Becoming-place
(Re)conceptualising friluftsliv in the Swedish physical education and health curriculum

av
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Abstract:
This thesis aims to critically examine taken for granted assumptions underpinning friluftsliv and outdoor education as a learning area in the curriculum, and to explore the educational potential of a place-responsive pedagogy. A growing body of critical research in outdoor studies suggest that there has been a discursive shift away from an activity-based personal and social development discourse, in favour of more critical awareness in outdoor education research. This discursive shift includes a focus on place and educating for an environmentally sustainable future as the primary goal for outdoor education. The Swedish curriculum emphasizes that historical, environmental, ethical, and international perspectives should be addressed in all subjects, including physical education and health (PEH), in which friluftsliv is imbedded. However, the implementation of these overarching perspectives into pedagogical practice has been proven to be rather limited.

The thesis comprises four independent but connected articles. Empirically, this thesis draws on interviews with PE teachers in New Zealand, reflective journals from a month-long journey in the Canadian Rockies, and curriculum documents, interviews and workshop reflections from a yearlong case study with a group of PEH teachers in Sweden. Inspired by the work of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, relational materialism and posthuman perspectives have been employed in the analysis.

Findings suggest that different ontological perspectives affect what is regarded as “normal” or “true” learning objectives in outdoor education and school-based friluftsliv. The overall findings from the thesis show that there is educational potential in place-responsive pedagogy. The case study demonstrates that place-responsiveness challenges the taken for granted people-centred practice focusing on personal and social development outcomes, which traditionally has dominated outdoor education and Swedish school-based friluftsliv. The decentring of humans, in favour of mutual and relational engagements with matter and the more-than-human, opens up new possibilities for embodied relations to place(s).

In conclusion, this thesis suggests the notion of engaging in a place-responsive pedagogy, in order to enable teachers to work within school-based friluftsliv in new and innovative ways. Place-responsiveness offer possibilities for working with the overarching perspectives and sustainability in pedagogical practice as well as for engaging in cross-curricular teaching and learning initiatives more locally.

Keywords: relational materialism, place, curriculum, friluftsliv, Deleuze
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