This is a particular reflective practise often used after Solo time and can be used to mirror and reflect back events in a way which is externalised and as such can be easier to hear. This can be framed as "I hear a story of a woman who..." and can provide powerful reflection on our patterns of interaction with the world.

- **THE USE OF SOLO TIME IN NATURE**

Solo time, being alone in nature, ranging from an hour, to a day or up to four days depending on health and safety, preparation and readiness to engage. This process can lead to profound self reflection and is often enhanced by the use of ritual, such as fasting.

- **THE USE OF NATURE BASED MAPPING TOOLS**

Indigenous cultures make use of nature based mapping tools based on archetypal qualities and patterns of the seasons or directions. These use isomorphic patterns in nature to help map human development Nature based maps are cyclical and fractal in form so encourage engagement in constantly emergent process and this can prevent the 'map' becoming the 'territory'. Brendtro et al, (1990) use 'The Circle of Courage' and a progression of stages through Belonging, Mastery, and Independence to Generosity.

Other examples include the shields used by The School of Lost Borders (Foster et al, 1998) and Plotkin's Soul centric wheel (Plotkin, 2008).

- **THE USE OF RITES OF PASSAGE PROGRAMS FOR HEALTHY ADOLESCENT TRANSITION.**

The anthropologist Van Gennep (1960) identifies three stages of adolescent rites of passage within indigenous culture as;

- **Severance;** a stage of leaving the past behind often involving a symbolic death.
- **Threshold;** a liminal stage of not knowing and change.
- **Incorporation;** a returning and the start of the new beginning.

This three stage theory of change is particularly useful in helping to understand adolescents and their need to leave their childhood behind and pass through a threshold stage on the journey to becoming adult. It has been used successfully as a tool for understanding the behaviour of gang cultures in South Africa, who ritualistically act out initiatory processes identical to those performed by indigenous cultures of which they had no knowledge (Pinnock, 1997). It seems that it is the ritual enactment of these stages that is most effective and forms the basis of many wilderness rites of passage programs. Schell- Faucon (2001) documents transformative wilderness trails in the Drakensburg Mountains of South Africa for the successful rehabilitation of

militarised youth and run by former child soldiers who themselves have been through a similar program. Programs such as this might well provide successful models for tackling gang crime and radicalised youth in the UK

There is considerable literature on nature based rites of passage and its therapeutic application notably Pinnock (1997), and Mahdi (1996, 1994) who has gathered papers from a wide range of contexts. Foster *et al*, (1998) and Merkur (2002) describe the value of vision quest from practical experience and from a psychodynamic perspective respectively. A recent report commissioned by a major UK Charity The Royal Society for Protection of Birds completed by Dr William Bird (Bird, 2008) contains positive evidence of the effect of ecotherapy and nature based therapy. The report concludes that there is good empirical data that show that simple exposure to the natural world is effective in reducing stress and poor self discipline in children and teenagers, as well as dementia in the elderly and is an effective component in the treatment of ADHD and depression. The 2007 annual report of the British mental health charity 'Mind' goes further and recommends that ecotherapy should be recognised as a clinically valid treatment for mental health distress and that health and social care funding should be allocated to research into the cost benefit analysis of ecotherapy, Mind Week Report (2007).

REMEMBERING A *LANGUAGE* OLDER THAN WORDS

Although ecopsychology can be thought of as a new idea, its roots go back into the earliest human relationships with nature. Both Berger (2006) and Rust (2000) describe a similarity between ecotherapy and shamanism. It was however, Theodore Roszak who coined the word 'ecopsychology' and defined its basic terms of reference and principles in his book 'The Voice of the Earth' (Roszak, 1992). Roszak defines the key principles as:

- The emerging synthesis of ecology and psychology.
- The skilful application of ecological insights to the practice of Psychotherapy.
- A study of our emotional bond with the earth.
- The search for an environmentally based standard of mental health.

Gregory Bateson was also deeply concerned with 'the contemporary crisis in man's relationship to this environment' which is arguably fast becoming one of the most important issues for our future. (Bateson et al, 2005) He worked most of his life to develop a critique of Darwin's evolutionary theory and in his final book 'Angles fear, an epistemology of the sacred' he turns his attention to attempting to heal the Cartesian split. Bateson challenges Descartes dualistic view of mind or Matter and drawing on concepts that Carl Jung borrowed

from Gnosticism, explores the idea that the world was not divided into mind or matter but into *Creatura* and *Pleroma*.

Pleroma being the material non living world as described by the physical sciences, *Creatura* on the other hand are the patterns of relationship characteristic of the living biological and language systems and includes all ideas, images, patterns and forms. Bateson uses this concept of *Creatura* to argue a link between mind and nature. These ideas are perhaps difficult to grasp and fall outside of our cultural language. The French oriental philosopher, Henri Corbin, a contemporary of Carl Jung, may shed light on this difficulty. From the perspective of an Islamic world view, the world of the soul, (which in the west we might call the 'psyche') and the entire natural world are joined in the *Mundus Imaginalis*, this is translated by Corbin as the '*Imaginal world*' described as existing in a space between the world of the senses and the world of the intellect. We cannot enter this world by thinking, but by a process of careful imagination that proceeds by means of images, not concepts, a process known in Arabic as *Ta'wil*. This practise of *Ta'wil* '*transmutes the world into symbols which by their very nature transcends the distinction between the outer and inner, subject and object, by interiorising the cosmos,... lead the soul beyond literal understanding of the world to its truth*' .. (Cheetham, 2003)

This description reminds me of Greenaway's (1995) 'wilderness effect' and also the state in which people frequently return from vision quest. Both often

states are characterized by a sense of coming home to the world, perhaps for the first time, a profoundly healing experience particularly for adolescents.

Ecopsychology is now a rapidly growing field in the UK and wider world, and is I believe an emerging attempt to learn, or remember, this 'creatural' or 'imaginal' language that is far older than words. It is worth noting Davis Orr's updated definition of ecotherapy.

"Ecotherapy begins with the fact that we indeed live in the lap of a great intelligence, as Emerson once said. It is a practical acknowledgement that health healing, wholeness and holy are related not just linguistic accident but by the fact that they are one and inseparable" (Buzzel and Chalquist, 2009)

In the current climate of uncertainty and ecological crisis, the relationship between human being and nature can no longer be ignored even if it does not comfortably fit current cultural ideas or clinical or educational practice. With the evolving synthesis of indigenous and western world views there may come a time when we wonder how nature ever came to be left out and "our emotional bond with the earth" is no longer marginalized from our understanding of what it means to be human.

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THE PROJECT “ABENTEUERGARTEN” – ASPECTS OF EXPERIENCING NATURE FOR CHILDREN OF A SOCIALLY DEPRIVED AREA

ELENA PRESENZA – IKJG MARBURG

ABSTRACT

Nature experiences are an important basic for children's development – not only in contrast to the increase of cognitive requirements and global media infrastructure. This opinion is generally accepted in the educational philosophy of outdoor pedagogies. However, differences exist in the possibilities and ideas about how we can enable children to experience nature and to participate in its learning processes. According to our observations natural and wild places cause a lot of fear and uncertainty. In the project “Abenteuergarten”, which our organization is realizing in the context of community work, we create a place in the neighborhood of the children to offer them different kinds of nature experiences in a protected and trusted surrounding. We call this place “Abenteuergarten” (garden for adventures). Step by step we are trying to strengthen the self-confidence of the children in the contact with the wilderness. So finally it should become part of their everyday life.

In the presentation I would like to describe the most important facts and actual situation of the project, especially concerning the various aspects of experiencing nature as well as the consequences and chances it offers in the support of children's development.

INTRODUCTION

"Into the woods" – that is the topic of the conference and maybe it seems inappropriate to present a project of district- and community work, because in the conventional sense district work is located in urban areas. Therefore the first associations are certainly not terms like wilderness, adventure or natural experiences. But in our project "Abenteuergarten" (garden for adventures), we create a place of wilderness and nature for the children living in a certain district of Marburg, to offer them natural and sensual experiences in the neighborhood of their homes.

To be able to understand what is so particular in the project, it is helpful to know some basics of the district and the principles of our work. Therefore I will start to introduce some facts about the area and the living situation of its inhabitants, especially focused on childrens' lives.

In general the work of our association focuses on a socially deprived area which is located on a hill in the western part of the town Marburg¹. Today it is a district with around 1.400 inhabitants, which is characterized by its many young and single parent families, a very high proportion of children and 33 different nationalities. Although there are many resources available, our work with the residents aims at the expansion of the stagnant infrastructure. We work to ensure that the care situation for children improves and that single parents are supported in the compatibility of work and family life. Furthermore it is our task to form bonds between young and old, natives and immigrants, as well as between the different institutions and associations. We offer a program of weekly meetings, activities and events to all inhabitants, to improve the quality of life and to relieve the families and individuals from their everyday difficulties (cf. <http://www.ikjg.de>).



impressions of the natural surrounding and the housing area of the district

Around the housing area is a unique landscape of hills and woods. So the natural surrounding offers a lot of possibilities for adventures and natural

¹ Marburg is a city in the middle of Germany with around 85 000 citizens.

experiences. But the structure of the population in the area is characterized by different poverty factors. Most of the children cannot use the natural environment for their playing. Their parents don't want them to stray around in unknown places, because they are afraid of the dangers of the wilderness and the woods. As a result, the streets around the houses become the playground for the children, but even more often they do not go out at all, but spend their time inside, watching TV or playing with the computer².

This development results in the fact, that children nowadays miss physical movement and sensual experiences. If they stay at home they only have limited opportunities for physical activities. Furthermore it is a space, which is controlled by their parents, who expect an equal kind of behavior. Watching TV finally has the effect, that children discover the world by visual mediation, but not by their own sensual experience (cf. Hurrelmann, 2002, pp.249).

So it is of special importance to give them the freedom and the spaces for a free development. Studies show that children prefer to stay on "forgotten" areas and playgrounds, which they can form according to their own request (cf. Gebhard, 1994 or Schemel in Kammerer 2009). This is what children can find in nature, because it provides them with countless places and possibilities

² The phenomenon I'm talking of includes two aspects of today's childhood: the domestication (cf. Zinnecker 2001, pp. 27) and the medialization (cf. Rolff & Zimmermann, 2001, pp 95)

for physical and sensual experiences as well as it increases their imagination. These thoughts result in the question, how can we bring these children back to experience nature and participate in its learning processes?

With the presentation of our project I would like to show you the way we have decided in the context of community work. It is only one possibility, but it offers different aspects of experiencing nature and gives a lot of chances in the support of children's development.

The roots of the "Abenteuergarten" go back to another project. There it was the children themselves, who showed us the necessity of it. In 2003 the so called "intercultural gardens" were founded, born out of the initiative of some immigrant families who sought for common garden near their home environment. Together with the city council and our support we finally found a place for gardening. Covering an area of 3000 square meters the garden offers today the possibility to manage a garden and grow vegetables or flowers to 20 families with a background of 11 different nations and cultures. Gardening together brought up new contacts and friendships between the families and became furthermore a popular meeting point for their children. They enjoyed to be outside, to play with the earth or to climb up to the trees. After some years it became quite obvious, that they need their own place for playing and maybe as well gardening, because the conflicts between the

gardeners and the playing children were increasing. That is why we started with the project “Abenteuergarten” in 2006.

On the other side of the intercultural gardens the city council of Marburg allowed us to create such a natural place for the children, living in the district. This place, called “Abenteuergarten” covers an area of 1.500 square meters and includes different natural areas. Each one offers certain opportunities of uses and experiences. Twice a week we spend the afternoons there together with the children, offering them a special activity. The children can decide whether they want to join or not. But if they are interested, children can come there whenever they want, also without our company.



The “Abenteuergarten” offers different natural areas for playing and discovering its phenomena

During the afternoons, we can suggest different ideas and impulses to the children, but in the end they use this time according to their own needs. In

these moments we are companions and observers. So in the following I want to introduce you some of my personal observations.

The examples I will tell you about are divided up into three different categories. These categories show in which way we use the natural surrounding to initiate learning processes.

PHYSICAL MOVEMENT - SELF-CONFIDENCE AND AUTONOMY

Most of the children in our district are missing physical activities and movement in their everyday lives. This result is also due to the situation that they miss the possibilities and places for free movement. The "Abenteuergarten" is a place with trees, bushes or slopes, which they can climb up or where they can find hidden places for their playing. It is especially the area, which makes them curios. This finally causes different processes of a physical development, because the natural areas need different movement patterns. I will give you an example of one of our kids.

A 5 year old girl came to the "Abenteuergarten" for the first time a few months ago. She immediately started to play with the other children, but she could not follow them running up the hills without our help. She did not know how to climb up the slope and was afraid to touch the bushes and trees, which could help her going up. A few weeks, we assisted her and showed her the different possibilities to get up the slopes. Today she is very proud,

because she can go the way on her own and can follow the other children to the hidden places between the trees and shrubs.

This example includes different learning processes. First of all the girl developed the physical opportunity to climb up slopes and use the wilderness for the playing with her friends. Furthermore this physical achievement strengthened the self-confidence and extended the autonomy of the little girl. And last but not least it opened the possibility to play in wild and unknown places. Based on a simple physical learning process, she is able now to participate in the playing with the other children, which is important for her social contacts and development. But above all, she now has a greater self-confidence and developed the courage to discover other natural phenomena.



GARDENING TOGETHER – SENSUAL EXPERIENCES AND SELF-EFFICACY

Beside the lack of movement, it is the injurious food that causes a high proportion of children, suffering from overweight. The majority of the families in our district are short of money and often they cannot afford wholesome and fresh food.

In the "Abenteuergarten" we have a place for gardening and some kids have an own bed, where they can grow flowers or vegetables.

First it is the process of gardening, which causes a very close contact to nature. During the process of sowing, looking after and finally harvesting the plants, the children can join in the growing process of nature. Normally they are not used to touch the earth or the plants with their naked hands and some of them are really scared of it. But if they are responsible for a bed, it seems to be quite usual, that they have to touch the earth. Over the time, they know what their plants need to grow. They become aware of the importance of the sunlight, the water or the little animals, living in the earth. Step by step the children loose the fear, because they have a special reason and intention to use the natural surrounding.

In addition to the process of gardening together it is the positive result of the work, which is a very important and often a new experience for the children.

A successful harvest shows them the consequences of their impact on nature. After harvesting we are preparing different meals or drinks with the children. In this situation they are also willing to taste the different vegetables and herbage, even if they are not used to it. Cooking and eating together is mostly a new sensual experience for the kids.

Gardening together and preparing fresh food implicate different learning opportunities. The work in the garden confronts them with the basics of natural phenomena. They become part of the growing processes and the course of a year. And finally they see the result of their work. So it becomes a learning process of their self-efficacy. Nature gives the children a direct feedback to their behavior. Only if they care for the plants and animals in their beds, they can finally harvest the products and prepare something to eat or to drink.



PLAYING IN THE NATURE – EDUCATION AND CHILDLIKE

IMAGINATION

We do not have the intention that children have to learn all details and facts about nature. Never the less we have the possibility to initiate some learning processes, if we spend time together with them in a natural surrounding.

During the afternoons in the “Abenteuergarten” the children discover new phenomena and thus many questions arise. E.g. they want to know which animals live in our pond, why are earthworms living in their beds and when the carrots are ready to be eaten.

Many occurrences which wake up the interest of the children originate from the natural surrounding. In the process of finding answers to their questions, we are only companions, but do not see ourselves in to position to teach them something. Often they can explain many phenomena just by their own observations and experiences. And sometimes they also find very creative explanations that stimulate their imagination.

The contact to the earthworms is maybe a good example. In the garden the children are often confronted with this little animal, living in the earth and they always have a lot of questions about them. They know that the earthworms are important for their plants and therefore they want them to have a good life. So some children build a big castle of earth, sand and leaves for the earthworms to live in it. They collect a lot of earthworms and consider how

they can live more comfortable. Maybe it is not appropriate to the species of the earthworms, but it shows that the children include the nature in their playing and their thinking. So they discover the natural surrounding with their childlike imagination.

This learning process shows a contrast to the learning forms at school as well as to the media influence. The children themselves are the initiators of the learning process and they take over an active role. They decide what they want to know and they often develop their own explanation for a phenomenon. In this way discovering nature could include aspects of education, but without the risk of failure or bad grades. So they can learn something about the facts and reasons of nature without the pressure to be successful. And this opens the possibility to promote the childlike fantasy and imagination. Finally that's an important compensation to the requirements at school as well as to their troubled families.



As you could see in these examples it is always an exchange between something certain and uncertain, familiar and new, obvious and hidden or something changeable and constant, that makes nature so attractive and useable to initiate learning processes for the childlike development. First it is something uncertain, new or hidden that makes children curious to start the contact with nature and to find out what is behind the phenomena. That is the beginning of the learning process. But finally it is the familiarity and certainty in the relation to nature, which strengthens their self-confidence, supports their autonomy and results in the fact that it becomes part of their lives.

Maybe the “Abenteuergarten” does not stand for “the wilderness” or “the woods” in the conventional sense. But as I told you at the beginning, the children in our project cannot use the natural surrounding of the woods on their own. With the “Abenteuergarten” we fulfill the function of a bridge between the nature or wilderness they are scared of and the comfortable indoor of their flats. Because the “Abenteuergarten” offers the children the possibility to build up a first contact to nature in a protected and trusted surrounding.

It is our preferred task to establish a regular involvement and relation to nature, to deepen the different learning processes so that it finally becomes

part of their everyday lives. And this would not be possible if we were directly going into the deep woods, because it needs sensibility and regularity to become used to it. It would not be helpful to confront the children as well as their parents directly with their fears. Instead of we are trying to strengthen positive experiences and contacts to nature. This process includes that step by step we also leave the protected place of the "Abenteuergarten" and make excursions to other places, especially to the woods. But it is still the basic of the project to allow all these important natural and sensual experiences I talked about in a place that children can also use without our company and according to their own needs.

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WOODS AS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND UNDERSTANDING.

*"ONE IMPULSE FROM A VERNAL WOOD, MAY TEACH YOU MORE OF
MAN, OF MORAL EVIL AND OF GOOD, THAN ALL THE SAGES CAN".*

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH IN "THE TABLES TURNED".

GEOFF COOPER

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH WOODLAND

Last year, there was a strong public reaction to the British government's proposal to sell off more than 250,000 hectares of state owned English woodland. The campaign group "38 Degrees" collected over half a million signatures and demonstrated how the internet can play an important role in galvanising public opinion. The government conceded that it had not appreciated the extent to which the nation cherishes its forests and in February 2011 it suspended all new sales of forest lands. An Independent Panel has now been set up to give advice on the future direction of forestry in England.

It isn't difficult to understand the strength of the reaction to the threatened loss of our woodland. There is less than 12% woodland cover in the UK compared with 44% for Europe as a whole and only 4% of our land surface is

covered by native woodland. Yet woodland is an essential part of our cultural heritage and the native “wild wood” was the predominant element of the British landscape from 4,000 BC through to Roman times. Ingrained in our psyche, woods became synonymous with wild places, where wolves, foxes and bears roamed. These were the frontiers of our existence, places where we could step outside our normal lives. Woodland stories, myths and superstitions have permeated our cultural heritage. We have a rich folklore of woods as places of uncertainty, danger, adventure, refuge and contemplation. Examples range from King Arthur's knights, Robin Hood's exploits in Sherwood Forest through to Mole's terrifying experiences of the wild wood in “Wind in the Willows”.

Step back 130 years in England and the novelist Thomas Hardy in his book “The Woodlanders” gives a vivid portrayal of the influence of the woodland on the lives of a rural community. The woodlands are a place of great activity for timber used in the construction of buildings, boats, barrels, fences etc. At a time of rapid industrial change woodlands became the hearths for tradition, places where values and traditional ways of life could be protected. The social and cultural importance of woodland is clear from Hardy's writing. Characters in the book use the woodland as a place to withdraw from society, a place for solitude and reflection, a place to walk unobserved, a place for trysts and meetings, a place for story-telling and a place to re-enact pagan rites and pastimes. Woodland becomes synonymous with nature, the

characters entering the woods experience the rhythms of day and night, the passing of the seasons, the signs of new growth, death and decay.

Although our woods do not support the numerous occupations and crafts of former times, woodlands still hold great significance in our culture through our social and recreational activities. The English woods no longer hold threats from hobgoblins or fierce animals but offer many opportunities for exploration and adventure through a variety of outdoor activities such as bird watching, tree climbing, orienteering and mountain biking. They still act as refuges; places where we can leave behind the clutter of modern day living and experience simpler pleasures. They are places for reflection, where we can take stock of our lives. They can play with our senses through light, shade, colour, texture, sound. They can be a source of inspiration offering wide canvases for artists, photographers and writers. They allow us to learn from and reconnect with nature. Numerous research studies support the many physical and mental health benefits of outdoor activities in woodlands and other green spaces. It is therefore not surprising that there was such a public outcry to the potential loss of the English cherished woods.

British native, or at least semi natural, woodlands provide rich wildlife habitats. Venture into a deciduous wood in spring. Typically there is a canopy of tall trees which may include oak (*quercus*), ash (*fraxinus*), birch (*betula*) and lime (*tilia*). Beneath this you find a shrub layer of perhaps hazel (*corylus*), hawthorn (*crataegus*) and guelder rose (*viburnum opulus*) and below a field layer with

swathes of wildflowers such as primroses (*primula vulgaris*), wood anenomes (*anemone nemorosa*), wood sorrel (*oxalis acetosella*), bluebells (*hyacinthoides non-scriptus*) and wild garlic (*allium ursinum*). A final ground layer may include mosses (*music*), liverworts (*hepaticae*) and fungi. These layers support a rich variety of insects, birds, amphibians and mammals which form part of an intricate ecosystem.

No-one can dispute that woods are life enhancing but we also know that they are even more fundamental to our existence. Through our symbiotic exchange of gases they literally support human life on the planet and at the same time help to absorb the excess of carbon dioxide we create. Faced with depletion of energy resources and climate change, we are increasingly recognising that our woodlands can provide a source of renewable fuel and they can also mitigate flooding by reducing surface run off and improve the quality of our water supply.

WOODS- CONNECTING PEOPLE AND PLACE.

Woodlands play an increasingly important role in outdoor learning. This is demonstrated particularly through the current level of interest in Bushcraft and Forest Schools in Britain and other European countries. Such programmes have a wide variety of aims such as developing personal skills, teambuilding, aesthetic appreciation, encouraging exercise and healthy living and scientific studies. Whilst these are all admirable, I want to focus on how

woodland can provide a stimulus for a programme which leads towards simpler and more sustainable lifestyles. To do this, I want to suggest 5 key concepts as a starting point:

1. We are part of nature not separate from it.
2. Everything is connected in nature.
3. We are intricately connected to other people on the planet.
4. We can act to improve the environment and quality of our lives and others lives.
5. We can share this learning.

These concepts can be promoted through an outdoor woodland programme which is based on both emotional and cognitive learning. This programme also has 5 elements:

1. Developing a personal connection to woodland through sensory activities.
2. Understanding ecological connections- using the woods to demonstrate systems.
3. Understanding global connections through similar systems thinking.
4. Taking practical personal or group action to improve the systems.
5. Reviewing the outcomes and sharing the knowledge and understanding.

WOODS AS AN INSPIRATION FOR OUTDOOR LEARNING AND SYSTEMS THINKING.

There are many advantages in basing the programme in a woodland setting. Entering a wood allows us to free ourselves from a busy, cluttered, commercialised world. Henry David Thoreau, the American philosopher, did just this in 1845 in the woods near Concord, Massachusetts and stayed for two years and two months. He built a hut and his simple woodland existence inspired his famous work, "Walden", a treatise not solely on nature but also on the wider aspects of economy and society. Roger Deakin in "Wildwood- A journey through trees" claims that "to enter a wood is to pass into a different world in which we ourselves are transformed". There is a change in light, sound and smell. In an old wood there is a sense of continuity, of co-existence, of balance. Trees are the largest and oldest living things that most of us have contact with. They are barometers for the seasons and deciduous woods in particular change dramatically throughout the year.

People living close to a wood may develop personal connections during their visits by recognising and appreciating particular trees, landforms, glades within the wood. For others, such as young people visiting a wood for the first time more structured activities can be offered. Personal connections can be built through simple sensory activities: looking closely at flowers, insects, fungi; touching moss, bark, leaf litter; sitting listening to the rustle of the trees or the birdsong; drawing the details of natural forms; writing our thoughts; making

art. There is a well-established literature and wide variety of materials available on the use of sensory environmental activities. They were developed in North America by Steve van Matre (1972), Joseph Cornell (1979, 1989) and Thom Henley (1989) and their value in outdoor and environmental education is discussed by this author in Cooper (1998).

Woods offer an ecosystem with clear connections for example the relationship of insects to particular trees and flowers, moss to damp conditions, birds to the woodland layers, fungi to decaying wood. It is easy to appreciate some simple food chains in a wood and the symbiotic relationships of plants and animals. It is possible to demonstrate and build up a picture of the system and discuss how we are part of this system. Thinking in systems is a prerequisite for sustainable education. Sterling (2001) argues that we need to think differently if we are to know and act differently. Systems thinking allows us to understand complex situations by looking for patterns and connections behind events. The major issues faced by the human race such as poverty, hunger, environmental destruction, climate change, resource depletion and unemployment are not isolated problems but part of the same system. The dominant model of Western education is based on acquiring knowledge with little emphasis on thinking and communicating. Most school based learning is analytical, breaking down knowledge into constituent parts rather than making relationships between our lives on the earth. Students become content specialists unable to appreciate the bigger

picture or to understand how economics, politics, culture, environment and society are interwoven. Outdoor learning can adopt a more holistic approach, investigating how the components of people and landscapes fit together without regard to subject boundaries.

Presenting and understanding a woodland ecosystem is a powerful way of demonstrating how everything is connected and this can be used as a basis for other systems, such as how we are connected to other people on the planet. By helping young people to think in terms of interrelationships and connections this will inevitably lead to a consideration of how our attitudes and actions can affect the environment and others. It encourages reflection, empathy through an appreciation of other's viewpoints and can trigger us questioning our values. This, in turn, may result in us taking more responsible actions.

Woods also offer many opportunities for groups to take action to improve the environment. Examples may include managing small areas to encourage diversity, through planting native species, removing invasive species, creating wetland habitats and putting up bird and bat boxes. Adopting and managing small parcels of woodland and carrying out surveys can allow groups making repeat visits to see the impact of their conservation. Such projects can be presented to other groups through photos, posters and video. There are other ways of taking action, for example, by supporting groups lobbying for environmental conservation and sustainable living.

In this way woods are a source of inspiration. They are much more than an arena, a backcloth or a setting for learning, I believe there is an impulse from our very being in a wood. There is an emotional tie, a connection which can inspire and motivate us to further learning and action. The writer John Fowles in "The Blinded Eye" sums this up, "an intense need and affection for the direct experience of nature is the only kind of soil in which a really effective general demand for conservation can grow". The British government failed to understand this emotional bond when they threatened to privatise the English forests and faced the wrath of large swathes of the population.

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EXPLORING THE ANCIENT VIRGIN FOREST OF RAJHENAVSKI

ROG

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Children today are spending more and more of their free time behind computer screens, video terminals, and the walls of their homes. As a result, their eyes and ears are constantly bombarded with mindless information. Worse, because of their reliance on computers and videos for entertainment, they don't know that a real world, full of fun, excitement and challenge is out there - in nature - in the woods. Pupils from the first triad of primary school, who come to our outdoor education center for 5 days, spend the entire day of each day outdoors participating in sport activities (cycling, climbing, kayaking and caving), science experiments and learning about nature, water, plants, animals and woods. Our outdoor education center is located in the heart of extensive birch-fir forests, where endangered predators like bear, wolf and lynx can still be found. In some remote areas nature is still untouched and our ancestors have left us with the (probably) oldest virgin forest in Europe - Rajhenavski Rog. Many pupils come

to us imagining that the expression "virgin forest" means an impassable tropical forest full of monkeys, anacondas and poison insects. "I saw it on the NGC!" is their reaction. But only a few steps further on the footpath they realize that our virgin forest is...different. Then they start to observe, to listen, to touch, to smell, and to feel...TO LEARN.

This paper explores that learning process and describes CSOD's program to combat a rising incidence of "nature deficit disorder" by using the Rajhenavski Rog as a classroom to inspire these pupils.

1. INTRODUCTION

CSOD is the acronym for Center for School and Outdoor Education and is an integrated part of the Slovenian Education Ministry. It organizes outdoor activities in one of the 23 outdoors centers across Slovenia, with an emphasis on sport and natural science in relationship with the natural environment of each center. Participation is not mandatory, but many schools take part in our program, which is a part of the mandatory curriculum in nine-year elementary education. Schools from different parts of Slovenia come to our center for a one week program, which consists of sport activities (kayaking, caving, climbing, archery, skiing, swimming), environmental education and natural science studies. The entire program is conducted outdoors: in nature,

in the fields, near rivers and lakes, mountains, caves and woods throughout the year in any weather.

CSOD center Jurček is one of the outdoor centers, specializing in outdoor education for pupils in the first four grades of elementary school. This center lies in the southern part of Slovenia in the Kočevska region, an area that offers many advantages for outdoor education because more than 90% of the land in this region is covered with extensive woods. Our program is based on the mandatory state curriculum with additional programs that emphasize living, exploring and learning in the woods. Many of the other CSOD outdoor centers have forest trails with didactic tables but CSOD Jurcek offers what the others can't: close proximity to the oldest primary virgin forest known as Rajhenavski Rog.

2. INTRODUCTION OF THE VIRGIN FOREST RAJHENAVSKI ROG

The virgin forest Rajhenavski Rog is situated in the middle of Kočevski Rog, a vast area in the southern part of Slovenia. The virgin forest of fir and beech has been growing here over millennia and was inaccessible until recently. In 1892 a visionary man, forester dr. Hufnagl, made a remark in forestry plan "let there be a virgin forest..." and hand over precious natural heritage, a virgin forest, never touched by an axe, to natural laws, eternal cycle of life and death. The first untouched areas were departments 38 and 39, which became part of today's famous, oldest and most important virgin forest in the

southern part of Europe - Rajhenavski Rog (Hartman 1987). Today, this virgin forest provides a unique research workshop and place to study. Forestry students from all over the world come to visit this undisturbed ecosystem, which evolved for thousands of years, guarding ancient information on the stability, safety, harmony and survival of the forest. The majesty of virgin forests is in their giant old trees, which can measure up to fifty meters high and up to 2 meters in diameter and which can be as much as 500 years old. When Columbus discovered America a young fir had already started its life in Rajhenavski Rog. Walking on the narrow footpath, under these giants, we feel so small, vulnerable and fragile...but no cutting, cleaning of rotting trees, picking of mushrooms, flower picking or even disturbing of silence is allowed in this protected area where endangered predators like brown bear, wolf and lynx can still be found. Rajhenavski Rog is also a very important protected area for birds, and is home to many ecologically sensitive species, e.g. Collared and Red-breasted Flycatchers, Balkan and Three-toed Woodpeckers and Ural owl, each of which are considered as very rare breeders in Slovenia (Perušek 1989). Visitors to the center Jurcek can satisfy their curiosity about all these species by taking a walk along the special didactic path leading between the protected virgin forest and an adjacent managed forest.

3. TODAY`S CHILDREN AND “NATURE-DEFICIT DISORDER”

When I first started my career as an outdoor educator there were two kinds of pupils: those from rural areas, who knew how to climb trees, ride a bike, catch a fish, listen to wind in a forest, and kids from cities, which typically did not have the outdoor skills that their rural counterparts possessed. Today, my colleagues and I have observed that there is only one type of student and, unfortunately, that student does not have the outdoor skills that his predecessors had. Louv (2005) described these pupils as suffering from “nature-deficit disorder”. They are robbed of the experience of playing outside.

There are many reasons why today`s children spend their spare time indoors, behind screens, including “screen lure”, parental fear, their parent`s working hours, too many afterschool activities and media overload. The results of this phenomenon are frightening. As Kaiser Family Foundation`s extensive studies in 2005 show, children and teens between the ages of eight and eighteen spend about six and a half hours daily with various forms of media. A typical day in the life of a child today includes three hours in front of television; two hours spent listening to a radio, CD or MP3 player and one hour playing computer games. That`s forty five and a half hours in an average week for media bombardment, more time than at full time job. But these numbers are even more frightening when one compares them to the time typically spent

each day on other important activities. More specifically, children spend only forty-three minutes for reading, a bit over two hours with their parents and hour and a half for some sort of physical activities during the course of a typical day.

Moreover, updated data (2010) show a dramatically increased amount of time spent for entertainment media because of multitasking (using more than one media simultaneously). Today, children are using an alarming 7:38 hours for media entertainment each day. This disturbing trend equates to almost 10:45 hours if multitasking is taken into account.

Parents should be aware, that research has shown that the recommended amount of physical activity for children should be one hour of moderate activity every day (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2008).

In the Slovenian children population, the incidence of nature deficit disorder is not as alarming as in other countries; however, the tendency for outdoor deficit is rising. To counter this trend, we have to adapt our outdoor education program, especially sport activities, because today`s children simply cannot cope with yesterday`s standards and norms. They appear to have a much better understanding of nature science, but this is often fact-based. Stated otherwise, they can see a tree, but cannot see the forest behind the tree.

Today`s multimedia children know all sorts of factual data, but are at a loss for words when asked “How do you catch and grip a frog?”. They have all sorts of multimedia toys and gadgets, but ten year old boys don`t know how to drive a bicycle because they live in a city and their fathers don`t have the time. They can connect to the internet to check on a Facebook profile in the middle of vast forest, but they ask for instructions on “How to make a pee in the forest?”

Gone are the days, when children came home from school, threw their school bag in the corner and went outdoors to play with their friends in forests, fields, and near the river`s. The child of yesterday used all his imagination and knowledge to make a small tree house (which was their own castle) and that same child put all his ingenuity to make a small modification to a bike, so the bike could be faster than the neighbor`s. As it looks now, children have lost this important connection to nature and have lost important skills that were a given just a generation ago.

4. THE PEDAGOGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE VIRGIN FOREST

The Virgin forest of Rajhenavski Rog is only 15 kilometers away from Kočevje, the major town in the Kočevska region. Because we visit this virgin forest with 6-11 year old pupils, we have to take a bus to take us to the starting point. I always use this time to ask the pupils: “What do you expect to see in the virgin

forest?, Will there be any difference?, How will they know, that they are in the ancient untouched virgin forest?" The children usually answer by stating: "Trees will be old and overgrown with moss...Forest will be impassable...There are a lot of animals...There will be a lot of noise (screaming animals)...There are many bears and wolves... There are a lot of spiders and venomous snakes."

The importance and positive effect of outdoor education school in nature have been studied and documented frequently (Louv 2005, Gros 2002, Torkar 2006, Zalokar Divjak 2008). Therefore, taking a cue from these studies, when we visit the virgin forest, the main features of our forest education are:

4.1 THE QUALITY OF FOREST EDUCATION AND ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVES OF COMPULSORY SCHOOL PROGRAM IS MUCH BETTER IN A VIRGIN FOREST.

Among the main compulsory curriculum objectives, for the first three grades, is to show pupils various natural environments, biodiversity and huge differences in sizes of plants, trees and animals. The Virgin forest has it all. It has three times more total growing stock per hectare than a managed forest (Perušek 1991). We can observe the entire life cycle of the life and death of a giant tree. Pupils can see, hug and touch a 500 year old fir tree. Additionally, this forest has a high diversity of mosses,

fungi, ferns, insect`s. Even colors and odors of the forest are diverse. Here, we can still see tracks of endangered large predators and make plaster cast of paws. Is there any better place for pupils to learn all that?

4.2 OBSERVING THE SURROUNDINGS OF THE VIRGIN FOREST WITH LIGHT PHYSICAL EXERCISE HAS A POSITIVE EFFECT ON A CHILD'S INTELLECT AND MEMORY.

Our didactic path through the virgin forest is approximately 2 kilometers long and usually takes 2-3 hours to walk through, even when walking with 6 year old pupils. For many of the students this is their first encounter with a forest trail. The combination of a new environment, unfamiliar objects, potential danger and modest physical activity provided by this walk in our virgin forest ensures a constant flow of fresh air and blood to the brains, which work faster and more efficiently. During the walk I tell them interesting stories or show them special plants and fruits. We can even find bear tracks or hear the songs of endangered birds.

4.3 EDUCATION IN THE VIRGIN FOREST DEMANDS ALL OF A PUPIL`S RECEPTORS TO BE ACTIVE SO THE PUPIL IS ACTIVE PARTICIPANT OF LEARNING PROCESS.

Because they have neglected their senses, other than eyes, we often stop and use them. We can hear wind, trees, leaves, bees, woodpeckers and owls. We can smell rotten wood, fungi, soil, essential oil of plants, and crushed leaves. We can touch different tree bark, leaves, plants, fungi, and soil. As one example of the learning opportunities that can be found in our virgin forest, the children are often astonished at how much water can be squeezed out of a piece of dead wood. Another technique we use to teach children about their other senses (when we are out of protected zone) is to play a very popular game called "Blind Trail" from Cornell (1994). Blindfolded pupils must use other senses to get across the forest with a help of a tiny line. There are various natural/unnatural things strapped to the line and at the end, they must describe what they touched along the way.

4.4 CHILDREN'S IMAGINATIONS ARE LET LOOSE IN THE VIRGIN FOREST, WHICH HELPS THEM WITH THEIR CREATIVITY.

Pupils can observe dead trees with many holes from woodpeckers, which can't be seen in the managed forest. Trees can also have diseases (tree cancer) or fungi infections and their wood can be deformed. In these deformities we can see various faces, animals and things (e.g. gnome`s). Pupils of all ages love to build small gnome houses, villages, towns from forest material because natural materials

provide far more opportunities and offer greater choices for creative play than school playgrounds and indoor places. Our children often ask later to visit their gnome house to make some adjustment or improve it.

4.5 THE VIRGIN FOREST OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSITIVE GROUP INTERACTIONS.

Because of the remoteness of the virgin forest, its mystic environment and the possibility of an encounter with a large predator, the group is more cohesive and more connected. Many grudges between pupils are fast forgotten because they must help each other to climb over the giant tree trunk. This interdependence is even more obvious when they help a classmate with special needs. Often the children will even compete to determine who is going to help the special needs student more.

4.6 THE RELAXED ATMOSPHERE OF OUR VIRGIN FOREST EDUCATION PROGRAM PROMOTES TRUST.

Our outdoor education program is different from other nature education programs. Pupils and teachers are living together for five days and get to know each other from different angles and in different circumstances. The focus of the outdoor program is not productivity

but new experiences, new aspects and to show the students how much fun and challenge can be found in nature. After spending a few days in our outdoor education program, we often hear from students' school teachers about how the program has changed a student for the better. "This kid is different. Back in school I have constant behavioral problems, now I barely notice him", is a comment we hear frequently.

Conducting an outdoor education program in protected areas requires some special attention. We are only guests in the virgin forest and because our pupils have little to no experience with meeting a bear, finding a snake or eating forest fruits they must be warned and (if necessary) supervised. Another aspect is footpath erosion. It takes only 600 steps on the same turf in one year and it may collapse (Vrhunec 2006). There is a zero tolerance for litter in virgin forest (obviously), but we can still find some small waste. It can be embarrassing to show pupils this ancient virgin forest only to have them find a plastic bottle in the forest. Before entering the forest, pupils are always warned of noise pollution and the possible negative influence of noise on the rare breeding habits of birds and mammals. We do our best but noise cannot be always muted with a group of 6-11 years old pupils.

5. CONCLUSION

We are never bored in the virgin forest. It's the best classroom a teacher could want, because it's never the same. Together with pupils we can spot something new and magical every single day. Regardless of the hour, the weather and the season - it's the eternal cycle of life and death that makes the virgin forest a magical mixture of colors, sound and smells.

The virgin forest of Rajhenavski Rog is a place where many stories live and some fairytales too. Never underestimate the power of a story (or a fairytale). I haven't met a pupil yet who remained indifferent when a powerful and magical story about brutal forces of nature, secret weapons of plants or struggling to survive was told. Regardless of age, we all like stories.

The work of the teacher in an outdoor education center is often difficult and involves a significant level of responsibility but the positive effect of an outdoor education program on the lives of the children we teach and the glow in the eyes of the children is what matters most at the end of the program. Because of the relaxed atmosphere of our program it's sometimes hard to maintain the focus of our young pupils, many of whom don't necessarily learn by listening, but rather mainly by observing teachers and adults. If we as outdoor educators are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, we will unlock the potential of the outdoors for our students, so it's crucial that the

outdoor teacher has positive attitude toward nature and uses appropriate methods so pupils from first the three grades of primary school can trust and respect him.

The effect of learning in nature cannot always be seen right away, but when I talk to parents and hear them tell me that their child talked for days about the virgin forest after participating in our program, then I know the virgin forest has touched them.

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THE CHILDREN IN THE WOODS / THE SIMPLE WAY IS OFTEN THE BEST WAY

JAN-KÅRE FJELD

First I would like to thank the board of the EOE that I was invited! When the headteacher and myself were making the basic plans for our after school activities back in 2005, we agreed that our idea of bringing the children into the woods was so great that we would try to encourage all our colleagues to do so – both on a local, regional, national – and international level: and here I am in Finland! Thank you!

Before I return to the core of this lecture, I want to say a few words about after school activities in Norway, called SFO. After a resolution from the Ministry of Education, it became mandatory for all primary schools to have ASA from autumn 1991, as, among other things, a preparation for the planned new curriculum coming in 1997, when the school starting age was changed from 7 to 6 years. After school activities are offered to pupils from 1st to 4th grade. It is not compulsory, but in Norway 150.000 pupils attend ASA.

And in Fredrikstad alone, 2000 children spend 3-4 hours a day with after school activities as part of the schoolday.

There is no law, and only, at best, vague local regulations, that says what ASA is supposed to be apart from playtime – with feeding - for the children. This means that the quality differs a lot from school to school, even though the parents pay a large monthly fee to send their children to SFO. And this is a big problem in Norway, with lots of parents complaining, though they still continue to use SFO or after school activities, anyway, because they are working and not home until late in the afternoon.

But this fact, that there are only minor regulations for ASA, is actually putting an even heavier weight on the shoulders of both the head of the school and the head of after school activities. What I want to emphasize is that we all have to be aware of that big responsibility and take action to meet this with good and sufficient content, based on the knowledge needed to run a good SFO. For the children's very best and to the parents satisfaction. That is, at present time, not the common situation in Norway. But things can be done, and maybe the things that have to be done, is to give our children better opportunities for outdoor experiences, knowing what research says, as we heard Liz tell about yesterday, about the significance of spending more time

outdoors and preferably in the woods, as means of improving both physical and mental health.

So what was so great about our idea? Well, we had the children, we had the woods, we had the teachers and assistants that were willing and able to go for this – and we knew that with this decision to offer 15 hours or so per week outdoors, in fresh air, with more physical activity and a clear focus on healthy food, we would be giving a good answer back to health workers' and health authorities' worries on how to cope with the increasing weight problems and in all more and more unhealthy lifestyle among also our youngest ones.

What I also would like to emphasize in this lecture is that it doesn't have to be very hard to increase the volume of childrens (and youths) physical activity. But we must be willing to take the simple steps required!

At our school, a countryside primary school with 160 pupils situated 10 kilometres outside the city centre of Fredrikstad, Norway, we decided six and a half years ago that our approach towards the constant increasing physically inactive lifestyle amongst the young ones should be to move our 50 SFO-kids, that is the children who attend before and after school activities, from indoors to outdoors. How can it be simpler? Move the kids half a metre, "through the wall" – and voila! – you immediately have more physical

activity! Research also tell us that being outdoors automatically generate more moving around, the use of the whole body, in big motor movements.

So, since the autumn of 2005, we have been outdoors every hour (from 1 – 5 a.m.), every day, every week, every month, through all four seasons, giving the children no other option but to play out in the woods and in the fields surrounding the school and our wilderness camp. If this sound like something too rough and tough for the children, ask yourself what we ask ourselves if doubt should occur: how can any responsible parent possibly think that playing outdoors in fresh air for two, three, four hours per day, is destructive to their child? Well, the answer is as simple as the whole project: they can't.

Nor can we. We have the children, we have the playground, meaning the woods and fields, and these two are very easy to combine – if we want it. And if we, the roll models, want to take part in it. And here we are, in my point of view, at the very bottom line when it comes to obstacles preventing us from doing it the simple way, the efficient way, the low cost way, the healthiest way: the grown ups. If we don't want to take on the challenge from "four-seson-weather", preparing us with proper clothing, good planning and a nevermind attitude towards weather conditions, we have lost before we even have started.

BUT: once the right choice is made, you stand with three easy-to-obtain means that will, if you are consistent, reward you with success:
You have the children in the palm of your hand
You have the best of all facilities, FOR FREE!
You have the best resources to achieve wanted results literally right there, not depending on anyone or anything else: YOURSELF

What comes next is good planning. And no fear concerning “not knowing enough”. What we have experienced through six and half years of wilderness camp work is that, in addition to the basic interest, is that the road is built as we walk. Jump into it, you will float, I guarantee you.

But back to planning: at our SFO, we base our outdoors, all-year-activities on a four level plan:

A sketch

of the year

telling us what we want to work with on a

Monthly basis (each month has it's own “main activity”, referring to what season we're in) challenging, stimulating and providing us with ideas for the

Weekly based plan showing details for

Every day

This keeps us constantly on our toes, getting the most out of both ourselves and the children. A MUST FOR SUCCESS IN THE WOODS.

What do we do? Well, our motto is "Everything is possible", so we DO provide the children with offers like theatre, music, dance, handcraft, card board games, books – all kinds of activities you normally wouldn't associate with being outdoors. Saying this as an answer to the skeptics who are quick to ask for these activities, referring to each child's needs and abilities.

BUT:

First and foremost, we promote and facilitate mostly for the big motor movements, making the heart beat faster and the lungs work harder, in order to help the children getting stronger, healthier • and happier!

So we

PLAY FOOTBALL

Ski

Play hockey

Dance

Walk and run

Go skating

Play on skateboards

Ski downhill

Bike

Skijump

Climb

Jump

Swim

Padle the canoo

Go bearhunting

Chop wood

Build cottages

Pick berries and mushrooms

Cook • .

Etc, etc., etc....

What do we get?

WEATHERPROOF CHILDREN WHO LOVE THE EXTREME WEATHER

Children who dresses fast and properly

Children with improved stamina

Children with improved motor movements

Children with better sport skills

Children with improved 努力ood skills"

Children who knows how to use an axe, knife, saw and hammer

Children who knows how to make a campfire

Children who knows how to cook splendid, nourishing meals outdoors
Etc., etc., etc.

And the best of it all:

IT'S EASY TO DO

IT'S CHEAP

IT'S ALL AT YOUR HAND

IT'S ALL UP TO YOU

BEING: 101 WAYS "INTO THE WOODS"

STEVE BOWLES

Just before my lecture for the European Institute conference in Finland 2011 we seemed to have a technical fault with the computerised systems. In fact I was happy at that. I had a good excuse to avoid screens and pictures and keynotes and I had the possibility to try and say something face to face at the heat of the moment. As I started my face to face presentation I felt a strong smile within and a naughty kind of childlike satisfaction. Those computers had lost the day this time and I was free again. I had escaped Nokia Land and I could then, just, be 101 ways "Into The Woods" in an active sense.¹

Being in the woods has often been an act of revolt and planned revolt at that as the woods were places to get lost and away from officials and

¹ The very appreciation of an Orwellian "Big Brother" or any system of covert surveillance smacks of contemporary times. It also smacks hard as it avoids and hides away authentic communication(s). Is it ironic that Finland has a history of liberty through the forest yet still boasts about Nokia land? But anyway I tried my best, in that lecture, to play a small part in a kind theatre where the audience might imagine themselves and thereby imagine again and again as human being might unfold. I had no place to hide away. Such was the adventure. In this a kind of theatre performance was "on-the-way" and such was no bad thing.

government controls. In Finland the woods were often seen as a place to avoid taxes.

In fact the woods were so dangerous to governments that Finland made laws to ban group meetings in the woods. The woods here were subversive and secret places that were beyond surveillance and officialdom. You can, as the reader of this text, now sense my childlike smiles at avoiding computerised systems for my lecture during that conference. Surveillance denied just a bit.

What is more is that Finns loved dancing and drinking "in the woods". That was soon to be banned too although such bans were less than effective. The Finnish woods and Dionysus and dances were usually much stronger than governmental attempted controls of the radical libidinal social bodies at play.

In the UK we can find many similar themes at work. Outdoor places were often places for early trade unionists to meet in secret because the spying for government and business were always attending the meetings in the pubs.

In the senses that I write here the woods are places for human being away from this or that system of controls. Away from surveillance. In this the woods was a radical place to be from the perspective a social-political orderings.

In a very real sense this radical "into the woods" experience would also be a living conflict with the various systems of control which includes the Outdoor Adventure Education and Experiential Learning officialdoms that officiate.

However this radical place to be "into the woods" vis-a-vis the city and the industrial capitalist political economy was just one face of this elemental and enduring experience. In a way of saying : there is so very much more than this to Being 101 ways "Into the Woods". More than we may merely think.

Into the woods has also a wonderful sexual history that is both serious and humorous. This is as any good Boy Scout or Girl Guide will easily recall. The going "camping" into the woods for Scouts was always as much about the sex and freedom as it was about obeying the laws that insisted upon being "clean in thought, word and deed". Evangelical programmes have tried so hard to avoid these sex in the woods activities. They make their money from social work and plasticised therapy instead. Bless us all. The Soul Trades on the massage table again and again.

We all wait for more well funded research to be made in this naughty area.

We must remember too those "wandering scholars" who have written and learnt so well within the outdoor adventure worlds of forests and woods. Both love and lust found freedom in the woods. Books from the wandering scholar, Patrick Leigh Fermor ? Oh yes, and books from many others too. ²

The forest and the woods spring out and blossom with sexual activity a'plenty but we still await well funded research on this matter of elemental urgency.

The hidden Evangelical Outdoor Education and Adventure Learning things have yet to handle the deep roots of that Being into the woods. In fact most existing research and writing from the high towers of conformity refuse such sexual and sensual essences that are, peradventure, quite wonderful. I ask just which "into the woods" experience is for you. This one?

The woods are also places for murder. Where better to kill somebody?
Indeed the history of the forest and the woods is full of nasty and evil death.

² Sex in the woods is sometimes a kind of lust and sometimes a kind of love or a mix of both. What brings this lust and love together is this place that is often called "woods". Orgasms under the safety of the trees and under the sensed stars at night? God forbid. Whatever next, we ask. Jesus wept soon we will need to talk of sex, politics and nature. German folk tales were recorded by Patrick Leigh Fermor and it was clear that love and lust was quite natural under the trees and in the wilds. German folk would even sing songs about this in the pub. It can be that we no longer live in such times of innocence.

The forest is also full of rape. Where better to rape somebody? Brutal places.

This is well said through traditional stories that range from contemporary newspapers to the warnings from so called childrens stories from 19th Century Germany or typical countryside folk-ways as simple poetics and easy-to-learn kinds of rhymes. Young children are warned about evils in the forest. This for very good reason no matter the ideological contents within that warning.³

But of course if you go down to the woods today you may see Teddy Bears having a picnic. Now that is real therapy and quite cynical therapy too. You may meet a big bad wolf. You might get eaten alive. Or you might starve to death or just rot away as Nature parades an inconspicuous consumption.

³ Let us make no mistake here. The "woods" can be nasty places and full of nastiness. There is nothing, that I can see, that brings me to that feeling of "the woods" being a place that is fancy-spiritual per se. Being into the woods might well critique city-capitalism for good reason but a being into the woods can also be hell-on-earth. I remember the novels of Maxim Gorky. He would never allow us to ignore the nasty ways and the pathetic ways of the woods and people in poverty. But we must we must remember too that Maxim Gorky was one of those wandering and scholarly types that would adventure outdoors and learn a few things here and there. Is it possible that we miss such voices today? I am not so sure. All I do know is that for Maxim Gorky the forests and the woods were never a playground for "forestry-woody" consumers.

But let us make now that eternal return to the Romantic traditions in another way. Let us consider William Wordsworth, the sly and sensible critical poet of a life lost and yet to be authentically gained, again, sometimes.

Wordsworth wanted to be with the woods and the outdoors. He wanted to be with. He sensed that to try and go "into the woods" was somehow false. He sensed that which was already lost and that which was still possible.

He also acted in strong ways against those big landowners that would stop everyday folk from just walking and taking a recreation on privatised land. There is much more to a William Wordsworth than just a mere Romantic "outdoors". Wordsworth acted as he fought against big landowners and their puppet politicians. Wordsworth could break down walls and open windows.

But this was, maybe, due to his basic philosophy that drove his feelings. That urged on his words and actions – words and deeds mixed up as it were. We read William Wordsworth through his words as a basic philosophy thus :-

" ... My object is to give pictures of Nature, Man and Society...." ⁴

⁴ That generalised picture from Wordsworth whereby Humankind and Society and Nature would be alive and dynamic seems to me still to be a kind of beautiful picture which must have within some truth. Even a radical artist or theoretical research scientist might agree there. I have tried, in my past writings, to keep true to this kind of

Wordsworth well knew that 101 ways were reasonable and necessary to consider constantly through any engagement or entanglement as a journey with the woods or outdoors. This Wordsworth was no mere Romantic of self.

Pictures of Nature, Being and Society are so much more than any mere me or self or commodity. Wordsworth sensed ways with a real peopled-woods.

But Wordsworth wrote in the early 1800s in England. Is that a long time ago? Is Wordsworth banned from "our" forests" and "woods" today as we make our "learning centres" as a monotheism whereby critical adventure is forbidden?

Has the poetic imagination and even literature itself become a long lost and ignored soul of any official Outdoor Adventure Education today?

To reply to my own questions I might say, as hyperbole, that contemporary outdoor adventure based and experiential learning systems have followed the Dark Side of the Force and through an idle following of various neo-positivist and neo-behaviourist banners have stamped, Ork-like-hard, upon both a poetry and prose of the imaginative kind. But still alive on the edges and borders there are many elves and hobbits and even angry trees that

beautiful truth as I have always known, somehow, that the Individual, the Social and the Elemental are like a holy trinity. Forget one and the beauty is lost and the truth flies away too.

remain alive. Being "into the forest" and Being "with the forest" is political conflict.

At that conference in Finland I was happy in that my poem was appreciated by many folk. I was happy at that not because of any special merit of my poem but happy because it was accepted as reasonable and valuable way with words and worlds as deeded as a maybe-communication inacted.⁵

Like most poetry it is almost impossible to measure its critical merit and like most writers of poetry I can hardly remember now some of the images that flowed during the writing itself. But such is one aspect of the poetics of a consciousness that dwells within a Maybe outdoor "into the woods" world.

⁵ The poetic communication(s) may not satisfy management training regimes or reach ideological targets and goals but such is good. The poetic communication(s) are maybe alternative ways, otherness ways and critical ways to sense the "soul" of life and humanity. Such is a deep ingredient of both science and philosophy and such a poetic act simply and beautifully joins into the big game of understanding acts. I would claim that a bit of poetics helps us keep our rational feet firmly on the real ground. I would claim too a presence here that is a presence that is of that kind which only helps reveal sometimes that which is big.

It remains for others to interpret, if necessary or desired, such poetic images. It is healthy and good for any poem to become a peopled-event thick and full of variable interpretations so that poetry itself can move on with Being, alive. I suspect that a poem is rather much like a so called "Fairy Tale" or a Grimm Tale where the imagination and the connections made are always so very much more than any science or a psychology can handle well. These poems and "Fairy Tales" are so much closer to the adventure and the Being "Into the Woods" than I can tell in any fashion of this or that orthodoxy of well seated congregations under the pulpits of well programmed facilitation techniques.

The extra-ordinary and the enchanting tales whereby "Into the Woods" comes alive is thick and alive with those elemental, social and individual weeds that will usually get plucked from the geometrical gardens by well ordered souls.

Fear not. For the adventure will remain. Well, before and beyond, the reach of the official weed killers and the purifiers of the woods.⁶

⁶ The woods, just like the stars at night or the new born baby will do well and continue peradventure. That much we know already. But it is not so easy to really know what we know. The adventure here is often the big "why" question. That which is beautiful calls us to understand it all.

Yet the necessity for banal and irritating rationalities remains so powerful. So it ought to be said today that the adventure is always before and beyond as the meaning is never quite grabbed or grasped in the here and now. The difficulty of the poetic imagination "Into the Woods" is always with meaning that is never, yet, quite there. Such is the bane of official well ordered woods.

The adventure "Into the Woods" is always a happening whereby an absence is coming alive and an idle routine necessarily denied. This adventure has the power to reveal that which is well hidden. But such is not all of Being-With the woods. So many ways, so many ways. So many alternatives, sometimes.

Anyways. So my poem, as my angelic wings, fly me to the sun. But first I must write away my devilish horns before that poem may show itself as a rather nice and (in)appropriate maybe-world. Poesy is best at the end.⁷

⁷ I only say this because I feel that poetics is best when it is moving both before and beyond that which is already said. The poetical praises that which is not yet said but maybe said soon. But I remain slow here as the poetic act seems to be much more evident from the mountains or the coastal areas or the cities. It is time for me to think more deeply about this poetics that might be evident from with a forest where few big horizons can be seen. Yet at the beginning or end of a "day" it maybe that poetics captures that moment in time. Such maybe when science and poetics hold hands together before and beyond.

During that Finland conference I also talked about many other aspects of this Being "Into The Woods". In every wood there is at least a small pond or a lake somewhere around and about. That is something to throw stones or things into. That is where this throwing of things into water makes waves.

Usually these water-waves move in concentric circles. These waves just move on and get bigger and wider in a very geometrical kind of way. If we throw out stones or things into the water where there are rocks or other things around then these concentric circles get blasted to pieces and return as a kayaking person will well understand in a wild rapid or a sea. The good term clapotis is used for these rebounding waves that clap their hands upon us. Anyway one young lad from a social-worker kind of forest camp found me throwing things into the water. I was just having a break from all the work. He sat down beside me and began to throw his own things into the water. His waves hit the rocks and bounced back to him. My waves were without rocks.

This is the difference between your life and mine. That he said to me. Just a simple trip to the woods and waters allowed that young troubled lad and I to talk a little about concentric and eccentric movements. But the talk was less than the event itself. We were open to an elemental conversation together but it was that elemental moment that remained significant and meaningful. I just threw stones into the water and this troubled "youth at risk" worked his

magic upon me. This was a hermeneutic event that was "on-the-way" to possibilities.

That young troubled lad led me into a world of study which I have still to continue. He helped me learn about concentric and eccentric differences. Yet I was being paid to help him. This was a splendid serendipity of the most elemental kind. For both of us this was a movement. That I cannot forget. A happening. Such is one aspect of Being together "In The Woods" perchance and peradventure. Who and what was that "educator"? Elemental quicksilver?

I was lucky that that troubled youth came down to the water with me and then threw stones and chatted. I think of him often and just wonder how he is doing. That after 20 odd years. I sense he is ok. We were together for those wonderful moments. Memory remains as togetherness now today as I write. Significant memories may be forged in such simple ways as Being "Into The Woods" where mysterious peopled-things become hermeneutically alive.⁸

⁸ I am only saying here that sometimes, many times, a conversation can release many once hidden meanings and such conversations are often quite unplanned or prepared beforehand. Such a "happening" is more like a meeting "perchance" and peradventure as it is through any well programmed process. Simple? Hope so. A meeting of differences in the scheme of life itself. That is significant. Something that awakes the sleep or a dream or a nightmare. Just a something not yet understood. Maybe just something from the postman Hermes mixing it all up again and at play

That young troubled youth began a conversation that enchanted me and from there we just carried on chatting in a friendly hermeneutical way until such time as we both were called to get back into the official programme. For the next few days we had many a smile together. We knew something together.

As I was being paid for that work my stone throwing friend was without choice or power. He was forced to "be there". A troubled youth channeled into a kind of programme. Yet, I believe, the forest waters and the waves helped us find a kind of togethness. He felt good in our conversation that made sense to him and I went away to struggle with postmodern theory and all to my absurdity.

That troubled youth and I met as strangers in a strange world. Yet, somehow, our strangeness became alive and we communicated a little. I guess we both knew that there was much more to this strange world than the programme we were both under. Even today I feel a kind of deep attachment to him.

with messages that might mediate between-worlds or even move towards a kind of transformation of thinking itself into-the woods. As the concentric meets the eccentric circles it seems, as if, our simple throwing stones into the water becomes a kind of insight into science itself as a "third-other" emerges and is revealed. No matter (no pun) this insight this kind of illumination with human-folk, nature and society seems to me to be just one part of the essence within our work. It may well be that often a dyad and triad feeds of each other as life itself. That third-other seems to be always around betwixt and between and with just that which is always somehow becoming.

We were both lost in a lost world. Me doubting my part in this programme and him forced into this programme. When he left we found time and place just to smile together again and say good luck and all that. A significant moment. It was significant in the sense that deep meaning was made, as if some strange and elemental message was received, as if a Hermes had delivered the post. As if we both had that kind of adventurous courage to open the post in times of trouble. We both had entered into hermeneutic circles peradventure as the future possibilities somehow enchanted us without ready-made words or concepts. Maybe we both felt that marginality which might just, sometimes, reveal a kind of openness to that which was once hidden away.

During my lecture one part of my head was saying to me to talk more about this concentric circles theme but like a cat I avoided that talking and I just continued with my lecture that tried to explore our worlds safely and homely. Like a cat I sensed that far too much is said when there is, in fact, so little that can be said. I was fearful of the "Gods". Perhaps. But, let it be said, that our sense of concentric circles became embedded within our lives. For me that was an education. For him that was an education too. But we were different.

The hermeneutics here involved many answers adrift and floating on the waves of ups and downs as we all swim in stormy waters. Yet there was a small message getting delivered. I think we both felt that and maybe he will

return. Maybe he will be open to my story. Maybe we meet again with the elemental and accept magical moments. Maybe we meet again find together more with more borders to cross or become heavy again in a world of ultra lite-ness. We related to something that was "other" but was still understood.

The education for me was immense. The education for him? All I know is that the fancy-full something was alive and well this time. But what more? I guess such a question is all about any education itself. But that is just a guess.

I also talked about a wonderful Finnish writer and his book "The Year of the Hare". Arto Paasilinna (English translation 1995) wrote his story in a very Finnish way where to go "into the woods" was often a kind of escape from the city life and a kind of return to basics and Finnish Romantic culture. To have a simple summer-house in the "wilds" was a Finnish tradition so very strong for many years of the late 20th Century. City folk could finally enjoy the woods and be free from the past, from the woods, as poverty and toil. The summer house in the woods became a kind of new escape as it became a kind of glorification of the city life.

Arto Paasilinna wrote his story from a perspective of an alienated soul, a journalist with no reason-to-be and a city-worker who was choking without a meaningful existence. He also wrote with humour which was so important but alienation just as important too. It was a kind of "return" into the wilds that allowed his humour to find such a display that has turned into a popular and well translated book.⁹

Later I was to learn that some of the conference members had ordered that book. Many had enjoyed it. That made me happy. Such a book encourages an Outdoor Adventure Educator to keep on thinking and working full time and encourages that wonderful link between alienation and humour. It was as if there were now 102 ways "into the woods". But which one is for you or me?

⁹ The "Year of the Hare" book was a wonderful education and read. But we must also, I think, enjoy those other stories that help inform it. In Finland the famous writer Aleksis Kivi and his book "Seven Brothers" also told much of this story in the mid-nineteenth-century. It was a book that any American might enjoy after a Mark Twain tradition. The story here involves a flight into the forest and away from parts of society and then somehow returns, in a liminal sense, to a society anew. It is also interesting that Aleksis Kivi wrote his "Seven Brothers" from a position where even the "A B C" of education (in those 19th Century years made through the Church) was denied. In fact to go into the woods was a very firm revolt against such an education itself. I suspect many different countries have quite similar stories that were before but remain today. Yet somehow society itself emerged as Nature and the Human-kinds explored and discovered that triad of conflict, change and Being.

I say this here only because such is rarely said, or even given the chance to be said, in so much official writings from this Outdoor Education world that is so well programmed that an Arto Paasilinna would rather visit the local pub.

What is more is that this adventure of "into the woods" was also political. This book combined alienation, humour and the political with the elemental. Arto Paasilinna was far too simple for contemporary Outdoor Programmers. Yet his book has been translated into nine different languages. His story seems to have connected and continued. His "Into The Woods" story seems to have reached out and been as a concentric circle even for all his eccentricities.

Which way and why do we select this "into the woods" theme as a theme that seems to make sense? I ask this only because this "into the woods" theme is much more than we maybe "think it is" - unless that is we "think again" as the woods and the forests just smile heavily upon our fancy ways. But even then we are lost in the woods. Lost always lost. An adventure as a beginning?

But getting lost in the woods might be good sometimes. Just getting strange sometimes ok. Making sense from strange worlds peradventure maybe.

I also moved onto memories of an outdoor trip with European students and into the woods and forests of Swedish Lapland. These were all university level students and coming from many different European countries.

I tried to tell the story about just how shocked and even angry some of these students were during their first real camping trip "into the woods". If ever there was an example of the feeling that – the heaviest weight we all carry around in our rucksacks is that cultural baggage on our backs – then this was it.

To cut a long story short. Many European students expected and wanted a wilderness experience and expected "their wilderness" to be "provided for consumption". As if advertised in a tourist brochure. Unfortunately reality kicked in. The wilderness areas are still peopled and still alive with human communications. In Swedish Lapland the forests are big but people inhabit those "wilderness" areas. City-Wild nature is always "peopled" in some ways.

At our overnight camping site the students were confronted by three snow mobiles carrying three strong local males with beers. Time for a celebration?

These three snow mobiles and three males had quickly known that strangers were around and in their local "Street Corner Society". So it was clearly the right thing to do to meet up and offer a welcoming beer – especially to the

females in the student group. The noise of the snowmobiles was loud but the welcoming words from these three local men was quite soft and friendly.

Students were not impressed at all. This was not "their wilderness" at all. In fact the students showed a rather unfriendly and even aggressive attitude to those local men who really belonged there, lived there and worked there.

It is not my intention here to judge or proclaim this or that. Rather I try to say that this "Into The Woods" experience was a clash of cultures for all. Such a clash maybe educational and somewhat, sometimes, illuminating. Such a clash and a clapotis event might be a bit magical as we wake from sleep.

Maybe "my" students in the days after this event learnt something. They certainly discussed things and tried to see the story from a local viewpoint.

My point here would not be worth making if more of the Outdoor Adventure Education "programmes" would include such a basic experiential reality into the official work. Only a few academics write about such basic things, or so it seems. Professional Adventure Educational Programmers and Facilitators for Learning seem to ignore and escape away from such basics. That I think.

As a short comment by-the-way I might say that there may be a world of variable meanings attached to any "Into The Woods" event but such worlds of meaning will be knocked back by any official programming regime which lives and exists through best funded managerial risk-managements.

It is also the case, I think, that, to be fair, it takes a long time to really be into the woods and any quick "holiday" (even a Boot Camp holiday) will not be able to "get into" the woods as woods. "Being Into" is no easy aspect of Being itself as Being as Being. To find a kind of homeliness with the woods? That takes time, a longer-time, than is allowed or financed by thin-skinned and weak therapeutic systems.

Sometimes I sense quite strongly that Outdoor Learning ways of officialdom exhibit a kind of shallow and absurd perspective of both "Being Into" and a being into the woods. As I write this today (3rd November 2013) I see that in Europe we have Hungary changing its constitution and laws in the midst of a European Union and global demise. One of the things that Hungary rules as against the law and order is "homeless people" living in the woods. People in Hungary will no longer be able to set up a home in the woods without official permission and thereby a human "Being Into The Woods", as homely, is to be against the law. Being-into the woods has often been a safe-place-against

this or that law and order system (Robin Hood theme as "Social Bandit"?).
Thereby such is usually banned and criminalised.¹⁰

I would suggest here rather strongly that to understand this Hungarian issue today is also to understand the privatisation of land and the capitalisation of public places. In fact to understand much of this "into the woods" outdoor learning officialdom and so called "Adventure-based Learning" is best when that which is avoided and hidden away is revealed. Then, maybe, we can know ourselves. That might be a first step to any therapy. To understand our part in consuming the experience of "the woods" might enlighten sometimes.

¹⁰ Even "up here" in Lapland I have witnessed a local story where an old man was found in the forest. He had been "missing" from the official offices. When the social welfare department found him they insisted on his joining the system. They also insisted to pay him backdated social welfare monies. To cut a long story short this old "wilderness man" was taken to the big city and given money to spend. He then bought 10 televisions. He had the idea that these TV things added to the walls and the home. He just liked the art-work as it were. No electricity? No problem. He did not use electricity. This was from the late 1970s in Lapland. As I lived only a few hours walk from this "missing man" I began to learn something about this "Being With The Woods" as home rather than "experience". Do I romanticize? Not all all. I simply tell a story that is real and that happened and thereby ask myself a few deep questions about just what is and what is not. Such is one small beginning for any Outdoor and Adventure Education. Such is one appreciation, perhaps, of life itself. Into the woods? For whom?

Then, as I recall, I tried to talk about a North American tale. It was really north and the book was a beautiful story about just how a local "outdoors man" can meet an "city academic woman" and find a life together no matter what. This book was sent to me some years ago by the Canadian outdoor educator Bob Henderson who was involved in The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education. It was such a blessing. Bob Henderson saw in that book a kind of story which might give thoughts to others and sometimes illuminate. Thanks Bob. I hope that your gift to me may be a travelling gift to others.

The story was a human story of relationships but, at the same time, this story was about both city and local "outdoor" values. Capitalism was central too as an ideology quite much in conflict with any spirit of the woods or "outdoors".

The story was also about a northern "into to the woods" guy who fell in love with an academic gal who taught in the city university. Culture clashes oh yes and love oh yes. The story continues in this kind of way. It was a personal and lived-experience story. In some way the spirit of the cultural outdoors is expressed through this story. How does it end?

Well, if you do not read the book you will never know. Damnit, I should have been working in advertising I would have made lots and lots of money. I jest

with reason here. Why? Because I cannot spoil that wonderful book and I refuse to write a guidebook to any "Into The Woods" experience. So I jest as a good jester might and will. Safer that way when Kings and Queens can chop off your head. I jest as others write guidebooks. Better just to jest.

This good book talks about the best ways to avoid any kind of Management Programming techniques disguised as an Adventure Education. This good book also talks about love, sex, adventure and business politics through a looking glass of a "Reality Land" that helps us join a conversation that is all too often denied. Liked it I did. Educational it was. Most inappropriate?

It was all something like a letter to Karl Marx. When Marx called rural and outdoor folk "idiots" a new conversation begins. Somehow this book is so very simple that it demands deep thoughts. But here I play mischief games do I not? Here I play and hope. Oh yes. Being "into the woods" is full of mischief.

This book is best read and discussed from a simple campfire. That is free, in some ways, from the curricula that rules the rural idiots and youth-at-risk. But two people forged a loving relationship in this true story of the conflicts that are inherent as "Outdoor" folk mix with "City" folk for real. But this was no exotic weekend retreat and no escape. This relationship needed slow time to flourish. Yet it had many fast-time movements too. A dynamic relationship?

One big question here is about "time" and "speed". Are rural folk really so slow? Are city folk really so fast? What may happen when they meet?

The lovely book was " Halfway Man" (1989) by the writer Wayland Drew.

This book was also full of northern humour vis-a-vis city business ethics and polite manipulations. Outdoor folk usually have a wicked and wonderful sense of humour that city folk have yet to appreciate when they merely visit for some holiday or therapeutic experience.

Wayland Drew wrote this in the context of a discussion with a city lawyer who wanted to own the land :-

" If I want to hear
from an ASSHOLE
I'll fart."

(Halfway Man page 81)

Rural idiots can hit back at fast-time city lawyers with a deep smile.

One of the big points that I tried to make in my small lecture was just this. The so called outdoor folk, or those people really "into the woods", made a sense of humour about those that just visited as tourists or travelling opportunists. The city folk however would usually just label local folk as fools and idiots rooted in a slow thinking way that did not satisfy the reality of city-ways that were the best and only ways. The northern outdoor humour I feel deeply as I can laugh and smile about such conflicts. I can even fart as I write this and fart with a smile. But my lecture was also made with a perfumed smell of city decency. I lectured within a well perfumed city perhaps.

Perhaps I ought to have talked about a "troubled youth" on a social work programme. I remember it so well from the early 1970s in the UK. The simple memory for me is this. One such "troubled youth" came up to me and said a very simple comment that hit me deeply. He asked :-

"Why do you take us away for good weekends like this and then return us back into this city shit hole?"

Maybe there is much to be learnt from an "asshole" and "shit hole" as we venture "into the woods" and the great outdoors. Elemental, maybe. However the point here is that of a conflict rather than any "one way to be".

I suspect that the "Halfway Man" book by Wayland Drew might help open up pathways that are all too often avoided because they are not appropriate as they do not get funding and financial short-termed glory.

I also suspect that such books, that deeply sense the "into the woods" and the outdoor life experiences, are avoided by the Adventure Programmers and the Salvation Army and the vast array of Evangelical careerists. Maybe I write from the nether regions. But better to read "Halfway Man". Your own self?

Sometimes it is much better to read and discuss and think about that which is just not said in public. Sometimes we are better to involve ourselves in that which is inappropriate. Even Hermes delivered messages from "above" and yet still enabled critical thoughts. Civilisation is full of "other-worlds" that may be felt firmly through openness peradventure. Mediation? With otherness?

After that lecture I also received questions from a few people that wanted to say something or add more. I enjoyed that.

One question that I was asked quite shocked me. I was asked if I followed a way of Zen. I replied that I was not sure about that but I always enjoyed the writings of a Hermann Hesse. I could not think of any other way of reply. Yet this seemed to be good enough for one person to continue and seek out the many ways within nature and things and folk. My reply was just good enough for him to feel ok and free to carry on seeking for meaning and significance. Yes, my reply was "just good enough". A kind of openness was possible.

In fact Hermann Hesse was involved in our work with the outdoors. He was one member of a group that tried so hard to combat Hitler and then try so hard to encourage an Outdoor Education back in the 1940s in a war-mad Europe. Perhaps this is a history that remains to be written. Political you see.

But more than this Hesse delivered letters and post to us all in those times and then just went away to deliver more messages to others. It was always with an otherness that Hesse worked with. The vast differences within any humanity itself were, said Hesse, wonderful and beautiful. Such a critique of 20th Century Modernity and Capitalism was quickly hidden away again and again and Hesse became labelled as a Romantic follower of Zen things. Oh how our hidden churches refuse that otherness and translucent awareness which might, might often, illuminate through a hermeneutical "fogue" as a most

musical adventure experience. A conversation as betwixt and between differences as real lived-experiences enacted.

Another question that came to me was wonderfully direct. I was asked why I seemed to be in such a hurry when I had talked about slow-time and the outdoors. I replied quickly : " The bar is closing in five minutes". This was made all the better by the laughs. This small happening helped us smile. As one "Friluftsliv" philosophy says : "How far can we go with a smile". Nice that.

Then I was asked about this talk of hermeneutics. The question came from an active outdoor adventure therapist who was clearly working with those kinds of young people that cried out for something quite different in their lives. We then discussed around a small table just what life-experiences might mean to us all in a social and political-economic context. We discussed just what a significant experience might be for different people. We then discussed about the possibilities of troubled youth actually living one or more years alongside real "into the woods" folk communities. I enjoyed this opening up of a debate. I also felt that such a debate was to continue in worlds that were not mine alone. Such continues in ways that are both before and beyond, eternally.

With another conference group I chatted about even more than 101 ways of this "Into The Woods" theme. We chatted about young people learning to light a fire outdoors safely. This, in Finland, used to be a common education.

We also talked then about photography and theatre and the "arts" as made in the woods and "with" the outdoors. This was not just for "young offenders" as this was for all – old and young alike – as a liberal arts movement good for more than 101 different kinds of people. Painting? Poetry? Just planting a few seeds in some earth? I guess it all comes down to that Classical question of education itself. What is this education and learning that we espouse ? Can we handle the beast within this civilization of discontents?

We talked also about just discussing books, reading them and writing them, from within these many kinds of ambient radical "woods" situations.

Would a book written from the forests be different from a book written from a coastal shore or mountain? Was a forest viewpoint different from a sea shore or a mountain top as a writer or a thinker thinks and writes within-place?

These kinds of conversations encouraged me to continue conversation that may not always be correct conversations when an "Into The Woods" theme is on the menu. A theme or a concept is always on-the-move is it not?

Maybe these conversations help, just a little, to open up possibilities and the realities that can sometimes get ignored or forgotten through any "one way" system as a be all and end all programme with both inputs and outputs that somehow deny different ways of Being-Into the woods and "with life".

I guess I shared that kind of hope with others whereby a wide-wild world of humanity would not be hijacked by any one big "One-Way" orthodoxy.¹¹

A question that almost infuriated me at the time was this : " Why do you always talk against our work?"

I think I was less than polite in my answer which was : " Because I am with and for an Outdoor Adventure Education that might really matter". It was not a good reply and I sometimes, now, regret that. Conference chats are like that sometimes. Yet if I could have found a better response then who knows what might have happened. But at least I blasted out my basic assumptions.

¹¹ A one way orthodoxy is sometimes and often hidden. Even the most important words like " with", "and", "into" and "for" gets somehow put into a forgotten place whereby fancy fashionable terms rule the day. Big projects and programmes are often that devil within. The refusal of small words that might sink the big ship?

I will live to regret that but I was deeply travelling pathways into the woods that were less well travelled. The poetry of Robert Frost had grabbed me but such poetry admits the mistakes and the conflicts both within and without. Betwixt and between. In my reply I had become anti-education and rather arrogant. I regret that today but I cannot promise that the very same will not happen again someday. Those in education have a dutiful right to confuse me whenever I show signs of joining them in the acceptable-worlds of Being Well. Such a conflict is essential as we must often travel pathways that are rarely travelled. (the interested reader might just ask just why I do not talk of risk).

Maybe I could have said something "Into The Woods" being a folk-like thing and a peopled-thing. I might have asked about any learning experience or education. I might have allowed that infuriating question to move. But I did not do that then. Maybe next time I will learn as I get infuriated. Maybe.

I might ask just why we sometimes see the "Into The Woods" experiences as that which is attached to a "Waste Land". Or, for that matter, something that is attached to the "Pure Land". I must today centre myself upon such modern issues as I try to release myself from torment and conflict. I must DO and act myself too in the public sphere whereby both subjective and objective things

might, might just sometimes, be understood by both myself and others in a kind of togetherly way. That, when "things" are much more than mere things.

Words and words and fancy concepts? Yes and No, both, at times when any so called "Being Into The Woods" is just that. Why? Such a why question does seem to be a quite natural human condition of civilisation itself. But these kinds of questions seem to be opened up through a kind of Liberal Arts atmosphere and closed down through a managerial puppeteering programme built upon war-like targets and abstracted instrumental goals somehow amiss.

Being Into The Woods, just like trying to make a face-to-face presentation to a large audience, is always a deeply moving experience as movement itself takes on "itself" a kind of forceful presence as a wide range of differences try to remain somehow unified. There is a kind of elemental reality within.

But before I end in my eternal and habitual inconclusive way let me open up to that which was not said and that which was just waiting behind. Let me try to say something about my own backstage preparations which-yet remained

backstage although they deeply informed my presentation. Perhaps that which I did not say in public was just as significant as that which I did say.

Maybe that is just the way it is with our worlds of communication sometimes. I totally missed out the links to military, church and political organisations that have been within Outdoor Education ways over the last centuries. This was not a deliberate act on my behalf. This was a perchance fact then with idle hindsight now. But such huge matters informed my face-to-face presentation as a hidden-other informs.¹²

I was almost ready to make a few points about "Being Into The Woods" as a kind of elemental conversation with Modern Times where lost worlds become

¹² To try and say what can be said is quite impossible in terms of communication. We are always saying things that cannot really be said in the big picture of things and words. But in that lecture I felt quite strongly that something "else" was making this conversation. I just did not get around to talking about everything that I had planned to talk. I was, in one way, living the moment peradventure as I sensed the spirit of the place and the non-rational parts of me in an official performance. I guess this was more theatre than science. I guess also that this was a reasonable way to try and communicate. This arena of debate has long been spoken and written whereby the Arts and the Sciences have been sometimes polarised or sometimes been linked together. This has been going on for some time, 300 and more years. This debate that may be experienced and made "Into The Woods" is a possible world that might just find a place to breathe-in and breathe-out as difference itself. I do not say this lightly. In fact I say this from the dark underworlds of the deep forest itself. For whom does the forest bell ring? Now that is a question that Outdoor Adventure Education might ask of itself. Yes?

as significant as so called risky-futures. Something stopped me saying this. I was ready to make a critical point and then talk about the elementary forms of an Outdoor Adventure Education Life. But something stopped me.

But here and now, through this text, I sense a different possibility that is still face-to-face with any reader but yet still at a kind of distance whereby the social might emerge. The social aspects of "Being Into The Forest" have, for a very long time now, been totally refused by so many and most. Indeed the deep and often "hidden-other", that is the social, has been ignored by those that provide us all with fancy programmes that "add-value" to the "outdoors".

Modernity, which is one aspect of our consciousness today, was always a kind of play between lost worlds and future worlds whereby the elemental senses of Being compared and contrasted with new orders and freedoms. It seemed to me that Modernity itself was one part in this "into the woods" act that was often to be called "experience". Therefore the social forces acted with and against our Modern heads of both feeling and thinking things. Such social forces, which were and are firmly connected with any political economy were one face of of that Modern question : Who am I? Who am I when this world is so different? Who am I when this world insists that I have an identity?

What am I as a "self" who cannot escape the social? What am I when I seek the elemental truth of the forest and the wilds and then find only the freedom to die? How can I measure this in a way that satisfies Modern Ways and "Me" and "I" in doubt all the time? How can I measure myself?

Through the "Woods" and the "Wilds" may I find myself? Through this outdoor life might I find a learning experience? Surely I must "Dare To Know" myself. I might measure my Modern self when I dare to know Modern times wild-side.

This kind of appreciation of any Being Into The Woods might be enjoyed and might be acted upon. A slow reading of Charles Lemert (1995) from the social theory side(s) of "things" might open up a few doors and windows. He tried to make sense of one American guy who travelled into the woods to explore and to die. This was the well documented story of Chris McCandless (also called, by his own words, Alexander Supertramp and "Aesthetic Voyager") where the story is rather common and simple. Chris McCandless cut up his bank cards and just went "into the woods" to somehow sort out this "self" in "civilization" as it all seemed so heavy and somehow wrong. He wanted to "know himself" and he dared to know.

This all became a very big story in global proportions. A book was written by Jon Krakauer (1996) taking meaningful perspectives from this same Chris

McCandless and "Alexander Supertramp" episode. Both books inform and illuminate. But the social theorist, Charles Lemert, helps us all to consider this identity crisis that is a crisis much more than we might merely "think it is". If we read Lemert, however, we will need a kind a daring to know which is, in some way, always before and beyond. Such is elemental. Such is social too.

As "Alex Supertramp" adventured "into the wilds" he openly questioned his very reason for being. He questioned our civilisation itself through his action. But Modernity "itself" questioned "itself". So why did I not mention this in my lecture? Did I just deliver as a postman might merely deliver a message?

It may well be that to lecture face-to-face with an audience, without any kind of protective system, is somehow to be with a practical social world whereby any social "thing" is lived rather than critiqued during that moment of lecture. The practical social worlds that we all live-by are not easy but at least they are in some senses easy to get by with. We cannot live within a social world if we critique all the time those structures that communicate and continue even when we must do that to somehow change "things". Modernity throws us all into such contradictions as capitalism too smiles and progress smiles at us.

But maybe I just did not have that courage to really confront and then maybe I was just a part of "it all" (out there). Such is that contradiction through which our Modernity exists. Who am I, I ask, when I even doubt myself? Modernity.

Might I find myself through going into the woods or the forests or the wilds? If I can do just so then, then, we ask – will big bankers of Modernity be happy?

Time now for my poem? (a poem I may regret). Better now than never. To do is always to regret in some way or another but not to do is a different kind of sorrow that begets the deepest of guilts within our already fragile humanity as we all labour in love and..... doubt..... and..... our lost worlds that remain.

My Forest That Remains, Dead and Alive

My forest is not your forest
Your forest is different.
Much different, and more,

And different to mine.

My forest is what is left behind
That demands attention,
Interpretation,
Living, and yet still left behind.
And your forest is much, much, more
Different to mine.

Your forest is just a game
With a voice.
A voice that is just a game
A game
Reproduced,
By nothing much at all.

My forest is speaking to me with no voice
My forest is my echo
Not yours.
My forest speaks to me.
And,
To me alone, silently alone.

My forest divides you and me.
You are dead.
I am alive,
In my forest.

My forest is a silent echo that bounces
Back,
Bounces back, back, back
But not to you.

With my forest I know myself.
I know
Know
Myself.
Alone.
Alone, I am, in my forest
The Modern way.

But I know myself,
Alone, in repeats and repeats with that silent echo.
I know myself the Modern way
Alone, alone, shallow

In my forest.

Alone.

That's it now. I am off to drink a good beer with Aristotle in a good bar. He has promised to chat about those "things that might be". If I am lucky he will say a few things about the adventure and the elemental poetics. That if I am lucky. That if I can remain open enough to really "Being Into the Woods" today.

You see I am but a duplex and even a triplex human being living in a world that constantly tries to tell me that the elemental and the social is just not what we do. Therefore I seek out lost worlds that are evident and yet hidden.

If mystery flies away as science is capitalised then god bless those research scientists that carry on peradventure where mystery remains alive and well. It is just this kind of contradiction and space for freedom and authentic truth that enlivens the best of any "wild" outdoor and adventure education and this, as Charles Lemert says, is really a very big conversation with Modernity itself.

If the forests and the woods have somehow bred a culture of fate then god bless those that carry on working each and every day in forest-cultures. It seems to me that we might learn with this fate as risk analysis is so shallow.

Maybe we are beginning to talk here about identity and the political economy as it rationalises a duplex and even triplex human being. Or at least might try.

Maybe I justly fail to live with my "self" alone without doubt. Then maybe too I need Charlie Chaplin to laugh at this. Who am I when this Outdoor Adventure Education is so different? Who am I when I hope yet remain in doubt?

Perhaps we, in this outdoor adventure work, might consider the existential and the confrontational questions that allow a humanity to really "progress" as the "Big Stories" really matter. Such is Modernity in inevitable conflicts.

This kind of appreciation demands ever-new-looks at the duplex-human and the triplex-human as a being that moves with an "otherness" that informs.

But this thought of mine must also appreciate that any Postmodern-Turn is much more than we might merely think it is. Thank you Charles Lemert for that phrase.

Yet still I remain a little confused and alert. Was it not already in the 1600s and the 1700s Europe that these questions became opened up to scrutiny?

Such were the birth pains of Modernity – have we really changed? Have we ever been Modern?

Modernity itself gives birth to the authentic truth-seeker as well as the most hopeless dreamer. This Being into to the woods theme does seem to bring this kind of theme where alienation and redemption become alive together.

I guess I have tried to say that this "Into The Woods" theme is interesting and deserves attention from more than any one prespective. Yes, yes that is what I say. Now I got it right.

I have also tried to respect the social theorist, Charles Lemert, as he helps me ask that eternal question : " Who am I when natural and social things are different"? Then I go and spoil it all again by merely "thinking" the Post Modern turn. Less thinking for me, I guess. Good for me that is.

Ah dunno.

But the fashionable "need" for evidence remains soul destroying. This most impossible dream seems to be taken so very seriously and so over-seriously that the very beauties and truths within our worlds of Being are forgotten or even ignored. Such are the skills and programming outcomes that hijack a most wonderful world of the wild-sides. But there is also real evidence too.

Clarence. J. Glacken (1976, my updated edition) searched hard and well for his "Traces on the Rhodian Shore" whereby a somehow old fashioned and hard worked history of Nature with Natural people involved a huge "break", in many ways, during the Modern Times between the 1600-1800s periods. He recorded this divide. Evidence he well presented. Good solid evidence.

Kate Soper (1995) did try to make more of this "divide" as she related it to the social and political faces of Nature itself. She identified a kind of "for" position and an "against" position concerning Modern Times as it asked the question "What is Nature". She identified a conflict and an identification in a way that Glacken avoided. Soper asked the question "What Is Nature"? Soper felt she might know but, as yet, still needed to ask the question.

Glacken asked the question differently but in harmony with Soper. Both tried to find their limits in a changing world where "things" elemental were very much more than we may ever merely think they are.

I begin my ending remarks like this because I sense that Modern Times are central to our Being into the Woods today. This has been one of the few common themes that I have been able to trace in this wilderness of Alice.

When Glacken identified a divide between Nature and human beings, where that divide was clearly evident by the 1800s, he also sensed a lost world and a kind of Classical world. Here Charles Lemert came into the scene and here Kate Soper came into the scene. Modernity itself became rather significant for any Outdoor Adventure Education that works and/or plays in the woods.

The very contradictions of Modernity may become alive (and even well) if we take all this just seriously enough and do it just well enough. If we can try and do this then an education might just be significant peradventure and also through one or more aspects of our very being-into-the-woods.

But where to start? Maybe we start with the Metaphysical poet Jonne Donne. Why not? We might begin an MA degree with only and just this poem as the curriculum. Let us turn back to "All Cohærence Gone" from the year 1611 :-

And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
The Element of fire is quite put out ;
The Sun and the earth..... where to looke for it.

.....

For every man alone thinkes he hath got
To be a Phoenix, and that then can bee
None of that kindle, of which he is, but hee.

....."

For me I am still searching peradventure with hope and a smile. I maybe an old fashioned guy that still reads books about that existential issue as I live as I have good and bad memories of the forest and woods. Simple? I seek? It is that seeking that Modernity has thrust into my very own self. Yet I doubt.

We might ask ourselves a kind of what if question here.

What if doubt and hope and seeking were to become reasonable again and even replace the rule of risk, rewards and add to your list as you will if you will. What if?

For me I must slow down a little. The winter-time is upon us. I must use the wood from the trees to keep the home-fire burning. Who am I when it is all so simple?

Who am I if my writing of "me" texts is different?

Steve Bowles (December 2013)

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ENDING BEGINNING. That's It Folks.