Master's thesis

NTNU
Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences
Department of Education and Lifelong Learning

Marie Élise Laubscher

"Det er deilig her"

An ethnographic study of children's encounters with nature in northern Norway

Master's thesis in Childhood Studies
Supervisor: Randi Dyblie Nilsen (June 2020-December 2020) and Anne Trine Kjøholt (December 2020-May 2021)
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Abstract

This thesis is an ethnographic study of children's encounters with nature in northern Norway. The fieldwork used a primary school as setting and was articulated around participant observations. This thesis is written within the interdisciplinary research field of Childhood Studies, therefore emphasizing children as competent actors and informants and emphasizing how childhood is diverse and does vary across time, space and culture.

The omnipresence of nature in Norway led its inhabitants to develop strong and sturdy relationships to the natural environment. Therefore, being able to cope with and manage oneself in nature is seen as a pillar of the Norwegian culture. Through various official publications and school curricula, the Norwegian government states the importance of children's access to nature, therefore ensuring that learning about nature and developing practical skills to cope in nature are some of the missions of the public education system.

The analysis and analytical discussion aim to illustrate how children do encounter nature, but also how adults do mediate these encounters. In addition, the concept of 'cultural analysis' will be used in order to unravel aspects about 'the good Norwegian childhood' and make a bridge between theory and practice by looking at how children's encounters with nature are a reflection of strong Norwegian cultural values.

The findings reveal that children encounter nature through various pedagogical and organized activities, but also self-driven and spontaneous practices. The adults of the school did mediate children's encounters with/of nature by providing them knowledge about nature, helping them develop a better understanding of the adequate clothing, but also let them learn how to cope with nature in an autonomous way. As childhood is seen as a time for trial and experiment, children are encouraged to take action autonomously without adult supervision. In this regard, by placing the emphasis on various play activities and the exploration of the natural environment, 'robust children' should be able to cope with nature and manage things on their own in order to reproduce some encouraged and valued practices in the Norwegian society.

Sammendrag

Denne avhandlingen er en etnografisk studie av barns møter med naturen I Nord-Norge. Med barneskole som setting, ble oppgaven formulert rundt deltakerobservasjoner av deltakerne. Oppgaven er skrevet innenfor det tverrfaglige forskningsfeltet Childhood Studies, og vektlegger derfor barn som kompetente aktører og informanter, I tillegg til å understreke at barndommen er mangfoldig og varierer over tid, sted og kultur.

Den allestedsnærværende naturen i Norge førte til at innbyggerne utviklet sterke og solide forhold til det naturlige miljøet. Å kunne takle og klare seg selv i naturen blir derfor sett på som en søyle i norsk kultur. Gjennom forskjellige offisielle publikasjoner og skoleplaner understreker den norske regjeringen viktigheten av barns tilgang til naturen. Dermed, sørger de for at læring om naturen og utvikling av praktiske ferdigheter for å takle den er noen av oppdragene til det offentlige utdanningssystemet.

Analysen og den analytiske diskusjonen tar sikte på å illustrere hvordan barn møter naturen, men også hvordan voksne formidler disse møtene. I tillegg vil begrepet 'kulturanalyse' brukes for å løse opp aspekter om 'den gode norske barndommen' og å lage en bro mellom teori og praksis ved å se på hvordan barns møter med naturen er en refleksjon av sterke norske kulturelle verdier.

Funnene avslører at barn møter naturen gjennom ulike pedagogiske og organiserte aktiviteter, men også selvdrevet og spontan praksis. De voksne på skolen formidlet barns møter med/av naturen ved å gi dem kunnskap om naturen, hjalp dem med å utvikle en bedre forståelse av passende klær, men lot dem også lære å takle naturen på en autonom måte. Ettersom barndommen blir sett på som en tid for prøving og eksperiment, oppfordres barn til å ta handling autonomt uten tilsyn av voksne. Ved å legge vekt på ulike lekaktiviteter og utforsking av det naturlige miljøet, bør 'robuste barn' være i stand til å takle naturen og håndtere ting på egenhånd for å gjengi noen oppmuntrede og verdsatte fremgangsmåter I det norske samfunnet.

Acknowledgments

Two years full of new challenges and one master thesis later, I finally have the time to look back at all the enriching discoveries and experiences I made. These two past years, but more precisely the writing process of my thesis, would not have been the same without the help and support - from far distance or close up - from all these competent and meaningful people:

First of all, I would like to thank the children of the 1st year class I did fieldwork in. By letting me enter your classroom and allowing me to be part of your everyday life through several weeks, my research project did evolve and take unexpected turns. I also thank their parents and all the assistants, teachers and headmaster of the primary school for their open-mindedness and trust. Your cooperation and curiosity were from the start encouraging and have helped me carry out the fieldwork in a warm and welcoming and atmosphere.

Designing and writing a thesis that does correspond to my ideas about children and childhood, but also match my expectations about myself, would not have been possible without two skilled and supportive supervisors, Randi Dyblie Nilsen (June 2020-December 2020) and Anne Trine Kjøholt (December 2020-May 2021). Even if challenging, I am grateful to have beneficiated from this 'double guidance' and their openness and thoughtful feedbacks.

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Finally, to the one who supported me with his creative and unexpected ideas, while hindering me from quitting quite a few times: Eirik. Your unconditional presence and patience, as well as your jokes and loving kindness, make me surpass myself in various areas.

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List of Acronyms

EEA	European Union
EU	European Economic Area
NSD	Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata
SFO	Skolefritidsordningen
UNCRC	United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child

Lexicon

As this master thesis has the Norway as main context, some Norwegian words or sentences are of special relevance. The following alphabetical list provides a translation which is intended to help the reader's understanding. Detailed explanations about their significance will be added as footnotes if not explained directly in the text.

Allemannsretten	The right of public access
Barnas dag	Children's day
Barnehagen	Preschool, kindergarten
Barneskole	Primary school
Det er deilig her.	It is delightful here.
Det finnes ikke dårlig vær, bare dårlige klær!	There is no bad weather, only inappropriate clothing!
Flisbukser	Fleece trousers
Friluftsliv	Outdoor life
Gi oss fart.	Give us speed.
Grunnloven	The Norwegian constitution
Grunnskole	Mandatory education
Hjemme	Home
Hva trenger vi for å ha det bra ute?	What do we need to be fine outside?
Isgryte	Ice stew
Jeger og isbjørn	Hunters and polar bears
Kroppsøving	Physical Education
Kulturanalyse	Cultural analysis
Lilleskogen	The small forest
Mat og Helse	Food and Health
Matematikk	Mathematics
Matpakke	Lunchbox
Mørketidsfest	Period of darkness celebration
Naturfag	Natural Sciences
Regjeringen	The Norwegian government
Samfunnsfag	Social Studies: Geography, History, Civic life
Sittunderlag	Sitting rag
Skolefritidsordningen	After/before-school care system
Skolefrukt	School fruit
Skolemelk	School milk
Stortinget	The Norwegian parliament
Synkemyr	Moving mud
Uhell	Minor incident
Ungdomsskole	Lower secondary school
Ute	Outside
Utetid	Time outside
Vi lager mat.	We are preparing food.
Videregående skole	Upper secondary school
Å ha det bra	To feel good/fine

1 Introduction

As first chapter of my thesis, this introduction lays the foundation of this study by outlining the overall background for this research and its topic, both from a general and personal point of view. The research questions and aims will be then presented, followed by a section about the relevance of this research. The final section, namely the outline of the thesis, makes clearer the overall structure before diving into the debates and the main topic of this study.

1.1 Background of the study

My inspiration for undertaking such research is multifaceted. It was firstly triggered by the mismatch between my own work experience as a primary school teacher in Switzerland, and what I could regularly observe when passing by a school in my neighbourhood while living in Norway. As a teacher, I had to prevent children from falling or hurting themselves, hinder them from throwing snowballs or climb up the few trees growing in the schoolyard. I also had to push my pupils to go out for the fifteen minutes of daily breaktime when it was raining. Here, in Norway, I could often see some children at the top of a tree, rolling themselves into the snow, chasing each other under the pouring rain, while adults wearing a yellow vest were walking around, talking with them and smiling. By being confronted to these unusual observations, my understanding of my profession, but more precisely what sort of encounters with/of[1] nature children could have in schools, started to be questioned.

In addition to my own interrogations, I got hooked onto an article written by Randi D. Nilsen (2008) about how children's repetitive encounters with nature can be a reflection of a 'proper childhood' in Norway. By describing how children are encouraged to develop a tight relationship with nature, her article raised a lot of questions about what 'the good childhood' could be. Knowing that I wanted to combine my previous education and the knowledge I had been acquiring during my Childhood Studies' master, developing a research project articulated around primary schools and the Norwegian context therefore appeared like an evidence.

[1] Throughout this thesis, "encounters with" and "encounters of" nature will be used in order to describe the same process. However, changing the preposition, namely using "with" or "of", allows me to have the main theoretical concepts and standpoints as watermark. This small change of words also allows me to subtly give my position about children's encounters with nature, while simultaneously strengthening my arguments and theoretical framework. The use of "encounters with" implies someone or something that is encountered. This something or someone, being inevitably nature itself. This preposition therefore supports a more relational view on children's relationship with nature. The development of this relationship happens in the interaction of children and nature, showing both of them as active agents (Hordyk, Dulude, & Shem, 2015; Rantala & Puhakka, 2020). Using "encounters of" takes on a more unidirectional approach to children's encounters of nature. The children are the agents, they have an influence on nature while encountering it.

Finally, the choice of researching about children in primary schools would also give me two incredible opportunities. The first one would be to discover another school system, get to know its curriculum, its structure and rules while conducting fieldwork. The second, more challenging, was to push me in my process of learning Norwegian. In order to do fieldwork in a school, I had to attain a high level of competence in all four areas of language skills.

1.2 Context of the topic

From an outsider perspective, Norway is perceived as 'the land of nature', where high mountains erupt from tortuous fjords, where the extreme weather forces people to toughen up in order to cope with the elements. This raw and omnipresent nature, who forged generations of resistant and strong people (Gelter, 2000; Repp, 1996), is generally depicted that way in advertising, books, travel brochures or documentaries. Even if based on stereotyped representations, these ideas about Norway are regularly conveyed outside of its borders. Before the corona outbreak, tourists would come to Norway to see the midnight sun or the northern lights and talk about these experiences in nature as hunting trophies. Being an outsider myself, my previous understanding of the topic was also influenced by these representations and the ideas I had about Norway. However, these stereotyped representations are not totally erroneous as scholars do acknowledge the idea that being able to cope with/in nature is part of the Norwegian culture (Gullestad, 1992; Nilsen, 2008).

Having that in mind, it is worth noting that learning about nature and learning practical skills to cope with nature is one mission of the public education system (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013b, 2015). By allowing a great amount of time for the experiment of nature and experiences in nature, the Norwegian government wants to secure that children develop essential competences for being well-functioning citizens. Even if this emphasis on nature is more present in the new national core curriculum, in effect from August 2020 (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020), concerns about children's declining use of nature have been raised in the past years. Children spend less time outdoor, as their access to nature might be more limited than before. They also engage less in 'free play' outside in their free time and spend more time in organized activities (Skår & Krogh, 2009).

One last point which needs to be raised is the global pandemic situation in 2020 due to the Corona virus outbreak. From March to May 2020, Norway and many other countries experienced a lockdown. Kindergartens and schools were closed, forcing children to be home-schooled. During the lockdown, the value of nature changed by being a place where people *could* go, to the only place people could visit without breaking infection control rules. In May 2020, while the schools were reopening with stricter rules about the number of people present in one room, hygiene routines or division of groups within one class, the use of nature increased. As teachers were encouraged to avoid being in a closed space such as a classroom, they had to find alternatives to their teaching and get the best out of the surroundings of the school.

1.3 Research questions and purpose of the study

The overall aim of this study is to explore children's encounters with nature in the Norwegian school context. As shortly mentioned above, this research is personally driven and is therefore not inscribed in a wider group of research or publications.

In addition to exploring children's relationship to nature, this thesis aims to focus on how children do engage in nature and with nature, by focusing on their everyday lived experiences. Simultaneously to children's encounters with nature, adults' practices and how they mediate children's interaction with nature will be illustrated through relevant examples. As the idea that having a strong relationship to nature can be seen as a core aspect of the good Norwegian childhood, the analytical discussion will also focus on the concept of 'the good childhood', aiming to unravel hidden aspects of children's experiences in nature and the cultural values laying behind these practices.

In order to fulfil these aims, the following research questions were formulated:

- How do children encounter nature in a school in Northern Norway?
- How does this school shape/mediate children's encounters with/of nature?
- How do children's encounters with/of nature reflect notions of a 'proper' or 'good' childhood in Norway?

The research questions are connected to different parts of this thesis (cf. section 1.5); I address and analyse the overall temporal and spatial frame structuring children's encounters with nature in the school context in Part 1 (chapter 5.1); explore how the children experience and participate in nature in Part 2 of the analysis (chapter 5.2); the discussion about adults' mediation of children's encounters with nature is done in Part 3 (chapter 5.3); finally I address how children and adults reproduce cultural values linked to what 'the good Norwegian childhood' should entail in Part in 3 of the analytical discussion (particularly in chapters 5.3.3 and 5.3.4).

The aim of this thesis is therefore to contextualize and theorize practices undertaken by children and adults in schools, but also shed light on the taken for granted cultural values linked to children's encounters with/of nature in order to explore how such practices make sense in context. More broadly, this project aims to challenge normative understandings of children and childhood, picturing that both children and childhood do not have universal definitions, nor are fixed categories.

1.4 Relevance of the study

As mentioned above, the main focus of this study is to explore and describe children's encounters with nature in a school from the Norwegian public school system but also question and discuss the concept of 'the good childhood' in contemporary Norway. Doing so can improve our understanding of the cultural embeddedness aspect of childhood and how children are expected to act according to local, but also national, values.

As mentioned by some authors and official Norwegian publications, Norwegian children are expected and taught to cope with nature from their youngest age (Einarsdottir & Wagner, 2006; Nilsen, 2008; The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013b, 2015). Yet, and as the literature review will present (cf. section 3.5), very few English written researches have been conducted in order to unravel children's use and

experiment of nature in the Scandinavian school context. There is therefore a need for further, or initial, research about children and nature, taking place in all parts of Norway. As pinpointed in a future chapter, there is also a lack of actor-oriented research, aiming to gain children's views and perspectives on their encounters with nature.

Similarly to other research conducted at a master level, my study is not part of a wider framework or other research projects. However and even if the results are not eagerly expected by a group of researchers, I hope that my findings and reflections will contribute to broaden our understanding of childhood and children's relationship to nature, but more importantly about what the 'good Norwegian childhood' can mean in a definite context. I wish to give readers, who are unfamiliar with the Scandinavian context, a better understanding of how such practices take place in a school from northern Norway.

Finally, I hope contributing in my own way to the field of educational or sociological research, but more importantly to the field of Childhood Studies, using the school as a context in order to present an outsider's view and interpretations of such doings. By its theme and framing, my research contributes to expanding the knowledge about children's encounters with nature in the school setting but will also be a valuable source of knowledge for teachers, parents and policymakers.

1.5 Outline of the thesis

As the last part of the introduction, this section provides the reader an overview of the overall structure of this thesis.

The second chapter unravels the background elements of the chosen topic and therefore briefly describes the historical construction of Norway while giving a few examples of its 'national culture'. It also touches upon more contemporary aspects encompassed within ideas about the welfare state and modern childhoods in Norway. Besides that, the chapter provides background information about the structure of the Norwegian educational system, its main aims and values, and also some subjects curricula that are of relevance for the topic.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical concepts relevant to this study. First, the general background of Childhood Studies will be presented, followed by theories about children's shared cultures and practices, and then the concept of nature. Finally, nature, Childhood Studies and Norway will be brought together to unravel ideas and thoughts encompassed within the concept of 'the good childhood'. In chapter 4, the methodology and methods related to this research are presented and discussed. The different sections present the process of data collection and related dilemmas faced before, during and after fieldwork. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations that were of relevance throughout all stages of this research.

In chapter 5, the data gathered throughout fieldwork is exemplified and analysed through the lens of the theoretical concepts and standpoints described in chapter 3. The analysis is structured around three different parts, each focusing on a different aspect of children's encounters with nature. Part 1 illustrates spatial and temporal aspects of the field. Part 2 takes a more actor-oriented stance in order to unravel children's everyday lived-experiences and practices related to their encounters with nature. Part 3 and its social constructionist lens focuses on verbal interactions in or about nature, of both

children and adults. By doing so, the analytical discussion aims to replicate the structure of the theory chapter: bringing together nature, Norway and Childhood Studies in order to question and illustrate cultural values about 'the good Norwegian childhood' in its last part.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion and presents answers to the research questions stated in the introduction of this thesis. Then, the outcomes of this study are reflected upon in a macro perspective in order to broaden up and shed a new light on ideas associated with 'the good Norwegian childhood'. Building up on all the arguments and information provided in this thesis, recommendations and suggestions for further study will finally be offered.

2 Contemporary Norway: historical, cultural and educational aspects

Before focusing on children's encounters with nature in the Norwegian school system, it is worth having an understanding of the 'Norwegian culture'[2] and the country's history. The following chapter shortly presents Norway in a socio-historical perspective, but also details its public school system - more precisely the primary levels. The second half details the national core curriculum and some specific subjects' curricula which do focus on the relationship to nature. These curricula, as well as the national curriculum, are public and official publications from the Directorate for Education and Training, which provide the educational framework for teachers and schools. All the sources cited and used in this second part are taken from these publications.

2.1 Norway: historical overview and construction of national culture

Covering 385 207 square kilometres shared by more than five million inhabitants (The Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity, 2020b), Norway is arguably said to be the youngest Nordic nation of Scandinavia. This sparsely populated country, where long distances between habitations did lead to the development of local communities and identities, is grounded in fishing, hunting, agriculture and shipping traditions. Even if located in the northern part of Europe, Norway has been in trading associations with other southern coastal countries since the 12th century (Borge, Nordhagen, & Lie, 2003) and has therefore never been isolated from the rest of Europe.

As mentioned by Gullestad (1992, 1997), Norway is often presented as a young nation, since having gained total independence from 1905 only. Before that, Norway was caught up in a whirlwind of Danish and Swedish domination for a total of almost 500 years. As a result of the Napoleonic war, Denmark lost Norway to Sweden and the 'Norwegian constitution'[3] (*Grunnloven*) was established from 1814. However, national independence

[2] The word "culture" is used here although it is a contested concept. Culture is diverse and dynamic, and cannot therefore be seen as a static of homogeneous category (Gullestad, 1992). However and even if in the following chapters I mention 'the Norwegian culture' as a whole, I am aware than it is broader and richer than what I present bellow. The ideas about the Norwegian culture and the mentioned examples that have been selected are contested examples even today. Migration and globalization have an influence on social practices that were seen as typically Norwegian only a few decades ago, and are changing and giving an even-more multifaceted aspect to culture. With this in mind, I have deliberately chosen to represent Norway in a more traditional, and arguably romanticized, way. Choosing and picking up examples of what is the Norwegian culture has been done through reading, but also by talking with older and younger Norwegians. I also took into consideration my own views and outsider perspective about how I considered this country, in order to paint a rich and colourful painting of contemporary Norway.

In addition, a short note about the concept of 'culture' will be done in chapter 3.4.

[3] https://grunnloven.lovdata.no/

was not gained before 1905, which explains the idea of the 'newness of Norway'. Between 1940 and 1945, the newly gained independence was disrupted by the German occupation, which triggered a general feeling that independence is precarious and precious (Gullestad, 1997). Today, Norway, which is not a member of the European Union (EU) but is part of the European Economic Area (EEA), is a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy (The Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity, 2020b).

This historical context led to the strengthening of a Norwegian identity in the 19th century. The promotion of this national identity - or patriotism - is strong and actively fosters positive ideas about Norway and Norwegians. It is widespread among Norwegian to consider national symbols such as the national anthem or the flag, as conveying positive and popular overtones only. Unlike other nation's understanding and use of flags in military aggressions or nationalism, the Norwegian flag is associated with peace (Gullestad, 1997).

The 20th century also constitutes a historical turning point for Norway and Norwegians, with the discovery of petrol in the North Sea. Resulting from these drillings, a considerable amount of money called 'The Government Pension Fund Global' but also known as the Oil Fund, was secured in 1990 and constitutes nowadays the well-known ground-layer of the Norwegian welfare state.

2.1.1 The UNCRC and the welfare state in Norway

Throughout the 20th century, new ideas about children and childhood, but more precisely the growing awareness of their rights as active human-beings resulted in the creation of a new, separate and tailored-made Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The creation of this document had various consequences for European policy and social practices; Norway, and the other Nordic countries did embed theories about the child's best interest while developing their welfare state system (Kjørholt, 2008; Nilsen, 2008).

It is common knowledge that the Nordic countries have a "relatively long-standing and strong commitment to child-centeredness, manifested for example in schooling, day-care and other aspects of the law and institutions, such as the establishment of a Children's Ombudsman" (Nilsen, 2008, p. 40). The idea that the state and local authorities should secure children and childhood is behind such undertakings. More importantly, these discourses about children's rights did contribute to considerable changes for the Norwegian childhood (Kjørholt, 2004; Kristjansson, 2006) and strengthened the idea that children do have a special position in society (Einarsdottir & Wagner, 2006). Before the end of the 20th century already, debates about children's participation were coating the political scene, offering children a membership in the nation and being seen as active participants (Gullestad, 1997), not solely adults in becoming (Einarsdottir & Wagner, 2006; Kristjansson, 2006). More up to date than ever, the Prime Minister of Norway Erna Solberg, did address a speech especially directed to children during the Corona pandemic outbreak[4]. In doing so, she and the whole nation that she represents, did strengthen the position of children in society as well as the attention paid to them.

[4] https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/statsministeren-holder-pressekonferanse-for-barn/id2693657/

2.1.2 Modern childhoods in contemporary Norway

The previous section did highlight essential components of the Norwegian society that shaped and still shapes the construction of childhood. Children's position in society is articulated around educational policies and the social welfare, setting therefore a very high value on children and childhood (Einarsdottir & Wagner, 2006). This Nordic welfare state and the Nordic child-centeredness is argued to be the main framework for understanding what childhood in Norway (and other Scandinavian countries) can be like (Kristjansson, 2006).

Western perspectives about children and childhood do stress the importance of its institutionalization, by viewing children as being located within schools and not home anymore. The idea that children should spend most of their time in school is contested if taking a Nordic perspective, as they usually start school later than in other Western part of the world (Einarsdottir & Wagner, 2006). The Nordic child-centeredness is articulated around the idea that children should have "time and freedom during the early childhood years to play and explore the world around them, unencumbered by excessive supervision and control by adults" (Einarsdottir & Wagner, 2006, p. 6), therefore encouraging 'free play' among children. However, children in Norway do attend preschool (*Barnehagen*) from a very young age, allowing both parents to go back to work after maternity/paternity leave. This reality does yet correspond to the idea that children belong to educational places (Einarsdottir & Wagner, 2006; Gullestad, 1997). In addition to schooling, modern childhood in Norway is also encapsulated within organized leisure activities that children attend during their free time (Nordbakke, 2019; Skår, Gundersen, & O'Brien, 2016). These activities can be organized by local clubs or organizations, or the before/after-school care system (*Skolefritidsordningen (SFO)*).

In order to support the previous points, the Norwegian National day on the 17th of May is a limpid example to illustrate the Nordic child-centeredness and children's status in the Norwegian society. Commemorating the establishment of the Norwegian constitution in 1814 is the main reason for this day and its celebrations. It is however children who parade in the streets, and not military forces (Gullestad, 1997). This day, frequently called *'barnas dag'* (children's day) is a day where children and what they represent is cherished and openly celebrated. In addition to the parade, it is common to treat your children or grandchildren, with hotdogs, ice creams or cakes.

2.2 The Norwegian educational system: structure and main values

Since the 18th century, free and public schooling has been introduced in Norway, where the current structure of what compulsory education is was set up. In 1997, the 7 years of compulsory education was increased to 10, allowing children to start primary school at the age of six and graduating from high school at the age of 16 (The Ministry of Education and Research, 2018).

The compulsory education system is divided in two distinct parts: from 1st to 7th grade, children aged between 6 to 13 years old attend what is called primary school (*Barneskole*); from 8th to 10th grade, until the age of 16 years old they attend lower secondary school (*Ungdomsskole*). These ten years of education covering primary and lower secondary education are called *'grunnskole'*. The welfare state policy states that all

children residing in Norway are obliged to attend school, public schooling therefore being free of charge (The Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity, 2020a). After completing the mandatory academic curriculum, the teenagers attending upper secondary schooling (*Videregående skole*) are qualified to whether pursue a more academic education, attending university, or choose vocational studies based on an apprenticeship.

The education's goals and its budgetary framework are ruled by the Norwegian parliament (*Stortinget*) and the Government (*Regjeringen*), and the implementation of national educational policies are ensured by the Ministry of Education and Research (The Ministry of Education and Research, 2018). It is therefore possible to state that the Norwegian education system is state-driven. At a regional level, the National Education Office, which represents the Government, cooperates with county and municipal authorities to provide adequate schooling for all children. Adding to this hierarchical structure, each school is articulated around various committees and boards (The Ministry of Education and Research, 2018).

The aims of education in Norway state to encourage children to develop competences and knowledge in order to be active participants in society, but also be able to cope with the various and quickly changing arenas of life. School must also be a cultural heritage transmission channel, and should help develop every child's potentials (NOU 2015: 8). Following the idea of giving access to education and knowledge to all, differently-abled children are also included in the public system by providing them, their families, their schools and teachers with adapted education, special needs education or by including them in the regular school system whenever this is possible (The Ministry of Education and Research, 2011, p. 6).

2.2.1 The national curriculum for primary and lower secondary education

The main teaching principles and learning objectives for primary and lower secondary schools are lodged in the national curriculum which comprises:

- A core curriculum for primary and secondary training
- Principles for education and all-round development
- Curricula for individual subjects

The next sections will detail these documents by explaining its main components, aims and values while focusing on the 'the relationship to nature' or 'environmental/outdoor knowledge' aspects encapsulated within these pages.

Core curriculum : values and principles for compulsory education

First of all, it is interesting to highlight that municipalities, schools and teachers are still given some decisional power and room for manoeuvre: they have the ability to decide what learning materials to use or which teaching methods to adopt for their own practice, as long as it comply with the national framework and curricula (The Ministry of Education and Research, 2018). This freedom does however not relieve schools and teachers to follow its educational precepts.

The core curriculum addresses the Norwegian education and training for primary and secondary levels. Its content - designed for everyone with teaching or training responsibilities - covers the education from the first year at the primary level up to

higher educational programs preparing young people for university, but also vocational programs. Its main aim is to give general guidelines for training and teaching of various subjects. By doing so, the core curriculum details the fundamental approach that all pedagogical practices should be built on. It also clarifies the responsibilities of schools and training institutions for education and all-round development (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020).

Simultaneously, a Sami curriculum does exist in order to perpetuate the culture and traditions of the Norwegian Sami community (The Ministry of Education and Research, 2018). This curriculum is applicable in specific and defined districts in Norway, and in specific schools or college. Even if the Sami culture and its ethnic minority has faced discrimination and got involved in heated debates, it is not the aim of this thesis to cover this subject nor detail this curriculum's content.

As presented in the national curriculum, the core values of education and training are pillars of the Norwegian society. They are the bedrock for the activities in school and must be used actively in order to transmit to children the Norwegian moral values dictated by The Ministry of Education and Research (2018). These values, comprised in the core curriculum and published by The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020), are detailed in the following sections[5]:

"Human dignity"

By ensuring that human dignity and its underlying values are taught and respected through education and all activities, schools do respect people's equality regardless of their differences. Drawing from the UNCRC and the Convention for Human Rights, this value looks for equality of treatment, no discrimination, solidarity and empathy .

"Identity and cultural diversity"

Schools must provide insights about the history and culture in order to give children a solid base for living in Norway, understanding its identity, preserving its diverse environment and help them develop a sense of belonging to society. In this regard, schools must teach children about diversity, divergence of opinions and the Norwegian cultural and linguistic diversity.

"Critical thinking and ethical awareness"

The promotion of critical thinking as well as the ability to question and be inquisitive must also be triggered by schools. In parallel, the teaching must give children more ethical awareness by developing their ability to overcome ethical issues or make ethical assessments.

"The joy of creating, engagement and the urge to explore"

Pupils and students must be encouraged to be curious, discover, create and transform ideas into reality-grounded decisions. Developing and encouraging curiosity and creativity must be done throughout the entire schooling.

[5] All the headings from this section have been taken from the following publication: The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2020). *Core curriculum - values and principles for primary and secondary education*.

"Democracy and participation"

Pupils must be given the opportunity to learn what democracy is, by putting it in practice and therefore participate in school decisions. Such experiences are aimed to prepare them to become responsible future citizens of society.

"Respect for nature and environmental awareness"

As children's encounter with nature is the core element for this master thesis, it is definitely interesting to see that developing respect for nature as well as raising environmental awareness are part of the school's main values.

It is the school's mission to help the pupil develop the competences to protect the environment and develop a positive relationship towards nature. According to The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020), schools shall help children enjoy and respect nature as well as develop environmental awareness. By experiencing nature as a source of joy, health, learning and utility, children will learn to find solutions to today's and tomorrow's challenges. In this regard, pupils should also develop a growing awareness about environmental issues.

"Principles for education and all-round development"[6]

In addition to the main disciplines taught in Norwegian schools, known as mathematics, natural sciences and technology, languages, physical activities, social studies and ethics, practical and aesthetic subjects, children must also be guided by teachers to develop broader competences. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2020) details the following elements:

Adding to developing the five basic skills (reading, writing, numeracy, oral skills, digital skills), children also develop social skills, achieve personal development as well as be able to *learn to learn* and understand their *modus operandi*. They should also gain more knowledge about interdisciplinary topics such as "health and life skills", "democracy and citizenship" and "sustainable development" (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020, pp. 14-15).

Thus, children should develop competences in academic subjects. The competences of the above-mentioned academic subjects must be taught in school as a part of the educational and all-round development mission of primary and secondary education. By developing basic skills and with the help of teachers and school leaders, children will gain knowledge for today but also for their future.

The competences children must acquire are laid down in individual curricula for all school subjects and all school years. As the link between school and nature is important for this thesis, the following section will detail the subjects' curricula that allow children to have an encounter with nature when attending public primary school in Norway. The curricula for lower secondary school are therefore not taken into consideration.

[6] The title is taken from the following publication: The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. (2020). *Core curriculum - values and principles for primary and secondary education*.

Curricula[7] for individual subjects at primary level: 'nature', 'outdoor', 'environment'

At a primary level (1st-7th grade) a total of 10 different subjects are part of the students' time schedule. When reviewing the Norwegian curricula for all these subjects, it is interesting to note that the words 'nature', 'outdoor' or 'environment' are often mentioned. More precisely 5 out of 10 curricula do comprise at least one of these three words at least one time[8], and are obviously mentioned in subjects that are more scientific instead of literary. The focus of the next sections will be totally oriented towards the part where the three words mentioned above do appear. It is therefore not an exhaustive explanation about the discipline nor its content.

Food and Health (*Mat og Helse*)

In this discipline, nature can be used as a resource in order to prepare food outside. Another focus about nature is through the Sami relationship to nature and their culinary traditions and cultural habits (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019b).

Social Studies: Geography, History, Civic life (*Samfunnsfag*)

In line with one of the principles for education, children are taught to develop sensitivity about nature in order to achieve sustainable development. In this regard, they are guided to get a better understanding of the relationship between human and nature, as well as man-made surroundings (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013c; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019e).

Mathematics (*Matematikk*)

The teaching of mathematics is done in a global perspective about the universe, its relationship between nature and society and the development of a system to analyse humankind's experiences (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013a; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019c).

Natural Sciences (*Naturfag*)

This discipline focuses on human's place in nature and the universe, as well as its need to find answers to questions about life and life forms. Children must develop knowledge about nature, the need to respect it and protect it (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013b; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019d). The English version adds that "knowledge on, understanding of and experiences in nature can strengthen the will to protect natural resources, preserve biological diversity and contribute to sustainable development" (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2013b, p. 2). In this regard, it will allow children to develop balanced views about the interactions between humans, society, nature and technology.

Physical Education (*Kroppsøving*)

The general aim of this subject encompasses developing competences through various activities, learn about the importance of exercising and the value of visiting nature. As

[7] From August 2020, various disciplines have enforced new curricula that are unfortunately only available in Norwegian. The English versions available have been issued in 2006 and are valid until July of 2021. However, I have chosen to double-check my findings by using both the still valid English version and the newest Norwegian version. Even if the purposes do correspond with each other, there can be some variations between the competence aims between the Norwegian and English versions, but the overarching aims do still comply.

[8] These calculations have been made by the author of this thesis. No bigger scale or more precise research have been done on this topic.

stated by both the English (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015) and Norwegian version (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019a), the society is based on a culture of 'activeness' with activities such as sports and dance, but also outdoor life.

In the English version of this curriculum, 'outdoor life' is introduced as the main subject area which covers "competences and skills needed to do things safely in nature and see the value of visiting natural environments" (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015, p. 3). Thus, considerable attention is paid to cultural and local Norwegian traditions.

Even if physical education includes various types of learning, a great focus has been placed on 'outdoor life' learning in primary school (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015, p. 2):

Year/Level	**The main subject area**	
1-4	Physical activity in various environments and settings	
5-7	Sports activities	Outdoor life

Between Year 1 and 7, pupils have 478 teaching hours of this subject, which represents approximately 68 hours for each school year. In addition to the consequent number of hours of teaching, the following competence aims do highlight the strong emphasis on nature (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015, p. 5):

> "*After Year 7, the aims of the studies are to enable pupils to…*
>
> … perform various physical activities that strengthen the body in different ways that promote stamina, coordination and other physical development
>
> … practice difficult movements, alone or with others
>
> … use orienteering maps in familiar terrain
>
> … comply with rules and principles for interaction and respect the outcome of the game
>
> … use basic techniques and simple tactics in some selected individual sports, team sports and alternative physical activities
>
> … ski and skate using different techniques when conditions allow
>
> … experiment with physical expression and perform simple dances from different cultures
>
> … ride a bicycle safely as a means of transport
>
> … explain why physical activity is important in everyday life
>
> … describe local traditions in outdoor life
>
> … participate in different outdoor activities and practice moving about safely in different kinds of weather
>
> … plan and carry out an overnight stay in the outdoors
>
> … practice some activities with roots in Sami traditions
>
> … perform simple first aid"

3 Theoretical perspectives

This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical concepts that will be used throughout this thesis but more precisely in the analysis chapter. First a brief outline of Childhood Studies will be given in order to understand the foundation of this research. By unravelling ideas about children's shared cultures, but also play theories, this chapter aims to shed a detailed picture of the construction of childhood. In this same detailed-attached approach, the construction of nature and its dichotomies will be presented.

Then nature and childhood are brought together in order to describe what children and nature do entail in the Norwegian context. This sections also aims to provide a better understanding of the normative ideas about 'the good childhood'. The chapter draws to close with an overview of relevant researches for the topic of interest, and a brief summary of the different key concepts that will be taken into the analytical discussion of this thesis.

3.1 An overflight of Childhood Studies

This first subchapter brushes a general picture of the research field named 'Childhood Studies', but also pinpoints its main school of thoughts and the current debates encompassed within this field. The following theoretical frameworks which have influenced my position as a researcher also set the base of this study, providing a contextual background for the methodology, methods and analysis chapter.

The study of children and childhood, also known as the "new"[9] sociology of childhood, is a multidisciplinary research field which went through a series of changes since the end of the 20th century. One main claim - although still criticized within the field - is that childhood is shaped and reshaped by children and for children. This different understanding of children and childhood, also controversially known as the 'new paradigm', did contribute to change children's position and acknowledgment in society. Not only were they heard, but children were also seen as worth to be studied in their own rights (Holmberg, 2018; James, 2007; Tisdall & Punch, 2012).

Childhood Studies emerged with the wish to set oneself apart from developmental psychology, anthropology and sociology, and argue against an outdated biological and natural lens on childhood (Holmberg, 2018). In addition, and starting from the 'irrationality', 'naturalness' and 'universality' of childhood such as presented by Piaget, ideas about socialization did also influence Childhood Studies' claims. The process of socialization, being ironically described as a process which "magically transforms the one into the other, the key which turns the asocial child into a social adult" (James & Prout, 2015, p. 11), did confront scientists with issues related to the validity and universality of

[9] The word "new" is placed within quotation marks, because of the debates regarding its actual newness in the 21st century. It is argued that it is not new anymore, after having existed for more than thirty years.

such theories. However and in the light of this process, childhood was still a category designed by adults for children and did not allow children to be heard.

Another main criticism was that, albeit the interest for children had always been present for researchers, adults and the society have had a tendency to silence children and their views (James & Prout, 2015). Its new agenda therefore went against the idea that children were 'adults in the making', passive and vulnerable, in need to be socialised and educated in order to become well-functioning adults in society (Brockliss & Montgomery, 2013; James, 2007; James & Prout, 2015; Jenks, 2004). However and even if constructed on worthy aims, this agenda raised and still raises criticisms nowadays: some defend its ground-breaking paradigm shift while others just see a set of different opinions leading to conflicting claims (Holmberg, 2018).

Rooted in criticisms and bitterness towards outdated ideas about children, the new sociology of children and childhood started to look at childhood as a 'social construct' (Jenks, 1982; Montgomery, 2003). Childhood was henceforth viewed as varying across time, space and culture (Montgomery, 2003), but also plural and diverse. Children, considered as active social actors being part of society, were worth to be studied in their own rights (James & Prout, 2015; Jenks, 2004). Going along with this reconceptualization of childhood came new research methodologies working mainly and directly with children.

As in any other research field, advocates and opponents did, and still shape the debates around this field of study creating and fuelling different ideologies. In his editorial, Spyrou (2018) relays interrogations about the future of Childhood Studies and its development by highlighting some of the current debates: Firstly, there is a need to rethink the field's main principles or ideas, and open up for more broader approaches and understandings. Childhood Studies has had a tendency to operate in isolation and has had very little impact beyond the field itself. Secondly, Childhood Studies has also, to a certain extent, been stuck in the past and conscripted in its own boundaries. In order to keep growing, Childhood Studies should embrace its interdisciplinary character even more and open to wider social phenomena and diverse forms of knowledge.

3.1.1 Theorizing childhood

Childhood Studies is structured around three branches presented by Alanen (2001) as the 'sociologies of children', 'structural sociologies of children' and 'deconstructive sociologies of children'. The 'structural sociology of childhood' perceives childhood as a permanent form in society, always changing and always present (Qvortrup, 2009) and tends to look for commonalities within childhood instead on focusing on their differences. The two other perspectives, unravelled in the following sections, are the pillars of the analytical discussions. In order to ease the reading, these two perspectives will not use Alanen's wording, but names that do represent more what they entail and their main ideas.

By choosing both a social constructionist and actor-oriented perspectives, this study aims to focus on children's own views about and practices in nature but also how their practices are inscribed in the wider Norwegian cultural context. For the sake of clarity, these two perspectives will be presented in distinct categories, however their boundaries are blurred and not as clear-cut as they appear.

An actor-oriented perspective

The 'sociologies of children', also known as the actor-oriented perspective, focuses on children's perspectives and views about their lived everyday lives. By giving them a voice and therefore enabling their participation, children are viewed as active and competent social subjects, worth to be studied in their own rights. While focusing on cultural practices initiated and shared by children, researchers also pay attention to values and beliefs among children (Clark, 2013; Corsaro, 2009). Within this perspective, the model of childhood sheds light on children's differences and how their social actions must be taken into consideration and interpretated (Jenks, 2004). They are seen as a 'group of children' producing common cultures that might not be accessible or known by adults.

Even if every adult has once been a child and therefore believe to know what childhood is (Gittins, 2004), their worlds, or peer culture (Corsaro, 2009), needs to be understood as "an independent place with its own folklore, rituals, rules and normative constraints" (Jenks, 2004, p. 91). The actor-oriented approach also elaborates on how children practice 'agency'. This concept - often depicted as Childhood Studies' signature look - can be understood as an individual's own capacities to handle choices and possibilities for its future life (Robson, Bell, & Klocker, 2007; Tisdall & Punch, 2012; Valentine, 2011).

A social constructionist perspective

By stating that childhood is socially, culturally and historically constructed, the social constructionist perspective places the emphasis on the plurality of childhoods. Social constructionists "look at how categories are constructed" and how childhood and adulthood can be understood in various societies and specific cultural contexts (Montgomery, 2003, p. 46). They also focus on ideas about childhood, not facts, as childhood is varying across time and space, and is culturally embedded (Jenks, 1982). Unlike the structuralist perspective which focuses on the macro-level, social constructionists are interested in the local developments of childhood.

By seeing childhood as socially constructed, childhood and 'images of the child' are not anymore natural, but cultural (Nilsen, 2008). These views are constructed within the daily life practices and cultural processes, for example in institutions like schools and kindergartens, but also policies. Childhood is therefore diverse and plural, leading to the use of the term 'childhoods' (James & Prout, 2015). Researching with a social constructionist perspective entails to visualise the prevalent views or practices taken for granted. Researchers might therefore focus on the 'time' and 'space' variations of childhood and highlight some points of significance in diverse contexts. These two concepts, which definitions can be vague and hard to grasp due to their familiarity but also complexity, will mainly be used throughout the first part of the analytical discussion. In order to keep it simple, 'time' can be defined as "the part of the existence that is measured in minutes, days, years, etc.", while 'space' is mainly defined as "an area" (Cambridge University Press, 2021). Even if this definition of 'time' can be satisfactory, Hassard (1990) argues that 'time' must also be seen in a social perspective and be understood through social processes.

In the same idea that social aspects of life do interfere with our understandings of temporality, Aune, Gunnerud Berg, Cruickshank, and Dale (2015) support the idea that our understanding of 'space' changes according to who we are, therefore rendering tedious the task of precisely defining this concept. The concept of 'space' is therefore

versatile and plural and can greatly vary from Childhood Studies to any other academical discipline. They also add that understanding what 'space' can be, is tightly linked to understanding how space is constructed. However, in their writings they draw on several dimensions to illustrate the concept of 'space', such as the need of a geographical location, somewhere which can be found on a map, or a place of encounters and relationships between people. In this same idea, James and James (2012) argue that 'space' can be seen as a geographical location, but which is strongly imbued in social and cultural meanings. Space is therefore not only an area, but also a place where social and cultural processes interact with the people. It is a dynamic concept which can only be understood when experienced (Aune et al., 2015). Having this in mind, the analytical discussion will make use of both 'space' and 'time' as a spatial and temporal framework wrapped around children's and adult's practices in nature.

This thesis will benefit from looking at childhood from a social constructionist point of view in order to understand the construction of ideas about children and nature in Norway. As constructionists argue that the "various constructions of children and childhoods are part of ongoing processes of cultural production and reproduction, acted out by agents at all ages, in different ways and in different contexts"(Nilsen, 2008, p. 39), the analytical discussion will be grounder in the concept of cultural analysis. In this regard, ideas about and the construction of the 'good childhood'[10] in Norway such as presented by Nilsen (2008), will shed another light in the understanding of cultural production and reproduction processes.

3.2 Children's shared cultures and practices

Children's encounters with nature and experiences in nature in the school context being the central theme of this thesis, there is a need to also get a better understanding of aspects related to children's culture. As the analytical part of this study will focus both on children's practices but also bodily movements in nature, it is therefore necessary to touch upon central themes such as children's play or the concept of 'peer culture'.

3.2.1 'Peer culture' and 'interpretive reproduction'

The concept of 'peer culture' is a solid departure point to bring a new perspective on children's shared culture. Corsaro (2009) defines 'peer culture' as "a stable set of activities or routines, artefacts, values and concerns that children produce and share in interactions with peers" (p. 301). Children's shared culture can be understood as "an independent place with its own folklore, rituals, rules and normative constraints" (Jenks, 2004, p. 91), however, it would be erroneous to mean that their culture is separated from adult culture (Corsaro, 2011). Children actively and creatively incorporate information from adult culture in order to produce their own culture (Corsaro, 2009; Kjørholt, 2003).

Thus, 'peer culture' can also be understood in the light of 'interpretive reproduction', which is the process through which children actively participate and reproduce society (James & James, 2012). 'Interpretive reproduction' was developed by William Corsaro in response to his dissatisfaction of traditional accounts of socialization processes (Corsaro, 2011; James & James, 2012). He argued that children are not simply passive recipients of their surrounding culture and do not evolve segregated from the rest of society.

[10] The concept of 'the good childhood' will be detailed in a following section.

Through interpretive reproduction, children actively reinvent, adapt and reproduce the local culture in creative ways. They create, share and negotiate culture with each other, but also with adults (Corsaro, 2011; James & James, 2012). By using the terms 'interpretive reproduction' Corsaro (2011) illustrated that children are affected by society and the culture(s) around them, while they simultaneously shape and influence processes that can lead to historical change.

3.2.2 Children's play in nature

As a point of departure, it is necessary to state that children's play cannot be seen from one perspective only and that, such as childhoods, 'play' is a rich and culturally embedded concept (Schwartzman, 1978). Schwartzman (1978) also argues that definitions of children's play do reduce these practices to arbitrary classifications, which are not representative of how diverse and socially constructed play can be. With this in mind, this section will not give an exhaustive picture of all the existing play theories, but rather focus on definitions of play that can be linked to children's play in nature.

'Play', according to Skår and Krogh (2009), is characterized by the exploration of what can happen, or being open to various possibilities. The main elements of play are pleasure and joy, its spontaneity and voluntary characteristics and the fact that it is intrinsically motivated (Brockman, Fox, & Jago, 2011). As mentioned by Skår et al. (2016), play is "genuine and meaningful in itself", it has its own life which "springs out of the participant's commitment and fascination" (p. 530). Play happens by itself, where the participants repeat an order of things are repeated without effort or aimed goals. In other words, play cannot "be predetermined" or " performed mechanically" (Skår et al., 2016, p. 530). Freedom, creativity and spontaneity are its core elements. Children's play takes place through interaction; interaction between the participants and the type of place, both influencing the play itself (Fasting & Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 2012; Skår et al., 2016).

'Practice play' and 'symbolic play'

Some previous theories about play are tightly knitted to development theories (Änggård, 2016), which have been highly controversial in the field of Childhood Studies. Even if his developmental ideas do not go eye to eye with this research field, Piaget's (1962) play classification can set a good base for illustrating children's play. Similarly than selected by Änggård (2016), two of Piaget's play forms are of interest here: 'practice play' and 'symbolic play'.

'Practice play' is mainly sensorimotor and is structured around actions carried out for pleasure. For example jumping over a river just for fun or manipulating natural elements. In this type of play, the material world does not represent something else. On the contrary, 'symbolic play' implies an absent object and a make-believe situation. It often includes sensorimotor elements. In 'practice play', the material world has a real importance, as children manipulate it in various ways. In 'symbolic play', the material objects are used with another purpose or representation (Änggård, 2016; Piaget, 1962).

As it will be highlighted in chapter 5.2.2, children's play in nature or encounters with nature can also be described in the light of the concepts of 'affordances' or 'playscape'. Nevertheless, children's play in nature have been separated in three categories:

'sensorimotor play', 'construction play' and 'symbolic/fantasy play' (Änggård, 2016; Fjørtoft, 2001, 2004).

'Sensorimotor play' can also be understood as 'physical play', where the child is in movement. 'Construction play' involves the manipulation of elements in order to practice the play. These two are subcategories to Piaget's 'practice play'. 'Symbolic play', or 'fantasy play' sticks to the above-mentioned definition. However, 'physical play' can be hard to categorize as some physical activity plays might also involve symbolic activity or games (Holt, Lee, Millar, & Spence, 2015). As mentioned above, the spontaneous character of play and its aim for exploration can incite children to switch from one type of play to another, influenced by the natural spaces or elements available.

'Free play' and 'curious play'

Yet, two additional types of play are mentioned in the literature and are of utmost relevance for this thesis: 'free play' and 'curious play'.

'Curious play' was designed by Gurholt and Sanderud (2016) in response to the concept of 'risky play', where the children take part into 'physical play' that can sometimes lead to injuries (Sandseter, Kleppe, & Sando, 2020). Gurholt and Sanderud (2016)support the idea that children are active participants in their own lives and shape and create meanings through their plays, movements or activities. The authors therefore argue that children's play should be seen in a more positive light (curious play) instead of seeing them as passive (risky play). Having myself very little experience with children playing in nature in the school context, I deliberately choose to place my attention on 'curious play' instead of 'risky play'. Even if my own experience in Switzerland makes me feel more in line with the latter, as it raises the notion of danger and depicts children's experiments with nature as sometimes needing adult's supervision, I wilfully choose to convey a more positive view about children and their interaction with nature for two main reasons. Firstly, to bring in the light a concept that enables children to be seen as active and competent participants in their plays. Secondly, because the general positive tone and ideas about children's encounters of and experiences in nature were very strongly emphasized by the adults of the school I conducted fieldwork in.

However, Gurholt and Sanderud (2016) argue that applying the concept of 'curious play' in the Norwegian context confronts to an internal contradiction. On one hand, children have relatively good access to nature (Wold, Skår, & Gundersen, 2015) and 'free play' is seen as a core value in the Norwegian society. But, as children's leisure activities are changing (Skår & Krogh, 2009), play outside in nature is often done under adult supervision in institutions such as schools and kindergartens. One could therefore argue for a mismatch between cultural ideas still valued in the Norwegian society and seen as ground layer of the Norwegian culture, and the actual reality of children's encounters with nature.

Nevertheless, the concept of 'curious play' opens the door for a broader understanding of the Nordic valued ideas behind 'free play'. 'Children self-managed play', or 'free play' being often understood as a specific type of 'physical play' that is child-initiated, spontaneous and voluntary (Holt et al., 2015). By using 'curious play' instead, the emphasis is placed on curiosity as the motivational factor for children's partaking in autonomous play and opens up the door "to understand children's free play in nature as

an exploration of their bodily possibilities and limitations through interaction with their physical, social and cultural surroundings" (Gurholt & Sanderud, 2016, p. 326).

Material aspects of 'play'

Focusing on the materiality of 'play' is of utmost relevance if wanting to understand children's use of material in symbolic games, which are often referred to as toys. As argued by Melhuus (2012), the artefacts that can be found in one place are a reflection of its educational priorities. I take the liberty to add that the artefacts found in one place are also a reflection of the environing culture.

A toy is "something one plays with, regardless of whether or not it is intended to be a toy" (Hangaard Rasmussen, 2002, as cited in Änggård, 2016, p. 81). This 'something' which is played with allows natural objects or elements to be seen as toys when used in play situations. Therefore, one could argue that the natural characteristics of a landscape and its various possibilities for play could also be seen as toys, as they often are used by children to practice their games. By making great use of the natural qualities that can be found in nature (Fjørtoft, 2001), children give a new dimension to our understanding of what a toy can be.

If looking at more mainstream definitions of toys, these can be divided into two categories: first they can have inherent qualities that provide the basis for the play (swings, toboggans, etc.), or be objects from the surrounding culture (buckets, trains, etc.). The second kind of toys is socially structured and mediated through social and cultural values. Yet, natural materials or elements of nature used as toys are not bearer of social meanings, instead, the children need to make sense and interpret them (Änggård, 2016). In other words, children choose themselves how to use the natural elements incorporated in their plays, therefore creating and recreating their own culture, separated from the adult's world.

3.2.3 'Agency'

As previously mentioned, the concept of 'agency' can be seen as an individual's capacity to handle possibilities and choices of its own life (Robson et al., 2007; Tisdall & Punch, 2012; Valentine, 2011). Using an actor-oriented perspective opens up for a broader understanding of how children practice agency. Viewing children as 'agents' allows researchers to see children as active and competent participants in their own life, but also in other's lives. It allows to view children as 'doers and thinkers' actively creating their experience and experiment of practices, and who might "negotiate and resist adult control, social and cultural expectations" (Nilsen, 2020, p. 8; Robson et al., 2007).

Even within the research field of Childhood Studies, the concept of 'agency' and seeing 'children as agents' are discussed. In recent years, growing concerns have been raised about the application of this trendy concept (Sutterlütz & Tisdall, 2019). For Mayall (2002), there is a need to draw the line between children as 'active actors' and as 'agents', as the latter suggest their interactions and negotiations with others. Although widely used, it is subject to criticisms and questions. As argued by Tisdall and Punch (2012), Childhood Studies has had a tendency to assume that children's agency is innately and inevitably positive, rendering negative views about 'agency' almost impossible (Sutterlütz & Tisdall, 2019; Tisdall & Punch, 2012). Hammersley (2017) adds that even if 'agency' has generally been see as a positive feature, what it indeed involves

remains vague. Valentine (2011, p. 348), states that "agency cannot be understood as the exercise of authentic choice or self-directed action". Agency must be seen as a social model "that recognises the particularity of children and the social embeddedness of the agency of both children and adults" (Valentine, 2011, p. 354). Both adults and children can be viewed as agents, and agency could also be seen in the interactions between them. Agency is therefore not a possession one can have, but a practice that must be done by oneself (Sutterlütz & Tisdall, 2019).

Thus, it is necessary to study and look at children in the context of their own lives. In this regard, Corsaro's work about 'peer culture' can shed an interesting light on the concept of 'agency'. He concludes that:

> *"Although a wide range of features of children's peer cultures have been identified, two central themes consistently appear: Children make persistent attempts to gain control of their lives, and to share that control with each other. In early childhood years (two to six years old), children have an overriding concern with social participation and develop strategies for challenging adult authority"* (Corsaro, 2009, p. 302).

Finally, the concepts of 'adaptation' and 'resistance', such as presented by Nilsen (2009), can also be understood as a practice of agency and children's repeated attempt to gain control over adult's authority. Adaptation and resistance occur in situations where adults are the key actors and where children might not meet adults' demands and expectations. In her ethnographic study in day-care centres, Nilsen discovered how children found ways to go round adult's directives, but also going against what was decided. She argues that "resistance is, at the same time, both an opposition to the adult authority and an empowerment of children" (Nilsen, 2009, p. 7). By drawing a bridge between the above-mentioned definition of 'agency', it is possible to see that when doing 'resistance' or 'adaptation', children are gaining control over their lives and therefore practicing 'agency'.

3.3 'Nature': conceptual and Norwegian understanding

3.3.1 'Nature' as a concept

Finding one and straight-forward definition of the notion of 'nature' can be a tedious task. Often been taken for granted in the everyday context, 'nature' is a concept which omnipresence creates more difficulty to precisely explain. However, nature can generally be referred to as "something out there somewhere" (Gurholt & Viken, 2003, p. 13) or defined in its opposition to the Man (Witthøfft, 2004). In the literature, the views about 'nature' have various standpoints and interpretative lenses. Drifting away from a dualistic perspective, the idea that 'nature' is socially constructed and reconstructed seems to be a widely shared belief within the field of social sciences (Gurholt & Viken, 2003; Linzmayer & Halpenny, 2014).

The following sections will present different understandings of 'nature', by unravelling different school of thoughts and their main ideas. In order to self oneself apart from a dualistic perspective which can be limiting and simplistic even if relevant, the focus will be placed on a post-humanistic perspective which opens up for a richer and more creative understanding of what nature can be.

3.3.2 'Nature' defined by its opposition

The concept of 'nature' presented in this chapter is part of a Western cultural and historical framework. From a constructivist standpoint, describing 'nature' can be done through four categories (Witthøfft, 2004, p. 33):

1. "Nature is the physical whole, everything that constitutes the world".
2. "Nature is that which is not created by Man, or manipulated by Man".
3. "Nature is the essence of a thing or a living being".
4. "Nature is what constitutes this world in its difference from others".

By placing nature in arbitrary categories, or describing it in its opposition to another element (Linzmayer & Halpenny, 2014; Witthøfft, 2004), the Western understandings of 'nature' are articulated around a dualistic perspective. On account of these four categories, five oppositions describing nature can be found in the literature. For the sake of clarity, each opposition will be presented as an individual subchapter even if the content of each section stays very general and does not enter in detail.

"The opposition between nature and society"

This first dual perspective, presented by Gullestad (1992, p. 205), opposes nature and society. It is articulated around ideas of 'natural' and 'man-made elements' (Chawla, 2015; Giusti, Barthel, & Marcus, 2014; Linzmayer & Halpenny, 2014), in other words what is still natural and what is constructed. Being out in nature can in this sense mean 'to be away from' people and society, which automatically implies that the social distance is converted into spatial distance. Yet, Giusti et al. (2014) consider arbitrary the division between human-made and natural areas, as all landscapes are "embedded in the local cultural system that defines the meaning of what is natural" and what is not (p. 19).

"The opposition between home and outside"

The second dichotomy named by Gullestad (1992, p. 203) is framed by an anthropological lens. She states that the home, or 'inside', plays a central role in people's everyday life, especially in Norway. She argues that nature can be seen as an independent cultural category, when creating the dichotomy between home (*hjemme*) and outside (*ute*). In other words, the concepts of 'nature' and 'home' come to life because of their opposition. Thus, she points out that the polarity between inside and outside had been used for centuries - more recently in international policies, among missionaries or researchers - by placing boundaries between us (home) and them (out). By creating this opposition between the inside and the outside world, nature ineluctably becomes a form of 'out'.

"The opposition between nature and culture"

The third division presented by Gullestad (1992, p. 206) sets nature in opposition to culture. In her writings, Gullestad is very critical regarding the two previously cited oppositions, but even more towards this last one. She argues that, as previously mentioned, 'culture' is wide and dynamic. Drawing from her arguments, placing 'culture' and 'nature' in opposition with each other confronts us to another issue: by placing

'nature' and 'culture' in opposition, it gives the impression that they are by definition two distinct categories.

In an anthropological perspective, culture is often referred to as a human construction. However, the outdoor cannot be positioned as separated from human presence, or as pure and authentic. The concept of 'nature' does not exist outside of human experience, and cannot therefore exist without 'culture' (Gullestad, 1992; Harju, Balldin, Ekman Ladru, & Gustafson, 2020). Therefore, if 'culture' is understood as something artificial, constructed by human, it can be set in opposition with the 'naturalness' of nature and its normative framework (Gullestad, 1992; Witthøfft, 2004).

If playing the devil's advocate, one could argue that culture is not the most outstanding category in the Norwegian society - in opposition to nature. Nevertheless, it is necessary to take distance from other Western or normative conceptions of 'culture'. In this regard, the Norwegian value of nature could be understood as a highly valued cultural category (Gullestad, 1992). This would therefore invalidate the idea of a division between nature and culture, but acknowledge nature as part of culture and social reproduction in the Norwegian society.

The opposition between 'human' and 'nonhuman'

In their research about children's definition and perception of nature, Tillmann, Button, Coen, and Gilliland (2019) did highlight that children's definitions of nature are often focusing on elements found in nature, for example grass, trees, water, stones, or wood. Children mainly focus on making the distinction between themselves and the elements that can be found in nature. In the four categories presented by Witthøfft (2004, p. 33), the distinction between 'human' and 'nonhuman' is also mentioned: "Nature is what makes a human body human and a tree a tree". When asked, children do also mention the dichotomy between 'inside' and 'outside', as well as seeing nature as a whole system of living elements which does, surprisingly not included them (Tillmann et al., 2019). In addition, nature can also be seen as "all materials components of the cosmos" which includes flora and fauna, geographical features, aromas, sounds or tastes (Hordyk et al., 2015, p. 574). It is also a dynamic collection of elements such as rocks, trees and other vegetations, animals or water (Linzmayer & Halpenny, 2014).

The opposition between 'raw nature' and 'organized nature'

As presented above, the concept of 'nature' can also be presented in the light of the division between "wild nature" and "cultivated nature" (Witthøfft, 2004, p. 34), in other words what is natural or built by humans (Linzmayer & Halpenny, 2014). However, this arbitrary division does not match with our more recent realities: natural areas have ever more been affected by a history of human modifications (Giusti et al., 2014; Linzmayer & Halpenny, 2014).

Scholars therefore argue that what is considered to be 'natural' is to a certain extend embedded in the cultural and local system that defines the meaning of 'nature' (Giusti et al., 2014; Linzmayer & Halpenny, 2014). In the field of Childhood Studies, the dualistic definitions of 'nature' have been challenged (Hordyk et al., 2015), and led to see nature as socially constructed (Linzmayer & Halpenny, 2014).

3.3.3 'Nature' in a post-humanistic perspective

Despite its etymological roots, it would be erroneous to understand the concept of 'nature' as natural, or being an untouched and unexplored part of the world (Gullestad, 1992). Post-humanistic views about nature, which have emerged in reaction to the normative ideas of "humans as the only agents in the world", have tried to dissolve the dualisms nature-culture, or human-nonhuman and highlight the agency of nonhumans such as animals, things or the environment (Änggård, 2016, p. 78).

The critiques of these dualistic views about the human-nature relationship, such as presented above, are drawing on three arguments. Firstly, it suggests a narrow and problematic definition of nature as "pristine and untouched by humans" (Arvidsen, 2018, p. 280). Secondly, nature is depicted as passive, as an inanimate brute material that awaits human action. Thirdly, these idealized views of nature might give an erroneous vision about what is really going on between the material world and humans, especially children (Arvidsen, 2018). Placing children, or humans, as active participants among a world of active materials allows us to see nature as part of the equation. Nature is influenced by humans, and humans are influenced by nature.

The following sections do reveal ideas about nature that are both related to the social constructionist branch, but also a more mainstream post-humanistic branch. From a social constructionist perspective, nature would be seen as *impacting* on humans' lives, while a radical post-humanistic perspective would depict nature as *acting* on humans' lives. As some of the post-humanistic arguments do seem quite extreme - especially seeing nature as a clear agent with acting power and abilities - the distinction between *impacting* and *acting* takes its full meaning. Nevertheless and even if these arguments can be valid, I have deliberately chosen to present a more nuanced version of how nature can be seen in a post-humanistic perspective.

'Nature' as socially and culturally constructed

Drawing from the idea that nature is influenced by human and vice versa, scholars clearly state that nature is therefore socially constructed. Children's experiences of nature are directly mediated by their social and cultural environment (Giusti et al., 2014; Linzmayer & Halpenny, 2014; Witthøfft, 2004). Views about nature, but also uses of nature, are embedded in the local set of cultural values and ideas.

Nature is a complicated culturally embedded concept at a crossroad between cultural reproduction and local or global discourses (Gurholt & Viken, 2003). Yet, nature has not always been understood as a concept, or not even seen as part of cultural reproduction. Until a few decades ago, nature used to be the central component for people subsistence, in terms of physical survival but also spiritual balance. Through the last century, nature has become a place of recreation and leisure. In more actual pressing matters, results of the climate crisis did cast nature and what it entails on the forefront of world-wide political agendas (Gurholt & Viken, 2003).

As argued above, this perspective fits the orientation of this thesis quite well. Not only because a social constructionist standpoint has been chosen and argued for throughout all chapters, but also because it opens up for taking into consideration both the local and global environment. If acknowledging the influence of children's social and cultural background in the understanding of nature, it opens up for seeing children's experiences as mediated and constructed (Linzmayer & Halpenny, 2014) and therefore relational.

‘Nature’ as relational

Still in a post-humanistic perspective, scholars were able to see children’s nature contact as relational. This standpoint takes root in the previously presented ideas about the social construction of nature, but extend the reflection to seeing nature and humans as emerging in interaction, influencing each other by their actions (Hordyk et al., 2015; Rantala & Puhakka, 2020).

Skår et al. (2016) define children’s contact with nature as a relational interaction. In this regard, one can see “children and nature as interacting agents, and the human-nature relationship as a dynamic and emotional relation” (Rantala & Puhakka, 2020, pp. 492-493). In this perspective, children “actively inhabit the space, creating an embodied, social and affective experience” (Skår et al., 2016, p. 529) in their contact with nature.

In addition, researchers see the relationship between children and nature as reciprocal. The child is not the sole initiator, both children and nature are active in the engagement (Rautio, 2013). When in nature, children do illustrate the relational aspect of their encounters by speaking to nature, responding to nature’s presence by caring gestures or even feeling emotions when outside (Hordyk et al., 2015). Seeing children’s contact with nature as relational can be extended to the idea that the environment has agency. As argued above, the controversial and radical aspect of such arguments are difficult to integrate in this thesis.

Drawing from this relational perspective, scholars have developed more creative views about the relationship between human and nature, putting forward the concepts of ‘affordances’ and ‘playscape’.

‘Nature’ as experimental: ‘affordances’ and ‘playscape’

This last view about nature depicts the natural environment as an experimental space, in other words “a playground for children” (Fjørtoft, 2001, p. 111). Nature has rough and dynamic landscapes that challenge children’s motor activity. By its changing topography (slopes, rocks, holes, etc.) nature provides obstacles children have to cope and experiment with (Fjørtoft, 2001).

These changing environmental patterns found in nature have an influence on children’s relationship to nature: “intuitively children use their environment for physical challenges and play; they perceive the functions of the landscape and use them for play” (Fjørtoft, 2001, p. 111). The concept linked to children’s examination of the environment is the concept of ‘affordances’ developed by Gibson (1979), describing children’s “awareness of the environments and their functional significance, or their functional meaning” (Fjørtoft, 2001, p. 111). In the past years, this concept has been criticized for placing too much emphasis on nature instead of focusing on the children (Gurholt & Sanderud, 2016). Nevertheless, it is of relevance for this thesis as it allows to shed a new light on children’s bodily practices and plays in nature. By focusing on how children understand the landscape around them and therefore use it in their daily practices, it opens up for pulling away from more mainstream views about their encounters and experiences with/of nature.

In addition, the concept of ‘playscape’ introduced by Frost (1992) is also tied to an experimental view of nature. He argues that natural environments, or features such as rocks, trees, rivers, are primordial qualities of children’s playgrounds. These natural

features provide children with a wide range of learning opportunities, which could not be available in traditional playgrounds (Fjørtoft, 2001, p. 112; 2004). Children are in search for specific environmental qualities such as colours in nature, shifting topography, places for climbing and construction. Thus, previous researches have shown that children are looking for challenging places for experiences and exploration. As argued by Fjørtoft (2004), children seek for more complex, exciting and challenging play spaces, and therefore might be more attracted by nature than traditional playground designed for them.

The previous sections presented theoretical views about nature that will be of relevance in the analytical discussion of this thesis. However, ideas about the construction of nature must also be understood in the geographical and cultural context of this study: Norway. As argued by several scholars, nature is often placed in the foreground in Scandinavian countries (Borge et al., 2003; Gullestad, 1997; Kristjansson, 2006). Children spend extensive time outdoors in kindergartens or schools and are encouraged to experience and experiment nature in all four seasons. Drifting away from the theoretical standpoints presented above, the next chapter will highlight some key points about nature in the Norwegian context.

3.3.4 Nature in the Norwegian context

Widely known as having special ideas about nature, as well as having a special relationship to what is understood as nature, Norwegians and other Scandinavians give peculiar attention to the environment, nature and the ability to cope in a landscape:

> *"Nature makes both body and soul hardier and fresh air gives one new strength. Nature trains independence and the ability to cope in the wild. Nature offers harmony, peace of mind, and distance from the hustle and bustle of society. Being out in the so-called fresh air offers solitude and freedom from society, as well as good friendship. This is how Norwegian men and women think, and to a greater or lesser degree this marks the upbringing of their children, their Sunday trip, and holidays in primitive cottages"* (Gullestad, 1992, p. 204).

The 'Norwegian love of nature' - or their strong bound to nature and preference for outdoor activities - is very often viewed as part of national symbols and discourses (Borge et al., 2003; Gullestad, 1997; Nilsen, 2008). More important, this sturdy relationship is linked to cultural heritage and identity. As Norwegians have always had to outlive a very changing weather, they were forced to develop a quite close relationship with nature, but also gain precious knowledge and skills that were passed on to the next generation (Repp, 1996).

Having this in mind, the following section will provide very concrete examples that do shape the Norwegian society, in order to understand how the Norwegian relationship to nature is part of national identity.

'Friluftsliv' and 'allemannsretten'

The Norwegian concept of '*friluftsliv'*, which could be translated as "free air life" (Gelter, 2000, p. 78), or "outdoor life" (Nilsen, 2008, p. 43; Repp, 1996), is the Norwegian understanding of what life in so-called 'untouched nature' does mean. It can also be understood as a philosophical lifestyle springing up from experiences of freedom and connectedness with nature, in the outdoor environment. 'Friluftsliv' is therefore not and

activity, nor a user's manual, but a philosophy and a lifestyle (Gelter, 2000). Historically, 'friluftsliv' was used for depicting thoughts and ideas about life, supported by the very idea that friendship with nature was more than a choice, but an obligation. In a modern perspective, 'friluftsliv' is a way of pursuing outdoor leisure activities (Gelter, 2000; Repp, 1996). It is also defined as "visit and do physical activities in the outdoor environment, with mindfulness of environmental issues and nature experiences"[11] (Det Kongelige Klima- og Miljødepartement, 2016, p. 10).

As presented by Nilsen (2008) and the White Paper on outdoor life (Det Kongelige Klima- og Miljødepartement, 2016), the idea of 'friluftsliv' is a core aspect of the Norwegian culture and the Norwegian national identity. Not only being about attitudes of love and respect of nature which must be learned and experienced (Gelter, 2000), it is also an educational value that is part of the Norwegian cultural tradition (Repp, 1996). Thus, according to the above mentioned White Paper (Det Kongelige Klima- og Miljødepartement, 2016), the experience of outdoor life in schools is one of the main goals of education. Children should develop the joy of being active, for obvious health reasons, but also to trigger sense of responsibility and awareness about the fragility and preciousness of nature. A connection can be made between the content of the curricula and national guidelines for education presented in the previous chapter and their strong focus on the experience and experiment of nature within the school system (Harju et al., 2020). More importantly, the existence of a White Paper on outdoor life, comprising more than a hundred pages about the importance and application of an outdoor life in Norway, is a good marker of nature's position in the Norwegian society.

The second core element of this close bound to nature is everybody's right of access to the natural environment, '*allemannsretten*' (Nilsen, 2008). This right restricting the rights of private ownership does allow people to pick berries and mushrooms, visit mountains or woods wherever in Norway (Gelter, 2000; Gullestad, 1997). This right is inevitably linked to the idea of 'friluftsliv': by offering people access to nature - 'allemannsretten' - it is hoped that they will enjoy and use nature in a respectful way - 'friluftsliv' - (Det Kongelige Klima- og Miljødepartement, 2016).

As will be presented in the next section, these practices associated with the Norwegian 'love of nature' do also affect children and childhood, by shaping ideas about the 'good childhood' through play, sports and outdoor activities (Gullestad, 1997).

3.4 Childhood and nature in a 'cultural analysis' perspective

In addition to the theoretical concepts previously presented, the analytical discussion of this thesis will revolve around the concept of '*kulturanalyse'*, in English 'cultural analysis'.

'Cultural analysis' is a rich and diffuse concept tightly connected to the concept of 'culture' and ethnographical research methods. According to Hastrup, Rubow, and Tjørnhøj-Thomsen (2011), the main goal of 'cultural analysis' is to unravel and make explicit some implied elements of social life. They acknowledge its link to the concept of 'culture', but argue that 'cultural analysis' should not limit itself to ideas about culture only. Instead, 'cultural analysis' should involve an in-depth study of the social reproduction processes at stake in a local context, while looking at the broader context in which these processes reproduce. In the same idea that only looking at culture is not

[11] The translation from Norwegian to English is from the author of this thesis.

sufficient, Gullestad (1992) argues that researchers using ethnographical methods should look at culture as "a set of permeable, less bounded, and less tightly integrated structures and practices" (p. 14). She adds that culture is not a possession that humans have, but an analytical aspect of their shared practices (Gullestad, 1989). In this regard, culture is seen as happening through the interaction with each other and is the reflection of meanings in social life.

'Cultural analysis' is therefore an exploration of the meaning-making processes that shape everyday life among different groups of people. It is a way of making explicit well-known or hidden cultural patterns, norms or values (Hastrup et al., 2011). By unravelling the unravelled, and paying attention to the taken for granted aspects of children's everyday life, this thesis aims to shed a new light on their uses of and encounters with nature in the school context. While using 'cultural analysis' as a tool, reflections about the socially constructed aspect of childhood, and more precisely 'the good Norwegian childhood', will be part of the analytical discussion.

3.4.1 Children and nature in Norway: 'the good childhood'

By revolving around the articulation between children and nature in Norway, this last subchapter is the final touch to this theoretical overview about children, childhood and nature in the Norwegian context. By connecting ideas about the construction of childhood and ideas about nature in Norway, it aims to focus on the so-called idea of 'the good childhood'.

As argued throughout the previous sections, ideas about what childhood should be and how children should participate in society, as well as ideas about how and why nature does play a major role in the everyday life in Norway, are all socially and culturally embedded. These norms are specific to the Norwegian context and valid for a specific time, supporting the argument of the time and space variation in the construction of culture and norms, as presented in chapter 3.1.1.

These variations do also affect the idea of 'the good childhood', as mentioned by several authors. According to James and James (2008), the ideas linked to the construction of a good childhood are shaped by the understanding of what children's 'best interests' do entail. Moreover, these representations are rooted in an adult perspective, leading to plethora of institutional arrangements and welfare policies aiming to secure what is thought as 'the proper childhood'. In line with James and James' (2008) arguments, ideas associated with 'the good Norwegian childhood' will be constructed from an adult perspective, however not by choice: current research about this topic do not take an actor-oriented perspective in order to gain children's understanding of a 'good childhood', but rather takes a socio-constructionist or structuralist stand.

The writings of Gullestad, even if published a few decades ago, are still of high relevance for unravelling what 'the good Norwegian childhood' is. Primarily, children are seen as "natural, sexually innocent and playful" in the Norwegian context (Gullestad, 1997, p. 28). In addition, it can be argued that 'the good Norwegian childhood' is rooted in democracy, but also ideas about equality and egalitarianism (Kjørholt, 2002; Wagner & Einarsdottir, 2008). In line with the idea that childhood is grounded into children's rights' discourses, Kjørholt (2008) argues that 'the good childhood' in Norway is "connected to the right to move freely in the physical environment" (p. 22) as well as placing an emphasis on freedom and play in particular in natural settings. Gullestad (1997) also stresses that many ideas about this good and 'natural' childhood do link children and

nature. This core element, being the ground layer of what constitutes 'a good childhood', goes in line with Norwegians' historical attachment to nature and their preference to outdoor recreational activities both for adults and children (Borge et al., 2003).

Children are expected to evolve in an active outdoor life, learn to cope with nature both in schools and during their free time. Hence, new kinds of preschools, more focused about nature and its experiment and experience are sprouting in Scandinavia (Fjørtoft, 2001; Nilsen, 2008), nature being perceived as a good place for children (Harju et al., 2020). These cultural practices and norms are exemplified by this popular saying:

"Det finnes ikke dårlig vær, bare dårlige klær!"

"There is no bad weather, only inappropriate clothing"[12] is a common sentence used to stamp out children's protestations about the idea of going out in bad weather. By learning to dress properly, according to the weather, and learning how to cope in nature, children are expected to develop a sense of 'norwegianness' and the love of nature. This ability to learn about nature and in nature has been explored by Nilsen (2008) in her fieldwork in Norwegian preschools, where she constructed the term of a "robust child subject" (p. 47). Being a 'robust child' means encountering and participating in nature, accordingly to adult expectations, and even showing competence in the outdoor setting by proving resilience, endurance or even vigour. Bodily and mental aspects, for example being an active participant in snow fights, as well as knowledge and expertise about how to stay warm of what kind of equipment is necessary according to the weather, are dominant features constituting a 'robust child subject'. Yet, being a 'robust child' in my understanding, is being able to survive in nature, but also being able to appreciate it.

'The good childhood' is also articulated around autonomous play among children, without adult supervision (Gullestad, 1997; Kjørholt, 2003; Wagner & Einarsdottir, 2008). 'Free play', understood as the creation of 'peer culture' where children can create meaning for their lives, is especially valued when taking place outside, in the natural setting (Kjørholt, 2008). However, disagreements can be found about the validity of this 'traditional Norwegian childhood' and its relevance today (Skår et al., 2016).

Yet, this emphasis on play highly contrasts with the ever more present institutionalization of childhood previously presented, as well as with the significant changes in the nature of children's play in the last decades due to the emergence of new technologies (Nordbakke, 2019). The concerns that children are losing connection with nature - valued for what it represents in Norway, but also for developmental and health benefits - are also growing within academia (Arvidsen, 2018). Thus, as a result of the societal organization of everyday life, not only do children spend less time playing in the outdoor natural environment, but their comprehension and use of nature is diminished (Skår & Krogh, 2009).

In sum, ideas associated with 'the good childhood' in Norway are the ones underlying national and local policies, school curricula, but more importantly traditional and cultural values. By emphasizing the outdoor and natural environment, mainly due to the geographical localization of Norway and the omnipresence of nature, these cultural reproduction processes are some of the ground layers for the Norwegian national identity. By experimenting nature and experiencing in nature, children do take part in a local socialization process. 'The good childhood' is therefore a time of training, of

[12] The translation from Norwegian to English is from the author of this thesis.

experiencing and experimenting, of gathering knowledge in context, to prepare the child for his/her future life as an active Norwegian citizen.

3.5 A literature review of previous research about children and nature

Original investigation on this topic gave the erroneous impression that questions about children and nature was a topic of interest in Scandinavia only, and was constrained to the geographical or life sciences areas. Even though writings on this topic emerge from various perspectives and within different academical disciplines, it remains nevertheless true that the largest proportion of studies are done in so-called developed countries (Gill, 2014). Moreover, the use of primary schools as a setting to look at children's experiences of nature has been found in only one research relevant for this thesis. Furthermore, a considerable number of researches have not been published in English, which hinders academia from very relevant sources by not being linguistically accessible. It is therefore knowingly that the following paragraphs will give a theme-categorized overview of the current research panel about children and nature, from both Scandinavian and international perspective. As this thesis is built around a qualitative framework, this literature review is not a systematic review. The articles have been selected from different journals of relevance for Childhood Studies, but also extending the search to other fields. In order to be even considered for this review, the articles should at least involve one of the three words in their titles: "nature", "outdoor" or "environment". Even if giving a good overview of the available research, it is not exhaustive nor complete, but aims to brush a blooming picture of the current situation.

Linzmayer and Halpenny (2014) argued that children's experiences with nature, as well as their understanding and use of nature, is mediated by various sociocultural factors, and therefore can vary with time and space. In their research about the role of the environment in children's sociocultural adaptation process, Hordyk et al. (2015) did also emphasize the cultural embeddedness of the construction of nature and normative ideas about 'the good childhood'. As previously mentioned, an article from Nilsen (2008), exploring this idea of the construction of a 'good childhood' as well as the traditional values and social practices stressing the importance of relating to nature and pursuing an outdoor life in the Norwegian context, was the point of departure of this thesis. Drawing from the idea that outdoor and nature are good places for children, Harju et al. (2020), did highlight that even if nature can play a central role in children's learning and well-being, the idea that nature is viewed as 'good' for children differs according to their ethnic background, their socioeconomical level and where they live.

Authors such as Tillmann et al. (2019) or Collado, Íñiguez-Rueda, and Corraliza (2016), did take a more actor-oriented focus in order to gain children's views and understandings of nature. By directly asking children and gaining their opinions, these Canadian and Spanish researchers are two of the few that did put into practice the idea that children can be knowledgeable subjects about topics that directly affect them. Yet, the idea that children might have divergent opinions was already taken up by Olwig (1989), who did focus on the contradictions between adults' and children's understanding of nature.

Children's use of nature is also a recurrent topic of interest within academia: Skår and Krogh (2009) did focus on how children's use of near-nature have changed through the years, by switching from spontaneous and self-initiated to being organized, planed and

controlled by adults. The changes in outdoor play and wider patterns of the use nature have further been explored by Skår et al. (2016) in a national survey from Norway, as well as by Nordbakke (2019) with a focus on children's participation in three different outdoor leisure activities in Norway. Fjørtoft (2001) studied children's changing use of playing space according to the weather and season and how it affected their motor-fitness. In this same idea, Eva Änggård (2010) focused on children's various use of nature while attending a Swedish outdoor-preschool.

Such as the ideas linked with the notion of 'good childhood', there are various researches, such as systematically reviewed by Gill (2014), arguing that nature can be beneficial for children. Skaugen and Fiskum (2015) did focus on how Norwegian schools achieving good academic results, could justify their use of outdoor education instead of sticking to more traditional pedagogics. The very idea that learning in the environment can be positive both for students and teachers was already supported by Fjørtoft (2001), who used outdoor preschools to explore the idea that the natural environment stimulates children's learning, as well as impacting their abilities and motor-fitness.

As previously mentioned, Eva Änggård (2010, 2011, 2016) did expand the understanding of children and nature, with a focus on Scandinavia and its cultural traditions about education. Even if using preschool as a setting her findings are relevant for the academical background of this thesis: according to her researches, children's use of nature and their exploration of nature are highly valued as pedagogical methods. By questioning children's gendered and non-gendered plays in the natural environment (2011), but also analysing children's types of play activities while being outside (2016), her writings did support that children and nature are socially constructed concepts, which are worth to be examined in turns, but also in the interaction with each other.

As stated at the beginning of this section, researches focusing on children's experiment and experiences with/of nature in primary schools are scarce. This lack might be due to the difficulty of gaining access to primary schools. Children's experiences in nature can also be linked with socialization processes, which make preschools more suitable settings. Most researches using primary schools as a setting do mainly focus on outdoor education, which is not the topic of this thesis. Nevertheless, in their research about how outdoor education can trigger other types of regulations than inside a classroom, Fiskum and Jacobsen (2013) did interview Norwegian children about their experiences from outdoor education. Also using primary school as a setting, Arvidsen (2018) took a closer look to children's dens and how they cannot be considered as fixed constructions, but becoming objects that are changing and being changed by children. He argued that there is a need to rethink our beliefs about children and their relationship to nature, as they are active participants of the natural environment. It is interesting to note that almost twenty years ago, Helga Jørgensen Rudaa (1993) placed her research in a school in Tromsø Kommune in order to assess the benefits of outdoor education, and more precisely the benefits of experiential learning through concrete experiences.

The brief overview provided by these articles sets a ground-layer for the topic of this thesis. As previously mentioned, it is unfortunately not exhaustive, as numerous relevant researches have been written in Norwegian, Swedish, Danish and Finish. The above-mentioned articles do nevertheless provide a solid background for the elaboration of the research questions and overall direction that this thesis will follow.

3.6 Summary: key concepts for the analysis

This chapter has discussed the theoretical historicity and ideas attached to children and childhood, but has also given a detailed picture of the concept of 'nature'. By bringing together nature and children, ideas encompassed in the concept of 'the good childhood' have also be presented.

Even if shortly presented, the concept of 'cultural analysis' will be the red thread of the analysis, aiming to unravel the taken for granted aspects of children's encounters with nature. Throughout the analysis, both actor-oriented and social constructionist perspectives will frame the discussion and aim to paint a clearer picture of what the Norwegian childhood can be. In addition to the ideas about nature and children, the analysis of this thesis will make great use of concepts such as 'agency', 'peer culture', the various 'play theories' presented in this chapter.

4 Methodology & methods

This chapter presents the whole process of data collection and therefore starts by briefly setting the methodological grounds of this research. It also focuses on reflections about the data collection in all stages of its progress: from the preparation of the fieldwork to the methods selected and used. The chapter also makes explicit some reflections on how I have dealt with the gathered data, and finally concludes with ethical considerations relevant in all stages of this research project.

4.1 Methodological perspectives

Throughout this project, the idea that children are subjects of human rights and therefore 'worth to be studied in their own rights' has been followed with careful attention. This research is thus based on human-rights law, more precisely on articles 3 (c), 12, 13 and 36 from the UNCRC (Ennew et al., 2009a). Right-based research makes a clear distinction between methods and methodology (Bessell, Beazley, & Waterson, 2017): all kinds of interaction forms between the participants and the researchers that lead to data collection, through communication or observation for example, are known to be the methods of the research. The methodology however is the overarching theory supporting the reasons for using such methods. In line with the UNCRC articles, a right-based research views children as valuable knowledge holders and therefore selects methods accordingly (Ennew et al., 2009c).

4.1.1 My position concerning children and their participation in research

As shortly presented in chapter 2.1.1, the UNCRC had a strong impact on contemporary societies but more precisely in Norway, and is still today a deeply rooted framework for policies and researches about childhood. Thus, its adoption in 1989 marks a turning point in ideas about children and childhood (Kjørholt, 2004). Previously, children were seen as becoming human-beings and not fully members of society. With the emergence of Childhood Studies, children did gain more attention and are nowadays perceived as active agents (James & Prout, 2015) (c.f. chapter 3.1). By acknowledging that children do have an influence on their own lives, one can argue that one and unique childhood does not exist. By being socially, politically, culturally and economically constructed, childhood is therefore diverse. This opens up for seeing children as valuable culture-makers (Kjørholt, 2004), and therefore acknowledging that they are worth to be studied in their own rights (Tisdall & Punch, 2012).

If seeing childhood as a social construction and 'children's cultures'[13] as diverse, one could argue that research findings would only be valid in the original context and therefore not applicable to more general statements. However, if not possible to identify more overarching statements, research findings would be quite limited. Commonalities about children and childhood even if in different contexts, must not be condemned as

[13] Once again, the world 'culture' here can be controversial. However, chapter 3.2 in the theoretical perspectives explains my positioning and what I mean by 'children's culture'.

they still can be of relevance (McKechnie & Hobbs, 2004). Having this in mind, I am aware that my research project could have produced different data if conducted in another region of Norway, or even another school from northern Norway. However, I support the idea that some generalization is necessary if wanting to understand the ground layers of children's encounters with nature in the Norwegian school system.

With the emergence of Childhood Studies and the implementation of the UNCRC, ideas constructing children as social and competent actors but also right-holders did lead to progressively ensure their participation in matters that affect their lives (Kjørholt, 2004). Shifting from *research about children* to *research with children*, attempts to involve children in all stages of the research and see them as equal partners (Ennew et al., 2009a) did lead to reconsider more mainstream research models where children's participation was constrained.

Children's full participation in research is however criticized, as adults should be the ones caring for the creation of safe environments and bearing responsibilities linked to the research. Thus, being a researcher is not innate to all human-beings, there is therefore a need for training and qualification (Kjørholt, 2004). Even if I also recognize children's competences and abilities, I deliberately chose not to design my first experience as a researcher, with children as researchers. I preferred seeing them as co-constructors of knowledge, actively contributing to the knowledge production by their insights and perspectives, but without having to care about the whole research process. By creating a safe space for the research to take place and offloading them from more administrative or structural aspects of a research project, I wanted to allow children to be seen as experts in their own life and giving them the opportunity to express reveal some crucial parts of their own cultures.

Seeing children as researchers is however not the only possibility for including children in a research process. The child can be seen as an object, as a subject, as a social actor or as (co-)participants in research (Christensen & Prout, 2002). This research allows children to be both social actors, acknowledging their own experiences and understandings, but also (co-)participants, perspective supported by the UNCRC and children's participation rights.

4.2 Data collection

4.2.1 Recruitment of informants and gaining access to the field

For researching children's use and encounter of nature within the primary school system in northern Norway, my choice of informants was quite limited, and I had to find at least one primary school willing to let me in for fulfilling my fieldwork.

I first determined that choosing a county with a high density of schools would increase my chance of getting positive answers to my enquiry. Having made a list of all available public primary schools, I ranked them according to three criteria: total number of pupils, localization and description of the school on its website. Following my ranking, I then took contact with all the directors, first by phone to briefly explain my enquiry and ask if I could send more documentation by email. I then waited approximately one week before calling the directors again, to hear if they had had time to think about my project. During this process, six schools never answered my calls or emails, a few declined straight away and the rest during my second phone call. Hopefully, one director directly expressed her

interest, which she confirmed during my second call. It is noteworthy to precise that the whole recruitment process, both phone calls or email correspondence or meetings, has been held in Norwegian. To seek the schools' interest, all got the same documents giving more details about my research: an English information letter addressed to the teachers/director including a consent form[14], a Norwegian information letter addressed to the pupils[15] and the NSD (Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata) approval[16] of my project. Being transparent about my research and aims would help gaining permission for researching in one school, but also ensure that I was conducting an ethically sound research.

Recruiting informants was not an easy and smooth process, letting me with no choice but only one school. My discussions with several directors highlighted that the schools' reluctance was triggered by the corona pandemic and its repercussion on the teaching staff, its availability, the hygiene rules enforced and an overarching climate of fear and exhaustion within the education field. Due to the hectic spring and summer, I had judged better to wait autumn before contacting schools, letting them start a new schoolyear and settle down in their new routines. However, I realized at that point that it could have been a double-edged sword.

After a first meeting with the director, where she agreed to all my demands and reassured me of the feasibility of my project in her school, I then met the two teachers I would be collaborating with. They had decided that their class, and therefore level, was the most appropriate for me to conduct fieldwork in. During this second meeting, they approved my project and welcomed me in their class[17], and also signed the consent form. No time or structural limits were formulated about my presence, due to the methods I had chosen: I could come and go whenever, as long as I would respect the ethical chart of the school and its confidentiality agreement. As no personal or sensitive information about the children would be gathered, I did not need them to sign a consent form. However, in my letter of introduction to them and their parents, I specified that they had the right to not talk to me or ask me to stop observing them. This letter, written in Norwegian, was distributed to all the children and their parents before my arrival.

I had therefore gained access to one class of 21 children, 9 boys and 12 girls, for conducting my observations over a total of 8 weeks. The participants, aged between 5-6 years old, were therefore not selected by me, but by the teachers and director, according to their knowledge about the use of nature in their school.

4.2.2 Characteristics of the participants and of the environment

Choosing to conduct fieldwork in northern Norway would allow me to experiment the season change in a more extreme and distinct way than in the rest of the country. The landscape is also sharper and the elements surge in a more brutal way. As wished, the school granted me the opportunity to split my fieldwork in two periods, one in autumn (October-November) and the other one in winter (January-February). It would therefore allow me to experience two seasons, broadening the situations in nature and the multifaceted appearance of the weather there. As previously mentioned, original plan was to split my fieldwork in two distinct periods (5 weeks and 3 weeks). Unfortunately, I

[14] Cf. appendix D.
[15] Cf. appendix B.
[16] Cf. appendix A.
[17] The fieldwork did however not start straight away due to time constraints of the school.

was not able to conduct the second part of it, due to corona restrictions and the uncertain and always changing situation. The total amount of fieldwork weeks was therefore of 5, which I consider as slightly too few in regard of the methods I had selected.

Nevertheless, the school is located on the outskirts of a town and has easy access to natural resources such as the sea, the forest or the mountains. Its buildings are also surrounded by nature, both 'untouched' and 'organized'. By untouched, I mean a forest, small rivers and hilly parts; and organized places as sand boxes, swings, climbing spaces or snowballs fields are also part of the schoolyard.

The class of 21 children, and their two teachers was a good representation of diversity. Varied cultural heritage, nationalities, residency status in the country or socio-economic were present. This will however not be detailed in this thesis, to ensure privacy considerations.

4.2.3 Research in a Norwegian school as insider and outsider

A short note must be done about my position as a researcher. Being a researcher in a Norwegian primary school, I was parted between my simultaneous outsider and insider positions. An insider is defined as someone who shares particular characteristics (race, culture, etc.) with the researched group, while an outsider does not share characteristics with the researched group (Mercer, 2007). However, the boundaries are not so clear-cut and one could argue that researchers could have plural status, negotiating their identity and moving back and forth from insider to outsider (Mercer, 2007). By not sharing some of the characteristics with the informants, but being used to the school setting and therefore feeling myself in a familiar space, I did navigate between these two positions.

Being an outsider was reflected in my non-perfect use of the informants' language or understanding of their culture or nationality. But as experienced by Corsaro in his fieldwork in Italy, not mastering the language can also help the researcher to be seen as an atypical type of adult (Corsaro & Molinari, 2008). In my case, this also encouraged the development of an unusual but positive relationship with the children. However, it also triggered tensed situations where I would not grasp the issues the children were talking about, or meaning of what was said, leading them to be frustrated or even angry. On the other side, being a primary teacher myself did push me on the side of being an insider. I was familiar with the structure of a school and all the implicit rules children face in a classroom. However, during data collection I was mainly an outsider. I did not know any of the children I would be observing and was therefore perceived as a stranger. They all knew that my mother tongue was not Norwegian even if I was living in Norway. The fact that I was a teacher, but was not acting like one when being with them also positioned me as 'someone strange'. In addition, not sharing their knowledge about the weather or the types of clothes to wear allowed me to be seen as what Mercer (2007) describes as 'the other', and therefore ask naive questions about their practices in school, while at the same time using my insider knowledge (teaching knowledge) to ask deeper or more specific questions.

4.2.4 Relations with the children

During my first morning with the class, the main teacher shortly introduced me and then gave me space to present myself and the reason I was there. As mentioned by Ennew et al. (2009b), it is necessary to build a trusting relationship between the researcher and the participants, especially when those are children. To develop a secure relationship

with the children, I went to school every day for six days in a row, being with them from the start until the end of the day. During my time there, I tried to take part in all the children's activities and games in the classroom, and also their games during the '*utetid*'[18]. By doing so, I created opportunities to get to know the children better, but also give them the space to get to know me and directly ask me questions about the research and myself, and overall to build trust. As the children did not have to sign any consent form, but still had to welcome me in their games and practices, I dedicated this first week to try to have interactions with groups of children, but also every single child individually. As argued by Solberg (1996) and Woodhead and Faulkner (2000), the relationship between the researcher and the researched must be negotiated, articulated, not assumed. Building trust is not a single and isolated process, it therefore continued throughout the whole fieldwork process.

4.3 Methods

Methods, also known as the "ways researchers and participants communicate" (Ennew et al., 2009c, p. 5), are a key aspect in researching with children and respecting their rights. In the context of my thesis, I chose to use participant observations.

In the following sections, I explain my motivations for the use of participant observations, as well as the challenges and successes I experienced during fieldwork. The overall structure of my fieldwork will also be detailed. General challenges, or ethical considerations about fieldwork, will be detailed in chapters 4.4.3 and 4.5.

4.3.1 Research diary & field notes

Besides the chosen method, I also used a research diary which I always brought with me while in the field. In this diary, I would write down the children's time schedule and the time I would be with them during the day, day after day. I also used this diary to take my observation notes, collect details or information that might be relevant for the ongoing day, or write down reflections about the data collection.

In order to not look *too much* like a researcher, I did not take out my notebook in the first days of fieldwork. After the fourth day, I decided I would carry it with me during my time in the field. However, each time I would want to write something that a child just had done or said, I would ask for permission. Even if I was not writing down their names or any other sensitive information, I used this procedure in order to build trust and show children that they had the right to decide whether or not I could gather information about their practices. Thus, the notebook became quickly an object of mutual interest: One day, while I was engaging in a fictive 'food preparation' with two girls during the 'utetid', one of them turned back towards me and asked if I could write down the recipe of the food in my notebook. I agreed, took it out of my pocket and wrote down what she dictated to me. She then verified that I had really written what she had said, and then continued playing.

[18] 'Utetid' is the Norwegian word used to describe the time children spend outside during the day, take part in organized or free play. In my understanding, it can be associated with a break. As the English translation 'outside time' does not encompasses the whole meaning, the Norwegian word will be the one used throughout this thesis.

4.3.2 Participant observations

Participant observation is an ethnographically inspired method which focuses on gaining knowledge directly from others. It is a long-term process which usually leads the researcher to share and participate in people's daily life over an extended period of time (Ennew et al., 2009c; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). The researcher is "watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019, p. 3). By looking and listening to children and their practices, while being both observant and participant, another aim is to give children a voice and let them express themselves about their lived experiences (Christensen, 2004; James, 2001, 2007).

The choice of this method allowed me to gain children's trust, but also gain knowledge about their use of nature during school time without being too intrusive. It also ruled in my favour when presenting my projects to the school, as my observations would not bother the children's schedule and learning objectives, and would not demand too much investment and energy from the teachers. In addition, this method also had to fit the current corona situation where close interaction and physical contacts had to be as restricted as possible. It also suited my Norwegian skills: If not able to gain sufficient oral proficiency, I would need to rely not only on speaking, but also seeing, watching and doing things with the children.

By attending school almost every day over a period of 5 weeks, I tried to align with authors' description of participant observation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). To be able to experience children's school life in almost all its forms and structures, I used to sit in the classroom and attend the children's schedule from the beginning until the end of the 'utetid'. Depending on the structure of the day, I would stay longer with them in the afternoon and continue my observations. As mentioned above, I tried to participate in their games and activities during my first week, but also during the rest of my fieldwork. I did alternate some times of being completely participant with others being totally observant. Navigating between these two positions was not always easy, especially as 'who I was' was not always easy to understand for children: I looked like an adult but lacked some knowledge about the school, agreed or asked to play with them but also wrote down some notes in a small book.

4.4 Producing and interpreting data

4.4.1 Field notes as empirical material

During the data collection, I simultaneously did my fieldwork and transcribed my observations at the end of each day. Transcription is understood as the process of translating spoken interactions between persons from an oral language to a written language (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). In my situation, the transcription of dialogues happened straight away when in the field. If hearing something relevant between children or adults, I would immediately write that down in order to be as accurate as possible. I did also focus on children's body language or expressions of emotions while trying to take note of their perspectives about and experiences in nature.

Even if always having my notebook with me, I did not always take general notes while being in the field due to various factors, such as the weather, activities or unexpected events. If hindered in my notes, I would quickly write down some keywords about the

current day just before leaving the field in order to remember the main events. After each day, I took time to transcribe my notes and what I recalled from the day, in a separate folder in my computer. As I wanted to have an even structure through my notes, I used a template that I had previously created[19]. In total, I have transcribed 18 days of fieldwork, which content covers specific events or even detailed whole days. Transcribing myself, or writing down my observations, was necessary as I did not systematically take notes while in the field. This would also allow me to give more detailed and thick descriptions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Writing down my fieldnotes was made in English, however all dialogues between people or sentences said by someone were transcribed in the original language (Norwegian). After deciding which parts to use for analysis, I translated them into English. Some words however could not be translated, I therefore decided to use the original word throughout this thesis. Even though the text could not be literally translated, I tried my best to convey the same meaning than the children or adults did when speaking. However, even using this approach, some details might have gotten lost or some inaccuracy might happen.

4.4.2 Data analysis

As argued by Hammersley and Atkinson (2019), ethnographic analysis is not a straight-forward and isolated process, and often already starts while in the field. In the context of my research, the early analytical process was mainly guided by the empirical material I had gathered. Even if I had an open approach to the field, some practices and intriguing situations kept my attention during the whole process of data collection. These were comprised in ethnographic field notes, process which was detailed in the previous section, and formed the basis for the further analytical work. Therefore, it is possible to say that the empirical material has largely guided the analysis.

After a rocky start with the analysis, I used the fieldnotes I had transcribed and gathered throughout my fieldwork to first list all the episodes or situations that could be of relevance for the analysis. The listing process helped me distinguish patterns or categories that would then become the structure of the analysis and its articulation around three different parts. After having organized these categories, I selected the most prevailing, exceptional and explanatory episodes that could be used later in the text. Doing so allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of my material and I came to see new structures and relations, but also how these would intersect or contradict the theories I had selected. Throughout this process, frequent and repetitive readings of my fieldnotes have been necessary in order to question each word or action and refine my analytical discussion. As analysis occurs at the crossroad between theory and empirical material, I repeatedly had to waltz from the theoretical perspectives to the analytical points I wanted to make. However, in the latest part of the analytical process, cultural analysis appeared as a red thread in each part of the analytical discussion, which allowed me to gain an even more precise and targeted standpoint about children's use of and encounter with nature in the school context.

The final touch for the written analytical process was to share my writings with the school I had been doing fieldwork in. As argued by Ennew et al. (2009d), communicating about the methods used is as important as sharing the results with the participants. It is therefore in this same idea that I send the most extended version of my analysis to the school director and main teacher. Even if the notion of 'member checking' is contested in ethnography analysis (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019), I nevertheless aimed for it for two

[19] Cf. appendix E.

main reasons. The first one is that my participants may have had additional knowledge or a different understanding of the context, and that their views would add value to my analytical discussion. The second is that even I consider children as competent actors, they simultaneously are holders of rights. As previously stated, questions and issues about their protection were of my concerns throughout the research process. By sending my analysis to the adults in charge, I offered them the possibility to check my writings in order to put into application children's right to be protected from harm.

4.4.3 Challenges of ethnographic fieldwork

Throughout the fieldwork process, the encountered challenges were related to various aspects. The psychological strain of staying focused for several hours a day, several days a week and being able to retape detailed and accurate empirical data, were characteristics of my daily endeavours. In addition, I sometimes felt inadequate when in the field due to my lack of vocabulary or not fluent language skills. More surprising were discomforts linked to the clothes I was wearing: spending more than one hour outside every day in cold temperatures, I had to wear several woollen layers in order to not freeze and be able to fulfil my observations. However, I would also spend a considerable amount of time inside, and would regularly be too warm, feel uncomfortable and even nauseous.

The biggest challenge for me was however to find a balance between my researcher role and my teacher identity, which put my personal values and moral stance to the test. This was especially challenging when two children would physically engage into fights or tease each other in a 'nonacceptable way' for my teacher-self. I would be parted between my will to be part of children's worlds and gain insights on their culture, but also aware that their well-being and security had to be placed before my own research aims. By not reacting, I had the feeling I was validating these kinds of behaviours, which led me to reflect on my position and status within the school context but also within my research context.

Another challenge in the context of my fieldwork was the discrepancy between my expectations about the number of weeks of fieldwork and the actual situation. I had to compose with both national and regional guidelines regarding how the schools had to be organized and what restrictions were operative. As ethnographic fieldwork is meant to be held over an extended period of time, one could argue that my research does not fulfil this criterion and is therefore not valid. I do not deny that the overall number of fieldwork days were lower than expected. However, when conducting a research one must be able to adapt to unforeseen events and expect the unexpected with a positive mindset.

In line with challenges when conducting ethnographic fieldwork also arise ethical questions that must be taken into consideration.

4.5 Ethical considerations

Conducting research with children as participants or any other human being, must rely on ethical principles (Abebe & Bessell, 2014; Ennew et al., 2009b). Therefore, the following sections provide discussions and reflections on the ethical challenges I faced before, during, and after my data collection.

4.5.1 Informed consent & voluntary participation

Informed consent is the crux of an ethical research. Researchers first need to inform/explain the potential participants about the research project and its aims. Participants should be given the possibility to ask questions, at any time, in order to be provided more information if necessary (Ennew et al., 2009b; Homan, 2001).

In the context of my project, informed consent - and the participants' voluntary participation - was sought through four different actions. The three first were presentations about my research. The first one was held to the director, the second to the two teachers and the director, and the third one to the children of the class I was potentially going to research in. In the presentations to the two teachers and the director, I explained the research topic and why I thought their school and them could be adequate participants. I then clearly stated that my firs aim was to not disturb their everyday and program, and that they could withdraw from the project at any time without giving any explanations. While explaining my project to the children, I added that they could opt out at any moment, and that nobody could force them to talk to me or let me observe them. As no confidential information (age, name, etc.) was going to be collected from the children, they did not have to sign a consent form. The information letter they had received was meant to inform their parent(s)/caretaker(s) about my presence and research, and give them the opportunity to take contact with me if not approving their child's participation. However, one could argue that by only explaining my project, I was assuming consent from the children and not seeking it concretely (Homan, 2001). The fourth action undertaken was thought to avoid assuming children's consent instead of seeking it: during the six first days of my observations, every time I would want to join a group for an activity or observe them, I would ask if this was comfortable for them and if they personally agreed. As schools are based on a structure of power relations between children and adults (Homan, 2001), ensuring that they could personally experience both the participation and the refusal without facing consequences, and that this was also reversible through time, played an important role in my relationship to the children.

As mentioned above, it was necessary to gain consent from children and their parent(s)/caretaker(s), but due to the hierarchical structure of schools, it also was necessary to seek the director's and teachers' permissions before gaining access to the children (Alderson & Morrow, 2011).

4.5.2 Confidentiality

In research, confidentiality refers to the agreement concluded with participants about what will be done with the data produced throughout the research process (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). For this project, I told the children I had to write a long text about how children did experience nature in northern Norway, but that their names would neither figure in my small notebook were I was taking notes, nor in my final text so that nobody would know who did or said what. For taking notes and their transcription, I used a two-sign code associated with each child and adult. However, throughout the analysis chapters, I assigned a typical Norwegian name to each of the children and adults, although the children were from various cultures and backgrounds. Doing so would give a more personal touch to my analysis and create a better narrative around the children's encounters with nature. Thus, it would still make the text clear and easily understandable for the reader, but also not reveal any personal information about the participants. The

school was also given a new name, based on Norwegian word that was used during a fieldwork day spent outside.

Thus, all information shared by the children or issues met were kept confidential from my first day of fieldwork. I kept my research diary close to me and would transcribe my daily field notes in a word document, at home or in a separate room of the school. My computer was, and still is secured by a password, not giving full access to all the documents related to my fieldwork.

Since my project was done in a school, I had to sign a professional secrecy agreement, hindering me to share any information with anybody, in order to protect the children and the employees. When asked about how my project was going or if I had found valuable data, I would answer sincerely about interesting observations I had made, but always staying very general and never mentioning personal information about the children or the adults.

4.5.3 Power imbalance and the role of the researcher

Power is not easy to define and can be conceptualized in many ways. Firstly, power can be seen as an object or a possession, that groups or individuals hold and direct toward others. However, power can be seen as a relational phenomenon, operating in the circulation of discourses and between the individuals (Punch, Bell, Costello, & Panelli, 2007). Christensen (2004) also adds that power does not reside in people or social positions but is embedded in the process of conducting research. Even if choosing one definition or another, reflecting on power and its repercussions is crucial when researching about/with one of the most powerless group of society, children (Ennew et al., 2009b). In our modern societies, the asymmetric power relationship between children and adults is stained by the social organization of society: adults have control and power over many aspects of children's lives (Christensen, 2004; Punch, 2002; Punch et al., 2007; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2000).

Such as Punch (2002), I consider children as similar to adults, but with different competencies. This position led me to focus more on the activity between us, on what Solberg (1996) sees as 'doing', instead to focus on the 'doer', namely children. Hence, my understanding of children and childhood did influence the power relation between me and the participants of my research project. As questioned by Thomson (2007), I query the idea of the "all-powerful adult" and its counterpart, "the incompetent child" (p. 208). My approach, in order to avoid this stereotypical view about the relation between a researcher and the participants, was to present myself as an unusual type of adult, who is "seriously interested in understanding how the social world looks from children's perspectives but without making a dubious attempt to be a child" (Christensen, 2004, p. 174). In the first place, I presented myself as Marie, a person who is interested in understanding their use of nature in the school context, but who was not going to be a teacher or an assistant in their class. I also explained that I had been given some homework for my studies, which was to conduct a research project, and that I therefore needed their help to show me and explain what did when they were outside.

To emphasize the distinction between me and the other adults in the classroom, I decided that I would sit down on the floor, next to the children when doing the gathering time at the beginning of the day. All the other adults would sit on a chair, but I deliberately refused when I was offered one, distinguishing me from their position and trying to *look more like* the children. However, I was aware that my relationship and the

complex roles between me, the researcher, and the children had to be articulated and not assumed (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2000). As experienced by Corsaro and Molinari (2008), my 'foreignness' was a core element for the development of this unusual status and image of a less powerful adult. In retrospect, I can say that having an accent when speaking Norwegian, not knowing some basic words the children used, but also lacking some knowledge about clothes to wear or social practices done outside, helped the children to see me at the cross-section of an adult and a child. However, to fulfil my research, I also had to be accepted by the adults working in the class, which sometimes placed me in an uncomfortable position: I was an adult, who knew the rules adult's should know, but who was trying not to apply them. Having to follow 'the set of rules for adults at school', and 'children's rules and practices' when joining or leaving a game or an activity, was a recurrent theme of reflection and questions while in the field: it was an "on-going balancing act between being recognized as an 'adult' and at the same time avoiding the preconceived ideas, practices and connotations associated with 'adulthood' or specific adult roles such as a teacher, member of the staff or a parent" (Christensen, 2004, p. 174). This hard definable status, such as experienced by Christensen (2004), had to be negotiated and renegotiated with children and adults during the entire process of fieldwork. Before starting fieldwork, I had determined I would refuse to adopt a traditional adult role in the school setting, such as setting rules for games, solving conflicts, looking for children and protecting them. But in practice, it was not easy to stay the course, and not be sucked back in my adult position.

5 Children, Nature and Norway

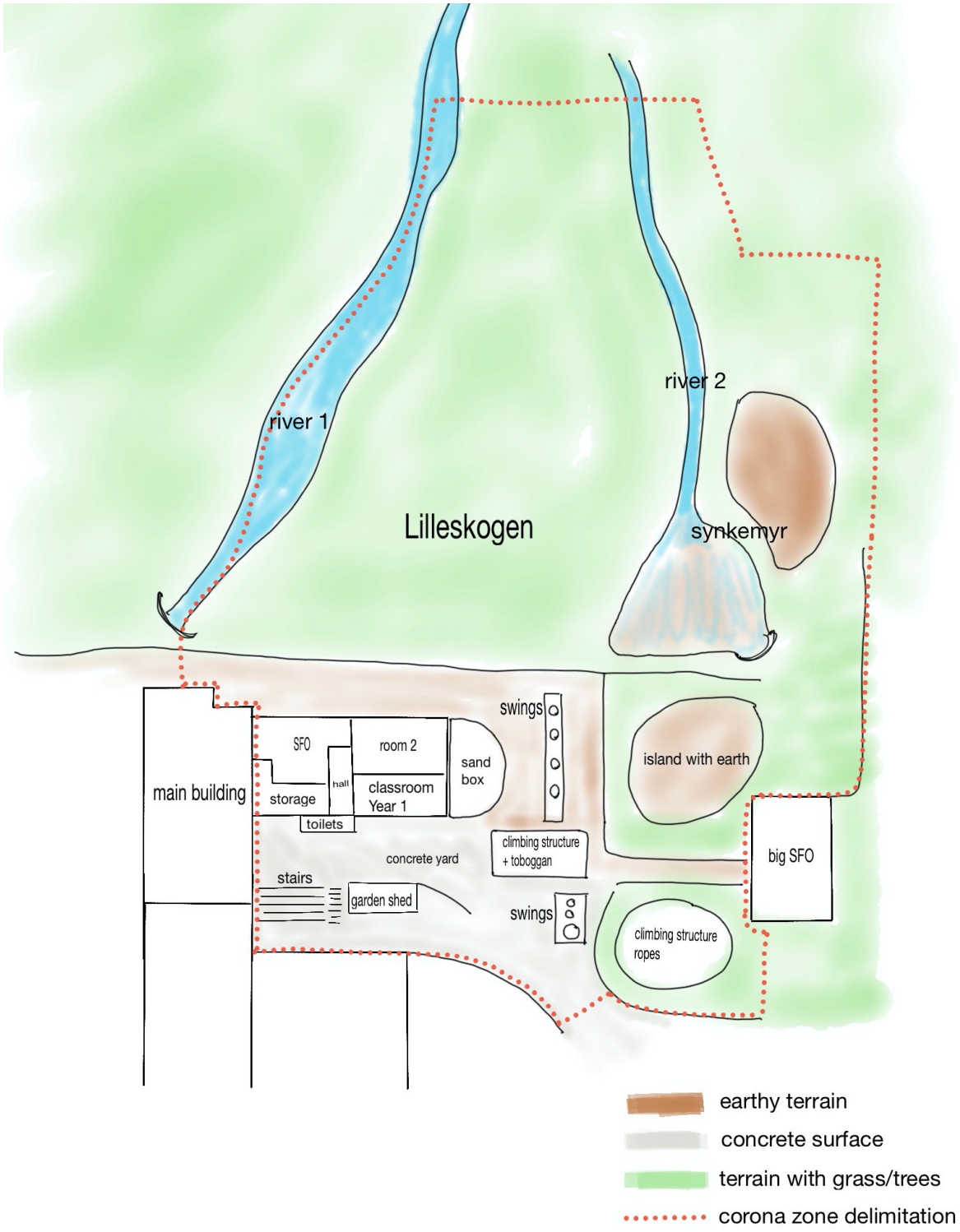

Figure 1: Map of Kråkebolle Primary School

The following analysis is structured around three parts, each of them focusing on a different aspect of children's encounters with nature or ideas linked to the concept of 'the good childhood'. As outlined in the methodology chapter, the fieldnotes taken during the data collection are the basis for the following analysis and the direction it took. Through my notes, but also dialogues between children and/or adults, I was able to discover different categories that did influence the overall structure of the analysis. The first part of the analysis "*Nature around the school, the school around nature*" does set the scene for the reader, giving insights on everyday life at Kråkebolle[20] Primary School, while gently starting the analytical reflexion about children's encounters with nature. The second part "*Children and nature in a school of northern Norway*" focuses on children's experiences and practices in nature, while unravelling the main elements related to children's encounters with nature. The third and last part "*When childhood is the reflection of society*" draws on verbal interaction between children and adults in order to focus on processes of social reproduction, cultural ideas laying behind 'the good childhood' and how 'a robust child' is constructed in this specific context. It also aims to brush a clearer and critical picture of 'the good Norwegian childhood'.

The data analysis of this research project is based on concepts and theories from Childhood Studies. However, other concepts and standpoints specific to sociology and anthropology have also been a source of inspiration in order to fuel the analytical discussion about 'the good childhood' and what it entails in this northern Norwegian context nowadays. Using 'cultural analysis' as a red thread throughout the analytical discussion was done to go in line with recent thinking of scholars in Childhood Studies, such as presented in section 3.4. Even if the majority of the analytical discussion is built around a social constructionist perspective, some aspects of children's encounters with nature will be seen in the light of an actor-oriented perspective. Doing so gave the opportunity to focus both on children's culture and their own practices, but also take a closer look to the broader picture and the context in which their practices do fall within. More precisely, Part 1 presents the field, using the concepts of 'time' and 'space', in order to give a better picture and understanding of children's schedule and the used areas of the schoolyard. This temporal and spatial framework also sets the premises of what 'the good Norwegian childhood' can be. Part 2 makes an extensive use of the concepts of 'the good childhood', while also focusing on play theories and the materiality of play. While looking at children's play, some reflections will also be made on the concepts of 'peer culture' and 'agency'. In addition, questions regarding different views about nature will be raised in order to give a better understanding of children's encounters with nature, but also how the school does mediate their encounters. Finally, Part 3 does build on the previous sections in order to push the discussion about 'the good Norwegian childhood' even further. In this regard, the concepts used in the first parts of the analysis - 'the good childhood', 'the robust child' and 'agency' - will be picked up again while sharpening the analytical discussion even more.

[20] "Kråkebolle Primary School" is a pseudonym that has been chosen to guarantee the children's, teachers' and school's anonymity. The word "kråkebolle" (NO) means "sea ursin" (EN), and has been chosen because the children and myself did observe these creatures during an outing.

PART 1: Nature around the school, the school around nature

As mentioned in chapter 2, the Norwegian schools are educational institutions where children are encouraged to develop competences and knowledge in order to become well-functioning adults. Schools are the mirror of society, as they are also seen are cultural heritage transmissions channels that should help each child develop himself (NOU 2015: 8). The core curriculum states that children should - with the help of schools - develop various skills and knowledge about nature, develop a positive relationship to nature, but also experience nature as a source of enjoyment and learning (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). Such knowledge and skills are introduced throughout and embedded in the schools' everyday life such as presented below.

This first part of the analysis will therefore elaborate on some spatial and temporal aspects of the primary school field, namely: the environment of the field and its access to nature, and the integration of accessing nature throughout the school's schedule. Such structures do frame the everyday life and illustrate some particular recurrent patterns of children's encounters with nature, such as their experiences, their relation to and their partaking in nature. By using spatial and temporal traits, this first part mainly uses the concepts of 'time' and 'space', both for the structure of the sections and the analytical discussion. In addition, the use of these two concepts is done in order to make clearer the overall organisation of this school. Thus, they provide the overarching frame for children's interaction with nature in this precise context.

Moreover, by focusing on the concepts of 'time' and 'space', I deliberately choose a social constructionist standpoint in order to illustrate how childhood and children's practices are socially, culturally and historically constructed (Montgomery, 2003) and that temporal and spatial aspects are the reflection of the local culture.

5.1 First grade class at Kråkebolle Primary School

In the autumn, the school days at Kråkebolle Primary School have only one thing in common: they start in the darkness, and also finish in the darkness. By this time of the year, both daylight and temperatures decrease, the golden and red colours of October gently leave room to tones of blue, white and grey. The endlessly shifting weather allows the children of Kråkebolle Primary School to go to school under both snow or rain, minus or positive temperatures in a very short time span.

The first-grade class, which I followed every day for five weeks between October and November, is composed of 21 children from various backgrounds and nationalities. All of them (12 girls, 9 boys) are between 5 and 6 years old and have just started school in mid-August. Before that, most of them attended Kindergarten while some of them were home with relatives, or in other types of day-care structures. My fieldwork did therefore take place during the beginning of their formal education, in a period where they were

still learning and getting familiar with the implicit and explicit rules of school. Besides the children, 3 adults were coming in and out of the class at different moments and for different purposes. The main teacher, Håvard, a cheerful and calm man in his late thirties, is every day with the class. He plans and organizes the time schedule or the activities, and is the reference person for both parents and children. A specialized teacher, Vilde, an energic but comforting woman in her fifties, intervenes in the class almost daily. She mainly follows children with disabilities but does also second Håvard whenever she is in the classroom. The third adult is an assistant from SFO, Ingeborg, a woman in her forties. She is there to second Håvard and Vilde, help the children with getting dressed before going outside, but also create a bridge between school and SFO that most children attend before and/or after school.

5.1.1 Spatial aspects: an overview of the schoolyard and main building

Kråkebolle Primary School lies on the outskirts of a big city in northern Norway. It is said to be located in an uneasy neighbourhood, with a dense and very motley population. Its main building lies way below a long but not steep mountain chain and is approximatively 700m away from the sea. The school's buildings are located in a housing area of high blocks, small individual houses or attached houses. The physical borders of the school were demarcated with the natural shape of the terrain: no walls or barriers.

Each grade is located in a specific place in the school, having a separate entrance to use. The overall architecture can be seen as very Norwegian, with concrete white bearing walls topped with colourful wood panels and a slightly sloping roof. Most of the buildings only have 1 level, giving an impression of flatness, unlike the building with the administration which has 2. From a bird's perspective, the buildings form a reversed "L", where a concrete yard rallies all the entrances, and spreads towards a small parking lot on the side of the road. The school also has its own football pitch, and green areas on its east and south sides. The lot size of Kråkebolle is around 20'085 m2, that less than 200 children from the 1st grade to the 7th grade, use every day.

However, due to the Corona outbreak, the schoolyard has been divided into different zones. The 1st and 2nd grades do share the same area, on the east and south sides of the school, which is around 6'829 m2 (see map below). As I conducted fieldwork during the pandemic, I was not allowed to go out of *my* zone, and therefore will only focus on and describe the '1st and 2nd grades zone'. My reference point was the building used by the 1st grade.

In front of the forest stands the 1st grade's building. The concrete yard in front of the building is flat and does cover a considerable surface of the school's surrounding. Straight on the right of the building lies a big sand box, dug into the ground. Next to it, a row of swings is placed on a sandy-earthy terrain. On the same soft terrain stands a complex structure looking like a castle, but formed by a swirling toboggan on one side and a straight one on the other, a rope grid, ladders and various climbing spots. Down below this structure, stands another static unit with two small swings and a big round swing able to support more than one child. Almost next to the parking lot, on a small but flat hill, stands a gigantic climbing structure made of red ropes.

This first map represents the schoolyard zone and building where the 1st grade did go every day. However, it focuses only on 'non-natural' elements, made and organized by humans.

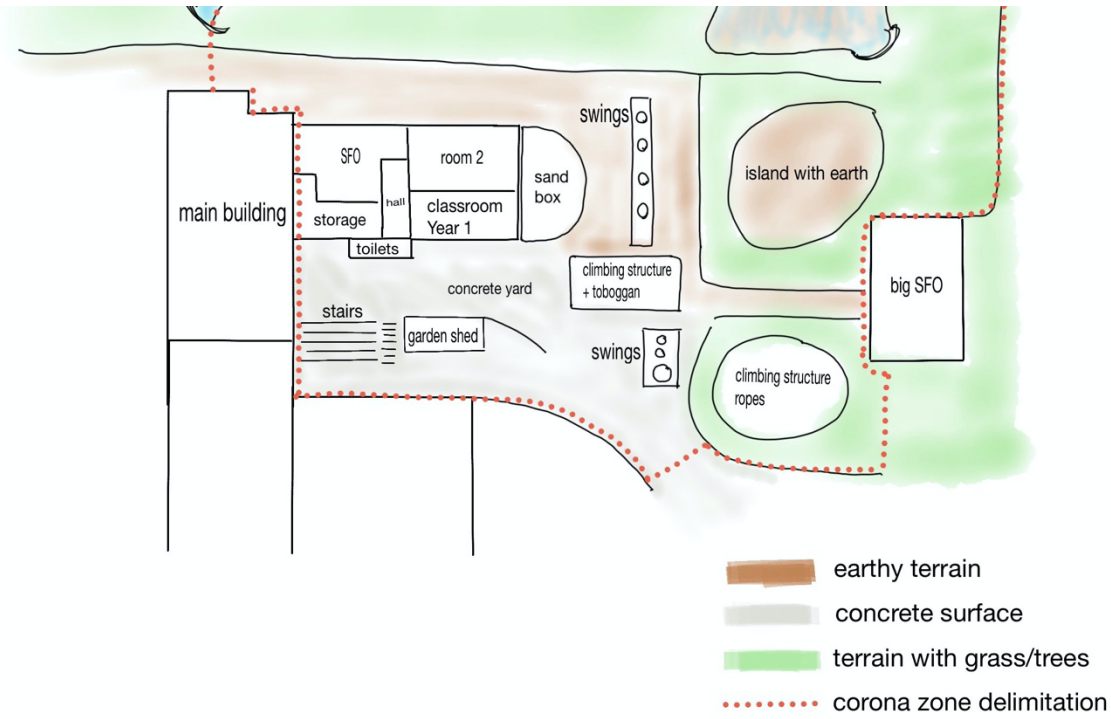

Figure 2: Map of Kråkebolle Primary School: elements organized by human

If looking at the school from above, one will be struck by the considerable surface of 'wild' nature. By this period of the year, the lack of light gives greyish tones to nature: the leaves had fallen of the trees, the grass was dry and brown giving a very special atmosphere to the schoolyard. Behind the building lies a small forest of tortuous trees and bushes (*Lilleskogen*[21]), where two small rivers run through. The forest is shaped in a sort of basin, making its sides grow into steep and abrupt slopes. These delineate the boundaries between the school's lot and the neighbourhood. 'Lilleskogen' is gently inclined upwards, covered with bushes, stones, holes and small hillocks. In addition to the two rivers, there are also 2 '*synkemyr*'[22] on the right-hand side of it. One of them is directly linked to a river, while the other lies a little bit higher, on top of a small hill surrounded by trees. Between the two 'synkemyr' and a building from SFO, a wet terrain covered with herbs, grass, trees and water has a small earthy island in its centre.

This second map is a sketch from the more 'wild' and natural parts of the schoolyard. It only details the zone the children had access to, and also highlights some main places that are of particular relevance for this analysis.

[21] 'Lilleskogen' (NO) is the translation for "the small forest" (EN). This denomination is how the children and adults of the school refer to it on a daily basis. If talking about 'Lilleskogen', all the people from the school know what it is and where it is.
[22] A 'synkemyr' (NO) is the equivalent of quicksand, but with a swamp. It is a space were the earth and mud has been overfilled with water, creating a very soft and moving terrain. As no translation of 'synkemyr' was found in English, the original world will be used throughout this thesis.

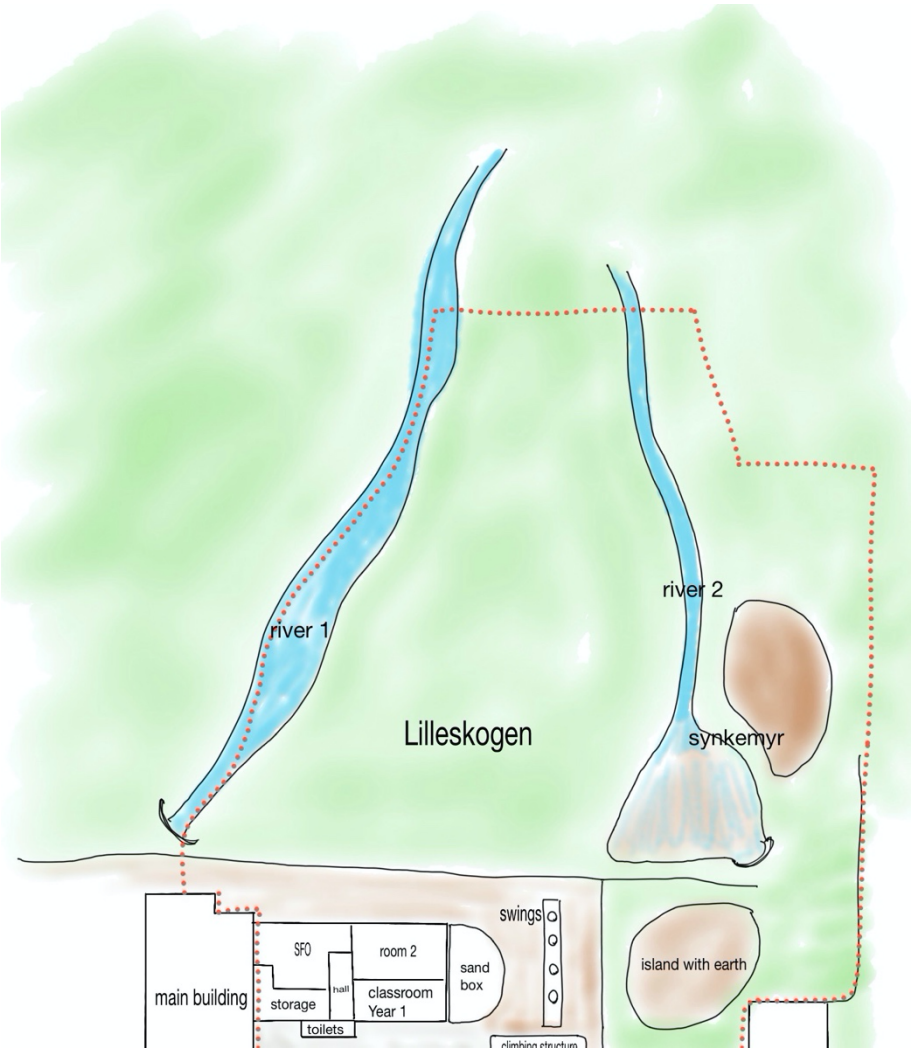

Figure 3: Map of Kråkebolle Primary School: natural elements

Throughout this thesis, the word 'nature' has been used, defined and illustrated, but one precision must nevertheless be made. The word 'nature' was rarely used by the teachers and children of the school. When talking about all the places that were outside of the school's building, they would often refer to it as '*ute*'[23] or use the precise' names of places such as 'Lilleskogen' and 'synkemyr'. The schoolyard did not seem to be, in their conversations at least, considered as 'nature'.

I have however decided to relate to the schoolyard and its different places as 'nature', for two main reasons. Firstly, to help the reader get a better understanding of how close to natural elements, and how intertwined with them, the school was. 'Outside' was, in my opinion, not enough to represent the greenness and various landscapes present and available at all time for the children. Secondly, my fieldwork comforted me in the idea the natural environment is an experimental playground for Norwegian children (Fjørtoft, 2001) and that the rough and dynamic landscapes of the schoolyard do trigger children's

[23] 'Ute' (NO) is, in this precise example, the translation for "outside" (EN).

bodily movements when being outside. If only referring to 'outside' when mentioning the schoolyard, one might overlook a more post-humanistic view about nature. As children's practices in the schoolyard, or in nature, are mediated by their social and cultural environment (Giusti et al., 2014; Linzmayer & Halpenny, 2014; Witthøfft, 2004), it is therefore possible to state that their encounters with nature is not a separated practice. It is in the interaction between children and nature that these practices develop and redevelop. Therefore, I decided to use 'nature' instead of 'outside' to stand by a more post-humanistic perspective. Thirdly and as argued in the theory chapter, I want to distance myself from more dualistic perspectives about nature. Using the words 'outside' and 'inside' would perpetuate these dichotomies and depict an incomplete picture of what the schoolyard could be.

5.1.2 Spatial aspects: the inside of the buildings

The building of the 1st grade class is divided into different parts used both by the school and SFO. The class uses two communicant rooms, one where they have fixed working places with individual tables and chairs for the children and adults, a sofa, some cupboards used for storage of the children's notebooks; another room where some tables and chairs are set freely and are often moved around. The second room is also used by SFO before and after school hours. The class also has access to two toilets and a storage room (with drying cupboards[24]) in the same building.

In the hall, all the children have a designated place, with two hooks for hanging things, two shelves for storage, and a bench bellow to sit on. In addition, each child has some space on another shelf by the entrance, where they can store their snowshoes and rainboots. In the storage room are also hanging their waterproof coveralls and snow coveralls. In this room has each child a drawer with its name on it, where dry and clean spare clothes are stored.

In both presentations made above about the schoolyard and inside of the buildings, I tried to accurately depict in what context the children of Kråkebolle Primary School were evolving each day. However, I also deliberately placed the emphasis on spatial aspects that did strike me, if compared to my own teaching experience in Switzerland. Comparatively, this Norwegian school had a bigger access to nature than I had in the schools I had been teaching in. Even if this might be the case by chance, due to urban planning and communal decisions about where to place the school, it is interesting to note that by its localization, Kråkebolle Primary School goes in line with national guidelines. As stated in the White Paper on outdoor life (friluftsliv), the government encourages schools to use the surrounding green areas as learning spaces (Det Kongelige Klima- og Miljødepartement, 2016). Interestingly, this White Paper is primarily not aimed for schools, but for the entire population. In the same idea, all the curricula presented in chapter 2.2.1, excepted 'Food and Health' subject, comprise some learning aims that are mentioning the use of the surrounding nature. Hence, by its spatial localization, Kråkebolle Primary School can be seen as having an asset in order to follow national guidelines for schools, but also for the national valued behaviours for Norwegian citizens.

[24] The drying cupboards were objects of strong interest when I started my fieldwork, as I never had seen some before. They looked like high fridges with a pipe coming out from the top. The inside was covered with hooks and shelves where the children and adults would hang wet clothes or place shoes in order to dry them. As the weather was shifting very quickly and that the children would play in the rivers or 'synkemyr', these cupboards were used almost every day.

5.1.3 Temporal aspects: a regular autumn school day for the first grade at Kråkebolle Primary School

School, as an institution, takes significant space in children's lives: the children spend most of their time there, five out of seven days a week, with a schedule varying every day of the week. In average, the children of the 1st grade spend around 4h10 at Kråkebolle Primary School every day. The content of each day - which did vary from day to day - was planned and organized by Håvard. A weekly plan was given to the children and their parent every Monday, while simultaneously being available on the school's website. The beginning of the day, as well as the time before and after the 'utetid', were the only routines that could be found every day.

As previously argued, using the concept of 'time' can provide a solid framework for understanding children's daily practices in school, but also set a rigid structure which will help the reader make sense of what is said. Since children's encounters with nature happen during their time spent at school, I argue that children's encounters with nature cannot be separated from their daily schedule. In this regard, the following paragraphs will give the reader a glimpse of a typical school day[25].

Between 07h15-08h30. On a regular school day of November at Kråkebolle Primary School, most of the children start their day at SFO, the equivalent of the before/after-school care system. There, they play with the other children or take part in various activities organized by the educators in charge.

Around 08h25. The children are sent in the hall and asked to wait as quietly as possible until the teacher arrives. They all have a designated place in the hall, with two hooks for hanging things, two shelves for storage, and a bench to sit on. In addition, each have some space on another shelf by the entrance, where they can store snowshoes and rainboots. In an adjacent room are also hanging their waterproof coveralls and snow coveralls. In this room each child has a drawer with its name on it, where dry and clean spare clothes are stored.

While waiting, some children are waiting quietly with their bags between their legs, others are pulling faces and laughing with each other. Some are also arriving from outside, as they did not attend SFO and are coming straight from home.

08h30. Håvard arrives and compliments the class on how nice and quiet they are, then invite them inside. All the children come in the classroom and place their bags next to their desk.

08h35-08h50. They all gather for the morning's ritual, in front of the whiteboard. Afterwards, they discuss the day's date and program.

08h50-09h30. The first part of the morning is usually devoted to various activities, planed and organized by Håvard, and sometimes Vilde. The structure of them varies, but most of the time, the children work individually at their desk.

[25] The daily schedule is based on daily observations of practices in the school.

Around 09h30. Håvard tells them to stop what they are doing and go and wash their hands to be ready for eating their '*matpakke*'[26]. Every child has a box with food and a bottle/cup to fill with water from the tap. Some have sandwiches, some have salads or even warm food, fruits, yoghurts, dried fruits, chocolate or biscuits. During that eating time, some children do not eat anything, and some eat all they have. Also around that time of the day, a woman from SFO distributes some milk bottles, for those who have signed up for the 'skolemelk'[27] and some fruit for those who also did sign up for the 'skolefrukt'[28]. They eat at their own desk.

Around 10h00. The children are still eating. Håvard leaves the classroom and does a quick check of the thermometer and weather outside of the building. When he comes back in, he starts detailing the weather conditions outside. Then he asks the children what kind of clothes they need to be comfortable outside. With the help of the children, they make a list of what is necessary.

10h15. The children tidy up their desk and go out in the hall in order to dress and go outside for the 'utetid'[29]. The children gather all the clothes they need, in addition to the ones they already are wearing. Håvard and the assistant are there, helping the children, answering their questions and ensuring that they put the right type of clothes on.

From 10h30-11h30 (even longer on some days)[30]. Once outside, the children take part in various activities, games or bodily movements. The following list is however not exhaustive. Some are playing in groups or alone, some are running, climbing trees, sliding on the ice, some children are using the swings or climbing structures. Some also stay around the adults that are outside and talk with them. They also play with the sand area, building things with buckets and spades, while others jump ropes or play hide and seek on the concrete area. Some children also sit down on the swings and stay there for an extended period of time, sometimes even during the whole 'utetid'.

Around 11h30. The end of the 'utetid' is signalled by an adult whistling. Some of the children run back towards the building and queue in line, waiting to be welcomed back inside. Some take more time to find their way back to the school's building.

From 11h30-12h00. The children come back inside and get rid of their shoes and clothes. The available adults help them to undress and hang the wet clothes in the drying cupboards. If some children are wet, they can switch with dry clothes that are stored in their drawer. The adults then place the small wet/dirty items in a plastic bag and leave them at the child's place in the hall. When ready, the children can individually enter the classroom again, where they might sit down and eat the rest of their 'matpakke'. If not hungry, they know that they can take out a colouring book and quietly sit at their place while waiting for everyone to be back inside.

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[26] 'Matpakke' (NO) could be translated as "packed food" or "lunch box" (EN). Usually, this corresponds to an easy-edible lunch Norwegians carry with them and eat during the lunch break. However, in the context of the school and its time frame, the children would eat their 'matpakke' around 09h45. The content of it was still the same than a lunch, therefore I decided to not use the word lunch, nor snack, but keep the original Norwegian word.
[27] Cf. Lexicon for translation.
[28] Cf. Lexicon for translation.
[29] Cf. Lexicon for a translation or footnote nr 16 for detailed explanations.
[30] The length of the 'utetid' is not legally determined, and every school is free to structure the children's schedule as they want, explained Håvard during my fieldwork.

From 12h00-13h15. The teacher announces what they will be doing in the last part of the day: it varies between organized activities, play, or free activities chosen by the children.

Around 13h15. The teacher tells the children to stop what they are doing and tidy up the classroom. When they are ready, they can individually take their bag and place it in the hall. Most of the children go to SFO after school (at the latest until 16h30), while some directly go back home with a relative that came to pick them up.

By detailing and describing children's schedule, I aim to provide the reader with a more structured frame. Hence, this temporal framework is also the basis for the analytical discussions from Part 2 and Part 3 of the analysis chapter. In the introduction of this thesis, I mentioned that conducting such research was fuelled by the mismatch between my experience as a teacher and what I could see in Norway. In the context of a temporal frame for children's encounters with nature, the difference of practices is striking. My pupils would spend around 15 minutes outside every day, while the children of Kråkebolle Primary School spend between 1 hour to 1h30 in nature. If extending the calculation further, my pupils would have spent in one whole week the same time outside that the children of Kråkebolle Primary School spend in one day. Not only shocking, these numbers can raise numerous questions regarding the different school systems, but also the cultural values encompassed behind these practices. Having these spatial and temporal aspects in mind, I argue that the outline of what 'the good Norwegian childhood' is are already appearing in this first part of the analysis. As this concept will be more deeply unravelled and discussed in the following analytical parts, I deliberately do not give details about this peculiar aspect of children's lives. However, I only state that by spending more than one hour outside every day and being in a natural environment, ideas about this 'good childhood' seems to be rooted in the encounter with nature and extended time of outdoor activities.

If focusing on this local context instead of comparing two different countries, children's encounters with nature is not a single and isolated event: activities or practices are conducted before and after the 'utetid'. The actual time spent outside is not the only time of learning about nature. Thus, while conducting fieldwork, I got the impression that these moments were as important, or as valued, than 'being outside'. In this regard, I argue that children's encounter with nature is not an isolated process. It happens at the cross-section of different practices, of different times and different settings. In this same idea, Part 2 of the following analytical discussion will build on these 'before' and 'after' moments in order to shed a new light on and unravel cultural practices that might be taken for granted.

PART 2: Children and nature in a school of northern Norway

As second part of the analysis, the following sections aim to focus on children's experiences and participating in nature. They revolve around three main aspects that were revealed throughout my fieldnotes, namely all the practices and routines associated with the time spent outside of the classroom, children's games and play in nature, but also the use of nature as a space for being.

By focusing on children's active participation in nature and their lived experiences, linkages between the actual episodes observed throughout fieldwork and the research questions can be made. While simultaneously presenting ethnographic descriptions and a more analytical discussion, the following parts aim to illustrate how children do encounter nature in the Norwegian context, and how do the Norwegian schools shape/mediate children's experiment or/with nature. The analytical discussion of the first and last sections will take on a more constructionist perspective, while the one focusing on children's practices will be shaped with an actor-oriented lens. Thus, the concept of cultural analysis - which main goal is to render explicit implied elements of everyday social life (Hastrup et al., 2011) - will be the red thread throughout Part 2.

5.2 Children's experiences and participation in nature

The following subsections will focus on children's encounters with nature in the Norwegian school system through their experiences and participation in nature. By mediating children's encounters with nature, the school or the responsible adults did offer 'a field for play and experiences' of and in nature, structured around the children's schedule.

5.2.1 Preparing oneself for the 'utetid'

The children of the 1st grade at Kråkebolle Primary School did take part in various days, with different structures and activities. Despite the often-changing structure or content of each day, the teacher had built their schedule around some routinized activities conducted throughout the day and repeated day after day. Having the focus of this thesis in mind - children and nature - this next section will focus on a specific and recurrent point of the day which is the bridge between inside and outside: the preparation for the 'utetid'.

5.2.1.1 "Hva trenger vi for å ha det bra ute?"

Around one hour before the scheduled 'utetid', Håvard would tell the children to stop the activities, tidy the classroom, wash their hands in order to eat their 'matpakke'. When the children started to be done eating, Håvard would take a look out of the window, or even go outside of the building to check the temperature on a thermometer. When back in the classroom, he would detail the actual weather or the forecasted weather:

Håvard: Today, I don't understand anything... there is some snow on the ground, but it's raining, and the temperature is above zero. How do we call it when there is a mix between snow and rain, like today?

Brynhild: Soft snow?

Håvard: Yes, but what is it called?

Vegard: Wet snow!

Håvard: Yes, but the word that we use here in northern Norway is different from the one I used when growing up in southern Norway (…).

Sometimes, he would also detail how he felt on his way to school in the morning. After having discussed the weather with the children or having detailed it, he would continue and ask them "hva trenger vi for å ha det bra ute?"[31]. The following episode illustrates this ritualized moment of children's school day.

While the children were finishing their 'matpakke', Håvard had drawn a scale on the blackboard, ranging from minus ten to plus ten. He also had drawn a thermometer and asked:

Håvard: How cold is it today?

Brynhild: Very cold…

Håvard: Are we more on this side (minus side) or this side (plus side of the scale)?

Runar: On the blue side (minus side), there is some ice outside!

Kjellhaug: Yes, on the minus side!

The temperature was around 7 degrees today, and it was forecasted some rain and quite some wind during the morning. This contrasted strongly with the previous day which was bright but with freezing temperatures around minus 2 degrees.

Håvard: Today, it is weird. Even if there is still some ice on the floor, the temperatures have been going up during the night. We are on this side of the thermometer (showing the plus side). You should wear a thin layer of wool or a fleece jacket under you rain coverall, as it is raining a little bit.

Frøya: We also need good shoes.

Håvard: You should wear rain boots, especially if you are going to jump into some puddles or in the rivers.

Even if the episode described above does not take place in nature, I deliberately have chosen to link it to children's experiences and participating in nature as it illustrates the bridge between the time spent inside and the time spent outside during the school day. Besides the pedagogical and learning aims hidden behind such routinized activity, it is necessary to comment on how nature is depicted in this precise situation. By using the words "what do we need to be *fine* outside?" while being in the classroom, Håvard conveys ideas about nature as the opposition of inside (Gullestad, 1992). Nature and inside are therefore placed in opposition with each other, maintaining the contested dichotomy between 'home' (*hjemme*) and 'outside' (*ute*) such as presented by Gullestad (1992). In this specific situation, nature is not presented as evolving in interaction with the children, but as inanimate brute material waiting for them (Arvidsen, 2018), being

[31] «Hva trenger vi for å ha det bra ute?» (NO) could be translated by "What do we need to be fine outside?" (EN).

somewhere out there (Gurholt & Viken, 2003) and which children or any other humans cannot influence.

Thus, by creating the opposition between inside and outside, nature seems to be something one must be prepared for and which could, to a certain extent, be dangerous if the children are not properly ready. If not seen as dangerous, the words used by Håvard clearly reflect that nature is something different, which needs at least special attention. In this precise situation, nature seems to have the upper hand over children, sending them back to their passive and vulnerable statuses. Although, "hva trenger vi for å ha det bra ute?" could also be translated as "what do we need to have it *nice* outside?", which opens up for a totally different understanding of Håvard's question. The positive underlying tones of 'å ha det bra'[32] could also illustrate that nature can be a place of pleasant emotions (Rantala & Puhakka, 2020) and that being outside could also be a time for experimenting, engaging in 'free play' and exploration of ones bodily possibilities, but more importantly for developing ones' agency.

By repeatedly asking the children "what do we need to be fine outside?" and therefore creating a routine for the children, this example clearly illustrates how the school mediate and shape children's encounters with nature. Håvard is standing at the crossroad between children and their experiences of nature, ensuring that they develop competences that will be useful for their future life as Norwegian citizens. In addition to reflecting the school as a mediator between children and nature, this episode clearly illustrates social values linked to ideas about 'the good childhood' in the light of the concept of 'the robust child'. Nilsen (2008) argues that 'the robust child' has knowledge about what material resources to use in order to spend time outdoor in all kind of weather. By asking the children to list the necessary clothing or completing the list, Håvard perpetuates day after day the idea that a Norwegian child should be a 'robust child subject' and therefore renders explicit some cultural values linked to the notion of 'the good childhood' and its close link to nature (Gullestad, 1997; Harju et al., 2020).

As previously argued, I see the activities before and after the 'utetid' as totally linked to the time spend outside. In addition to a more theoretical analysis of these episodes, illustrating ideas about 'the good childhood' and 'the robust child', it is possible to draw on a more practical aspect of such enterprise. Knowing about the weather and therefore what type of clothes to wear is a necessity for Norwegian children, especially northern Norwegian children. Because of the quickly shifting and more extreme weather of northern Norway, wearing the proper clothes is a requirement for children. As the weather is complex and rough, children have to acquire an extensive amount of detailed meteorological knowledge, both theoretical and practical. If drawing a parallel with migrants - or even my own experience when I moved to Norway - it is possible to see that this type of knowledge is not innate to everyone. Knowing what the proper clothes are must be learnt and experienced in context. In addition to the social and practical aspects that migrants have to get used to when moving to another country, there are some cultural aspects they also have to tame. One of these various cultural aspects is linked to clothes and weather. In this regard, I argue that clothing is strongly culturally embedded, and that knowing what to wear can be seen as a social and cultural practice valid for a special place and a definite time. In the same way that childhood is varying across time and space, and is strongly culturally embedded (Jenks, 1982), proper clothing is a reflecting of a certain place at a certain time and is subject to changes.

[32] Cf. Lexicon for translation.

5.2.1.2 Getting dressed

The second part of the preparation for the 'utetid' happened in the hall, where the children had their clothes and shoes. As previously mentioned, the weather of October and November in northern Norway can undergo huge variations: snow or rain, minus or positive degrees can be part of the same day. As the outside temperature did contrast with the one inside the building, the children would need to put more clothes on before going outside for the 'utetid'. While being inside, they would just wear their woollen base layer, and a thin woollen sweater. Some would also wear jogging pants, or woollen tights. Most of the children did not have slippers to wear inside and would walk shoeless inside the school's building.

Right after having detailed the weather and asked what the children had to wear to feel fine outside, they would go out from the classroom and start getting ready in the hall. First, they had to gather the clothes they needed, getting them from their individual drawers, or the hooks in the separate storage place. Some days, they would need to check the drying cupboards to see if some of their gloves, scarfs, or coveralls were not still hanging there. After having gathered everything, some children would spread them on the floor, and then place each item on. I noticed that in the beginning of my fieldwork, some children did seem to have difficulties gathering all the clothes necessary. It would also take more than 20 minutes from the start until they would be ready and go outside. The overall preparation process was done under the supervision of the available adults, Håvard, Vilde or Ingeborg, and even sometimes with their help. In the early stage of my fieldwork, I repeatedly asked some children to show me how they were getting ready, here is one my interaction:

> *Day 2, between 0-1 degree Celsius, slightly snowing, almost no wind. I went back into the classroom and a few girls were still there, talking. I asked if at least one of them was willing to show me what to wear and help me get ready for the 'utetid'. Inger and Brynhild said they could show me. However, Brynhild ended up getting dressed without helping me. Inger had her place right in front of mine. She came to my bench and took all my clothes one by one, telling me to put them on. She was verifying that I was placing them at the right place, and also checked that I followed was she was telling me. When I said that I wanted to go out now, because I was getting to warm inside, she said that I was not ready yet. She looked at me and asked what was missing. I could not answer, but then looked at my feet and realized I was missing my boots. She laughed and said that I should switch shoes, because I could not go out with my indoor shoes (some thin and small sneakers). She then returned to her place and asked me to tell her what to wear. I started the list but forgot 'flisbukser' (fleece trousers). She put it on anyway, telling me that she needed it. During the process, I once said "I might be wrong, you have to correct me or explain me, because I don't really know what to wear". She replied "yes, you know what to wear now". We then put our shoes on and went out.*

On a general level, this episode seems quite dull and does not convey any special knowledge about children and nature. However, it sheds light on a precise aspect of children's everyday life in school: the trust adults place into children. On that day, Brynhild and I just went out after having dressed without any adults checking what clothes she was wearing. By not following up children in this precise situation, the adults do clearly show that they trust the children and their ability dress properly. Even if still reminded and asked before going outside of the classroom about what clothes they should wear (cf. section 5.2.1.1), children are seen as gradually able to take decisions

about themselves and what to wear. Even if adults are available and supervising children's preparation, they are however not always interfering. In this regard, I argue that by staying back but still being present if needed, the adults clearly place children in a position of competent rights and knowledge holders. Thus, as life outdoor is seen as a value in itself in Norway (Gelter, 2000; Repp, 1996), children learning to be responsible of their own clothing reflects national cultural values.

The examples illustrated in the two last sections both fall under the same category of "preparing oneself for the 'utetid'" and are both an illustration of cultural values reproduced by society (Hastrup et al., 2011). But more precisely, I understand them as an illustration of how institutions such as schools and kindergartens can become arenas for strong cultural reproduction processes.

If going beyond words choices and their implications, the question "what do we need to be fine outside?" is in my understanding tightly linked to the Norwegian popular saying *"Det finnes ikke dårlig vær, bare dårlige klær!"*, and is therefore an illustration of cultural reproduction in Norway. Discussing with the children the adequate clothes to wear and allowing them to gain knowledge about the weather can be seen as an expression of the idea of creating a 'robust child subject' (Nilsen, 2008). The thought could also be extended to seeing children's knowledge and decisions about what to wear as an expression of their agency. As the concept of 'agency' can be seen as an individual's capacity to handle choices for its own life (Robson et al., 2007; Tisdall & Punch, 2012; Valentine, 2011), children's decisions regarding their clothing are a matter of self-decided choices.

However, if playing the devils' advocate, one could see a mismatch between the school's attitude towards the children and their dealings: even if the children can get dressed alone, there are still some adults present that are checking what they are doing. On one hand, the children are pushed into the role of a 'robust child', full of agency, competences and knowledge and are encouraged to act and evolve as such. On the other hand, adults are still there to supervise and help them. These dilemmas of freedom and autonomy on one side, but adult control on the other, do reflect ideas about childhood and children. By not letting the children get dressed completely autonomously, one could argue that the school is placing them in a passive position, or in need of protection from what could arise during their encounters with nature. In my understanding, this discrepancy reflects issues laying behind ideas about how childhood should be. But more generally, it reflects ideas about children's best interest and their rights to protection.

5.2.2 Children's practices in nature

During the 'utetid', children's practices and doings were really diverse and could take different forms or use different spaces. They could both be short and sporadic episodes or be a repetitive pattern lasting over several weeks. Some children would start/continue a game straight from the beginning of the 'utetid' and would be out of sight until the end of it, seeming totally absorbed by what they were doing, unlike others who would interact with adults more often.

The following sections will provide a general and broad picture of the 'utetid', in order to supplement chapter 5.1 and the descriptions of the time frame and available spaces during the school day. While simultaneously describing recurrent practices and focusing on particular situations that are of relevance for this study, the next sections aim to highlight how children do encounter nature in this precise context. The analytical

discussions knitted to each section will take a more actor-oriented tone, emphasizing cultural practices initiated and shared by children in the light of Corsaro's (2009) arguments, but will also draw on play theories and its materiality.

5.2.2.1 Children's bodily movements in nature

As mentioned in the overall schedule (cf. section 5.1.3), children would take part in various bodily movements during the 'utetid'. Some, such as running, climbing up trees or on the rope structure, using the swings, crawling on the ground, jumping from rocks onto the ground, were performed daily regardless of the weather and state of the ground (covered with ice, snow, bare earth or mud).

Other bodily movements could be closely related to the weather or the current materiality and state of nature. When the ground and 'water sources' of the schoolyard became frozen, the children would walk on the ice, go up or down the riverbed, or walk on the flat surface of the 'synkemyr'. If it had rained, the children would often jump into the newly formed puddles of water. These activities involving water were also often linked to some '*uhell*'[33] where the children would fall down in water and get wet. If happening, they would spontaneously come to an adult and say that they had to go back inside in order to change clothes. I also witnessed that there was a connection between the weather and children's bodily movements when snowing. The only day of fieldwork where it had considerably snowed during the night, the children did slide down a small hill on plastic plates, or roll down the slope several times while I would hear laughter and screams of joy.

However, one recurrent bodily movement was performed throughout the weeks at a very specific place: around the 'synkemyr'.

> *Day 4, between 5-6 degrees Celsius, blue sky and no wind. I spotted a group of four boys (Runar, Øystein, Leif and Torstein) who were up above the iced river, in the place where the 'synkemyr' was located. I wanted to have a look at what they were doing because I could not see from where I was standing. I walked up there. The four boys were actually walking, crawling and foraging in the mud with branches. Øystein was standing still at one place, one foot deep down in the mud telling the other boys that he was stuck and that his shoe was stuck deep down in the mud. At that point, I did not see any of the boys trying to help him. Øystein then pulled his foot out of his boot, the boot was obviously stuck in the brown swamp. He sat down on a branch while Torstein tried to reach the boot with a stick, without success.*

Having in mind the concept of 'affordance' (Gibson, 1979), being how children "perceive the functions of the landscape and use them for play" (Fjørtoft, 2001, p. 111), allows to shed another light on the different bodily movements performed by the children during the 'utetid'. By running, jumping from rocks or climbing up trees, the children's movements illustrate the idea that nature can be an experimental space (Fjørtoft, 2001, 2004), but also a space of experiment. Thus, children's extensive use of 'Lilleskogen' and all the other natural elements of the schoolyard also reflects ideas encompassed behind the concept of 'playscape' (Frost, 1992). By actively using the various terrains available, children's practices do reflect that some types of natural features contribute to trigger

[33] Cf. Lexicon for translation.

some types of plays or activities which could not come to life in traditional playgrounds (Fjørtoft, 2001).

Looking more closely to the bodily movements described above, and if agreeing with the idea that they fall under the category of 'physical play', it is possible to argue that all these bodily movements were actually 'free play'. 'Free play' being understood as a kind of 'physical play' which is spontaneous, child-initiated and totally voluntary (Holt et al., 2015). However, settling for seeing children's practices as 'free play' only could be simplistic and deprive the analysis from a more in-depth understanding.

If drawing a bridge between the concepts of 'affordances' and 'playscape' and the play theories mentioned in a previous chapter (cf. section 3.2.2), it is possible to interpret some of children's bodily movements as 'sensorimotor play' (Änggård, 2016) and 'curious play' (Gurholt & Sanderud, 2016). By jumping from rocks, walking on ice or exploring the 'synkemyr', the children were often oscillating between 'sensorimotor play' and 'curious play'. This was done through a physical exploration of nature where the child is in movement, but simultaneously a curious exploration of nature and oneself owns bodily possibilities and limitations. More precisely, the episode describing the group of boys in the 'synkemyr' reflects that some children are in search of more challenging play situations. By having access to nature and having the possibility to explore it freely, children are more likely to take part into rougher or physically demanding situations than if restricted to traditional playgrounds. Ideas laying behind children's practices will be developed in the following analysis, as these rougher or more physical situations do have a certain value in the Norwegian context.

However, while unravelling and discussing children's practices in nature some questions can be brought up: Are the local cultural expectations influencing children's play in nature, or are children themselves choosing nature as a place for play? Are children really in search for more physical experiences in nature, or are the cultural values conveyed by the school pushing them into that direction? I deliberately do not answer these questions straight away as these interrogations will surface again in the following sections.

5.2.2.2 "Vi lager mat"[34]: Children's play

During the 'utetid', the children did also take part in various plays which had for main characteristic to not be restricted by equipment or rules. As already mentioned, the 'synkemyr' was a place of vivid interest for the children. Every day, some children would play or participate in various activities around that place of the schoolyard:

> *Day 3 between 3-5 degrees Celsius, grey and cloudy, strong wind. Jorunn and Inger were playing next to the 'synkemyr'. A thick layer of ice had formed on the river, allowing to have a 2x3 m surface of ice trapped in a sort of basin as the edges were forming up. I asked them if I could join, they agreed. I crawled down and sat down on one of the edges, took my notebook out to write down what they were doing. They both noticed my notebook and asked me what that was and what I was writing. I explained that I was writing down some things they were doing because I thought it was interesting, but that I was not writing who was doing it (so the names) down. I showed them my notebook, and they said it was totally fine.*
> *I could see that they were scraping ice from the river and transferring it in buckets. I asked them what they were doing and the two answered that they were preparing food. I asked what kind of food. Jorunn replied that she was doing an 'isgryte'[35]. I*

[34] «Vi lager mat.» (NO) could be translated by «We are preparing food.» (EN).
[35] Cf. Lexicon for translation.

did ask if they were planning to prepare some desert. I did not understand the overall answer of it and did not ask again as Inger said that she was not a big fan of deserts.

Preparing food was a repetitive pattern in children's play, both among boys and girls. However, I noticed that girls would stick to the play and use the natural elements for preparing cakes, sausages, stews or ice cream. Even though some boys would also prepare food, some would put a personal twist and prepare other types of things such as preparing poop or preparing a fire. The children would also take part in other 'fantasy plays', having however a slightly different structure than the previously mentioned: playing 'Minecraft'[36], or playing that one child was a snake and another a koala. These two plays which would last over several days, had been developed by two groups of children and would include the same children over and over. It is worthy to mention that I was never invited to play with them, nor explained the aim of this play, despite my questions regarding what they were doing.

The previously depicted episodes are of relevance for explaining children's encounters with nature for two main reasons. Firstly, it clearly reveals that children use nature as a space for play. Secondly, that nature is also a place for creation of a common culture.

In my understanding, these 'food preparation' plays fall under the category of 'symbolic play' (Änggård, 2016; Fjørtoft, 2001; Piaget, 1962). By replacing an absent object (sausages, fire, cake mould) by another element (earth, bucket, ice), the children did take part into a make-believe game that would go forward only if all the participants did agree on its implicit rules. In the second type of play (Minecraft or snake/koala), a make-believe situation was also created. However, the focus was not on the material world, but on the child itself. In this situation, the material world is not representing something else such as it can often be done in 'fantasy play' (Änggård, 2016), but the child's body and who he was did differ from the reality. Therefore, the term 'fantasy play', used by Änggård (2016) and Fjørtoft (2001); (2004) suits better the idea that the child's body represents something/someone else than in the real material world.

In addition to ideas about play, the types of fantasies in which I never was invited do also relate to the concept of 'peer culture' (cf. section 3.2.1). By participating in a play, and therefore developing a common culture which was not accessible to adults (Corsaro, 2009), the children of Kråkebolle Primary School illustrate that even if evolving in a context which was shaped by adults, they still can create their own world and practices. Yet, it would be erroneous to state that children's cultures are separated from the environing culture. As argued by Kjørholt (2003) and Corsaro (2009), 'peer culture' is produced in interaction with peers, but is also actively incorporating elements of the local culture. By playing 'Minecraft' - a game played by their dads - or preparing food - an activity done by their moms - it is possible to see how their environment shape their practices. Although the last sentence is deliberately stereotypical about gender divided tasks and is not representative of all families and their practices, the main point to remember is that children's environing culture do have an influence on their practices and the way they incorporate them in their everyday lives.

[36] Minecraft is a video game, rated 7+ by the PEGI norms, in which players create and break apart three-dimensional worlds, by using various types of blocks. Some boys told me that their older brothers or fathers were playing it.

5.2.2.3 'Jeger og isbjørn'[37]: Children's games

Children's games, understood as activities with some well-established rules known by all the participants, were also part of the 'utetid'. They had a definite beginning and end, could include both children and adults, but were however very seldom. Thus, they would be initiated by the children only. These games, such as riding a horse, namely an adult carrying a child on his/her back and running/hoping around, or playing hopscotch would sometimes take place on the concrete schoolyard. Another game, with a structure and rules similar to a game swiss children do play, was called '*jeger og isbjørn*':

> *Day 4, around 5 degrees Celsius, blue sky and no wind. I was not introduced to the game by being explained the rules, Inger just said "I am the polar bear, you cannot trap me". I knew that I should hunt her and run after her, which I did. I cannot remember in which order which child did join the game and started running after her or another child. But they did take turns in the hunting and running. Brynhild, Øystein, Jorunn, Siri and Hilde were playing as well. The bear was first hunted, then caught, placed down on a table, salted and spiced and then cut into pieces and eaten. All the children taking part did be polar bear once in the game. However, when it was my turn to be the polar bear, something went wrong, and I stayed human. Siri came to me and said that she had been eating my heart. They asked me to lay down on the table and started preparing me with spices and then ate me by gently tapping my body like if they were cutting me into pieces. Øystein tried to save me while I was laying down on the table, by saying that he had saved my heart and mimed to give it back to me. He said that I was alive and could be free.*

This section, illustrating games conducted by children, might be seen as redundant, especially after the section about children's play. However, there was a need to draw the distinction between children's play and children's games. Play, "springs out of the participants" (Skår et al., 2016, p. 530) and happens by itself. It is driven by freedom, creativity and spontaneity (Skår et al., 2016), unlike games which are more structured and must follow precise rules. As presented in the previous section, children's play can be an illustration or 'peer culture' and do incorporate the environing culture in their practices. Thus, I argue that children do also incorporate the surrounding culture in their games by choosing polar bears, a typical animal from the North. By taking up dramatic themes, or scary animals, in their games, children do illustrate they do not evolve in a parallel world, protected from reality. Even if never verbally mentioning the dangerous aspect of a polar bear, by trying to escape and run around the schoolyard in order to avoid the bear, children do still clearly show that these animals are linked to some sense of danger.

Still in the idea that children are operating in relation with their environment, I want to propose a parallel between the concepts of 'peer culture' and 'agency'. Corsaro (2011) argues that 'agency' is reflected in the fact that "children make persistent attempts to gain control of their lives" and "they always attempt to share that control with each other" (p. 150). In my understanding, this can be translated to children's culture: children make persistent attempts to incorporate the surrounding culture and make sense of it in their practices, but they also share these new practices with each other creating what might be named 'peer culture'.

It is interesting to note that these types of games would never take place in 'Lilleskogen', only in the more 'organized spaces' of the schoolyard. Even more striking, the proportion

[37] 'Jeger og isbjørn' (NO) could be translated by "hunters and polar bears" (EN).

of organized games was way smaller than the proportion of 'free plays' conducted by the children. These observations can lead to speculate about children's interest for games or for play during the 'utetid' as they seemed to be more attracted by the natural landscapes and the variety of activity one can take part in, instead of taking part in fixed and clear games.

In addition to how they are performed, children's games can be analysed in the light of what they represent. A structuralist perspective, aiming to find commonalities between childhood (Qvortrup, 2009), could bring an interesting light on this game. In this class this game is named "hunters and polar bears", but in Switzerland, the same game is called "police and thieves" even if responding to the same rules and structure. Thus, it is quite likely that the same game has another name in the neighbour school, but still responds to the same rules. By seeing these commonalities, the culturally, socially, historically constructed aspects of childhood can be called into question.

5.2.2.4 Using nature as toys

Regularly during the 'utetid', children would use natural elements as toys. The school provided around 10 plastic buckets and 10 plastic spades of various shape and size, tidied in a designed place in the schoolyard, and available only if an adult would unlock the padlock of the box. Conflicts between children would often happen, as there were less objects than the number of children. Other than this box of spades, buckets, and some ropes, no other objects were available during the 'utetid'. The fixed structures with swings, ropes and toboggans were of course available all the time, but the children did state that these were not toys, but part of the landscape of the schoolyard.

Even if sometimes using the available buckets and spades, Leif and Torstein would very often hold thin wooden sticks while being outside during the 'utetid'. These sticks could take various purposes, such as being a flute to charm a snake, be a fishing rod or even weapons. However, using the sticks to fight and hit each other was not allowed during the 'utetid'. The boys would therefore walk around the schoolyard, take part in games, activities or bodily movements, while holding a stick in their hands. My observations do correlate with what Melhuus (2012) found while conducting fieldwork in outdoor day-care centres: children do incorporate elements of the modern and urban world in their plays, by recontextualizing and adapting the natural elements available.

As highlighted in the theory chapter (cf. section 3.2.2), children's plays are also articulated around its materiality. Related to the use of toys, there is a need to draws the line between natural material and a regular toy, the latter being bearer of social meanings, the first allowing children to interpret and make sense of how to use the natural material independently (Änggård, 2016). The above-mentioned examples do illustrate perfectly this idea: the use of sticks did vary not only by the type of game they were used in, but also their purpose. In line with the idea that regular toys are bearer of social values and meanings, the use of buckets and spades did not pull away from its expected use.

Again, children's use of toys in nature can reflect the cultural values at stake in the local context and therefore raise questions about who influenced who in the first place. Nevertheless, I argue that even if being influenced by the context and culture they evolve in, some children are able to pull away from the cultural expectations and therefore create their own culture through their choice of toys in nature. By choosing sticks, Leif and Torstein do reflect that they are competent subjects (Clark, 2013) actively creating their experiences within the interaction with each other (Corsaro, 2011).

5.2.3 Nature as a space for being

For the children of the 1st grade class, the schoolyard and its surroundings were not used only during the 'utetid'. Some activities were also conducted outside, with various structure, length or use of the available spaces. As the boundaries between *doing* and *being* in nature are blurred, the following sections will illustrate some examples of organized activities designed and conducted by the teachers in which the children did take part. As this thesis focuses on children's encounters of and experiences in nature, the last section will focus on children's use of space in the schoolyard.

The analytical discussion tied to the first section will be based on the school curriculum and official publications mentioned in chapter 2, while the second will be at the cross-section between children's play and their use of outdoor spaces.

5.2.3.1 Organized activities designed and conducted by adults

> *Day 1, cloudy, below zero degrees Celsius, almost no wind. Håvard had planned an activity that was going to be done outside, as Thursday is usually the "outside day" in this school. After having gathered all the children in front of the whiteboard, he explained the activity and how they were going to take part in it: The whole class was going to go outside in 'Lilleskogen' and they would have to find natural elements such as trees, rocks, sticks, etc. that looked like letters of the alphabet. When a letter was found, they should call him. They could also pick the elements up and try to form words of the letters. The whole class went out, without spending too much time in the hall as all the children were already adequately dressed. The children started running in 'Lilleskogen'. Soon, I heard them shouting Håvard's name, for him to come and see what they had found.*

This activity is a limpid example of organized activity using nature as setting, planed and supervised by the adults of the school, but aimed for the children. This learning activity happening outside was not conducted during the 'utetid', but during another moment of the school day usually allocated for classroom activities. Other activities such as an outing to the nearest beach or a full day outside marking the darkest period of the year - the '*mørketidsfest*'[38] - were other types of organized activities the children did take part in. These activities were planed and organized by the teachers, had a definite beginning and end, but did also include 'free' times where the children could decide themselves what they wanted to do.

These activities fall within the framework of the core curriculum (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020) and curricula for individual subjects. Even if the core curriculum does not clearly state that schools should use nature as an area of learning for various disciplines, nature is mentioned as a potential area for learning (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). However, a distinction can be made between the two types of activities presented above. The first one has a very concrete learning aim, recognizing the letters of the alphabet, whereas the second places

[38] 'Mørketidsfest' (NO) could be translated by "period of darkness celebration" (EN). In northern Norway, the sun does not come above the horizon between approximately November to January. The period of lack of sun varies according to longitude. 'Mørketidsfesten' is made to celebrate the beginning of the darkest period of the year. Another celebration, happening in January to celebrate the return of the sun, is linked to the above-mentioned. As this is strongly culturally embedded and does not exist in southern lands, or even southern Norway, the schools do plan activities or small celebrations for these highlights of living up north.

the emphasis on another level, being outside for one day. These types of activities are however tightly knitted to the modern Norwegian ideas of 'friluftsliv'; visiting the outdoor environment for physical activities with mindfulness about nature experiences or environmental issues (Det Kongelige Klima- og Miljødepartement, 2016).

If the experience of outdoor life in schools is one main goal for education (Det Kongelige Klima- og Miljødepartement, 2016; Harju et al., 2020), the use of 'cultural analysis' as analytical lens allows to push the discussion forward. As experiences of outdoor life are seen as deeply-rooted Norwegian cultural traditions (Gullestad, 1997; Repp, 1996), the school ensures the perpetuation of these specific cultural values by encouraging children to take part in outdoor experiences. However, it is necessary to say that this picture is the reflection of a certain place at a certain time, and is not representative of all northern Norway. The socially and culturally constructed aspect of practices (James & Prout, 2015) is therefore of utmost relevance and can be seen as a valid argument.

Inevitably, cultural analysis of the practices associated with the use of nature in schools and children's encounters with nature leads towards ideas associated with 'the good childhood' in the northern Norwegian context. As this concept and what it entails for this thesis will be spelled out in the next part of the analytical discussion, I shortly add the following: even if everything suggests that children's close interaction with nature and the development of a 'robust child' are core aspects of what 'the good Norwegian childhood' should entail, there is a need to stay critical and consider that these values might not be shared or reproduced by all.

5.2.3.2 Children's use of spaces in nature

As this thesis is articulated around a qualitative approach, no numbers or percentages have been calculated in order to support these observations. However, from day 6 of fieldwork until day 18, I had written a short paragraph about children's use of space during the 'utetid', focusing on patterns or surprising elements. These are the basis for the current section and its analysis.

Throughout my fieldwork, the observations comprised in my fieldnotes revealed that some spaces of the schoolyard seemed to be more often used than others during the 'utetid'. However, it could be arguably questioned if these places were really more used, of if the activities performed there were more evident to see. Nevertheless, the schoolyard had distinct places of interest where children would perform bodily movements, or several sorts of plays and games. These were, fairly predictably, the following: 'Lilleskogen' and the 'synkemyr'.

Thus, it also appeared that some children did often use the same spaces during the 'utetid'. A group of three boys (Runar, Vegard, Åsmund) would spend considerable time on the climbing structure with ropes, while Gørill and Dagny would mostly be on the second set of swings.

In general, the 'synkemyr' and its surroundings was more exploited by boys, unlike the sand area which was more often used by girls. The gender character of children's use of space was also reflected in their games, as boys more often took part in 'curious play', while girls would seem to prefer 'organized games' or 'fantasy plays'.

Weather induced variations were also revealed. Some places such as 'Lilleskogen' appeared to be more used when the ground was not covered with snow nor ice. In this regard, a very clear distinction can be found between *clement days* (temperature above

zero, no rain, no ice or snow on the ground), where the children did use 'Lilleskogen' for various types of play, and *less clement days* (temperature below zero, ice and snow on the ground, wind or rain), where the children use the already existing objects/toys available in the schoolyard.

In order to get a better understanding from these small analytical pictures, the concepts of 'affordances' (Gibson, 1979) and 'playscape' (Frost, 1992) can again be of interest. If considering nature as experimental, in other words to see nature as a playground for children (Fjørtoft, 2001), it is possible to link the prevalent use of certain spaces with the type of activity performed there. Each space but more precisely 'Lilleskogen' and the 'synkemyr', have precise characteristics: a defined terrain, different obstacles or features and purposes. These differences provide challenges for the children and places where they can experiment and cope with the roughness of nature (Fjørtoft, 2001). As children perceive the different types of terrain and possibilities of such places ('affordances'), they discover different learning opportunities linked to different types of features/natural elements which could not be available in other types of playground ('playscape') (Fjørtoft, 2001). These findings have also been found by Arvidsen (2018), when researching children's use of space for building dens and how these could evolve. He observed that children's dens were in constant change and that children would pick up dens' locations very carefully.

This difference in the activities around performed the schoolyard is also connected to the concept of 'curious play' (Gurholt & Sanderud, 2016) and therefore links children's use of spaces with their own understanding of the terrain. If setting aside the gendered character of children's use of space, it is possible to clearly draw a bridge between children's use of spaces and the current weather. Spaces that induces more 'free play', or 'curious play', were more often used in a moderate weather, findings shared by Fjørtoft (2001). I would therefore argue that children carefully, but unconsciously, selected their play spaces.

The spaces that were both physically and mentally challenging would be used on clement days, as they could mobilize all their competences and resources for focusing on their bodily movements and not be challenged by the weather on top of it. Having to cope with the weather is a demanding task and requires skills that some of them did not yet had. Hence, the children did show their competences and abilities to cope with nature when choosing, or a challenging landscape, or a less challenging landscape when placed in combination with bad weather.

PART 3: When childhood is the reflection of society

As the third and last part of the analysis, the following sections aim to focus on children and adult verbally communicating in and about nature. This will be illustrated by dialogues, short episodes or more extended descriptions gathered throughout my fieldwork. Even if not all do contain an actual dialogue, I argue that the episodes presented below are the reflection of strong cultural values and how ideas about 'the good Norwegian childhood' can be present in schools also.

Authors argue that discourses and national values shaping the Norwegian society are articulated around the love and development of a sturdy relationship to nature (Borge et al., 2003; Nilsen, 2008). Even if the concept of 'discourse' - brought up by Michel Foucault - will not be the main focus point of the analytical discussion, a short definition should nevertheless be given. Discourses are dynamic and are produced in the interaction between several entities, but also on different levels in society (Kjørholt, 2004). However, as this concept is subject to contested understandings, I choose to consider it as a set of ideas and notions represented and constructed in a cultural context. Thus, discourses are also encompassed in what is said, (Montgomery, 2003), in other words cultural values are reflected in and constructed by what people say and in their interaction with each other. In this regard, the following episodes and the analytical discussion linked to them will be anchored in the Norwegian context and its local values. Hence, if discourses are reflected in what is said, focusing on expressions and interactions about/in nature between children and adults are of utmost relevance for this last part of the analysis.

The analytical discussion will be strongly grounded in a constructionist perspective, with a strong focus on cultural analysis. Ideas about what being 'a robust child' or 'the good childhood' in northern Norway do entail will be discussed and questioned throughout the following sections. Further reflections abouts the implications of these cultural values on children's practices - or encouraged practices - will also be part of the analytical discussion related to this last analytical part.

5.3 Children and adults communicating in/about nature

As mentioned above, this last part of my analysis will focus on the spoken interactions about nature, but also spoken interactions taking place in nature, that happened among children. It will also explore interactions about/in nature between children and adults, as well as among adults. The last section will also highlight topics that are not spoken, or not mentioned when discussing about children and their interactions with nature.

By focusing on what is said by adults and also children, I aim to go beyond factual and trivial analysis about how children do encounter nature in the school context, and how the schools mediate their interaction with nature. As presented in the previous parts of

the analysis, children do reproduce the surrounding culture and try to make sense of what they live. These meaning-making processes can be grounded both in bodily movements, but also through verbal communication. By looking at dialogues and oral interactions between children and adults in a 'cultural analysis' perspective, I aim to drift towards a more in-depth understanding of 'the good Norwegian childhood' and its associated set of ideas and values.

The following sections will first focus on children and their own wordings about/in nature, and will then switch focus into adults talking about children. The last section will bring together adults and children, and try to illustrate what happens in the interaction between them.

5.3.1 "Det er deilig her"[39]: children talking about nature

When in nature, the children did talk to me, or talk together, about what they were currently doing or feeling. They often also expressed some emotions while talking about, or in nature:

> *Day 7 (outing at the beach for the whole day), minus 1 degree Celsius, snow and blue sky, some wind. The 1st grade and 5th grade children, teachers and assistants did take part into lighting bonfires, playing together, grilling sausages and marshmallows at the nearest beach. The snow was falling, and everything was covered with snow. We just had walked down from the school and arrived at the beach. Before leaving, the children had packed their bags with their lunch, some spare gloves or mittens, and had also dressed up with several layers under their snow coverall. On the beach, a lot of different activities were performed, and the children were or playing games, or talking together. I was standing next to a group of 3 girls, sitting down on the snow. Two of them, Norunn and Hilde, asked me some help to open their thermos. While I was removing the cap of one bottle, I noticed that they were not sitting directly on the ground. They had a thin and flat layer of wool/plastic between them and the snow. I knew that this item, a 'sittunderlag'[40], was commonly used in Norway, but asked:*
>
> *Researcher: What is it, that you are sitting on?*
>
> *Norunn: That's a 'sittunderlag', so you don't get wet when you sit down (pointing at the pink plastic layer under her).*
>
> *Hilde: Yes, that is really useful when you are out in nature (sitting down on a woollen felt square and holding her thermos in her bare hands).*
>
> *Frøya was also sitting down, sipping some hot cocoa from her thermos. She was looking at the sea, and said "Det er deilig her, jeg liker det". The snow was falling, the wind slightly blowing, and the temperature was below zero.*

Even if the various bodily movements performed by the children and the cultural values laying behind such outdoor activity could be of relevance, this new section has for aim to focus on children talking about nature. The main part of the analytical discussion will therefore revolve around the dialogue I had with the group of girls, which reflects two

[39] «Det er deilig her. » (NO) could be translated by «It is delightful/wonderful here. » (EN). "Jeg liker det." (NO) can be understood as "I appreciate it" (EN).
[40] See Lexicon for translation. This Scandinavian item (I had never seen one before coming to Norway) can take various shapes and be made of various materials. The overall aim is to create an air cushion/some insulation between the cold/wet ground and the person's bottom. Using this allows anyone to sit down even if the floor is wet or covered by snow.

different facets. Namely their knowledge and use of a 'sittunderlag', and the emotions expressed by Frøya at the end of the discussion.

The first one takes on a more practical aspect and frame children as knowledgeable and competent subjects, which have gathered the necessary skills for coping with and in nature. It also goes in line with Nilsen's (2008) description of a 'robust child', described as having knowledge and expertise about how to cope with nature. Yet, knowledge about selecting the adequate clothing, as presented in section 5.2.1.1, is not the only type of abilities children need to develop. By knowing that a 'sittunderlag' can prevent them from being wet and cold, this group of girls completely reflect Norwegian expectations about how 'the good childhood' should be. However, I argue that the concept of 'the robust child' such as presented by Nilsen (2008) misses an important nuance. Having the knowledge and the ability to cope outside in nature and acting in line with adults expectations are one aspect of it. However, I argue that appreciating nature and enjoying being outside is the second. In my understanding, a 'robust child' is not only doing *what is expected* but is also demonstrating his enjoyment when outside. In this regard, Frøya completely reflects what I see as a 'robust child', by knowing how to cope in nature, but also enjoying the challenges that nature can offer.

If shifting focus on the words used by the girls, it is possible to make visible the emotions expressed when talking about nature. Even if children's emotions in or about nature, as well as gaining their opinion about nature still needs to be explored, Tillmann et al. (2019) have showed that children can express both feeling positive and negative feelings when in nature. In their research, negative feelings were mostly associated with "feeling unsafe, scared, or nervous because of animals (bears) or inclement weather" (Tillmann et al., 2019, p. 712). Surprisingly, inclement weather did not seem to bother Frøya, as she said "It is delightful. I appreciate it".

In this example, Frøya did only express 'activation feelings' (Collado et al., 2016), which can be seen as "happiness", "greatness", "enjoyment" or "fun" (p. 724). Deeper aesthetic judgments about nature are however not part of the conversation. One could say that sharing emotions about nature does not fit in the category of 'talking about nature'. However, I argue that by telling how she feels about this precise situation, Frøya does give information about how she perceives nature and perceive herself in relation to it. Thus, by expressing such emotions, she brings another perspective to children's encounters with nature. Experimenting nature does not only take place in action or bodily movements but takes place in all the lived-experiences children can have.

One last point must be made regarding children's experiences in nature and how they encounter nature in the school context. In addition to the emotions associated with the situation mentioned above, the words used by Frøya illustrate that nature is not only "something out there somewhere" (Gurholt & Viken, 2003, p. 13). Nature, in this precise situation, can be seen as relational. As children and nature are influencing each other by their actions, I argue that this creates a dynamic and emotional relation between them (Hordyk et al., 2015; Rantala & Puhakka, 2020). Children's experiences with nature therefore cannot be seen as isolated from nature, as their emotions and embodied experiences are built in this same interaction. Thus, children "actively inhabit the space, creating an embodied, social and affective experience" (Skår et al., 2016, p. 529). In other words, the emotions, words or bodily movements triggered by any situation are the results of two main protagonists: the child and nature. By actively inhabiting the natural space, children can be seen as competent and active agents, which can have an influence

on their lives, but also on others.
Even if I am sceptical about seeing children's encounters with nature as reciprocal (Rautio, 2013) where both nature and children are seen as active agents acting together and towards each other, this idea can be reflected in the previous example. As argued by Hordyk et al. (2015), children illustrate the relational aspect of their relationship with nature by expressing emotions when outside. The words used by Frøya and the positive feelings she expressed are an accurate reflection of how nature is not something operating outside of human experience.

5.3.2 Children talking in nature

As mentioned in the previous section, children did talk with each other when being in nature. Two mains, but yet different types of interactions could be found in children's conversations among themselves: talking about the activity and explaining what was done, or talking about something else than what they were currently doing.

> *Day 3, around 5 degrees Celsius and nice weather. At the end of the 'utetid', I stopped around the sandbox, where four girls were sitting down and digging, apparently constructing things. Inger, Frøya, Siri and Norunn explained me that they were building a castle. I asked a few questions, about who was going to live in the castle, what were the different places in their castle. They always answered my questions and seemed happy to share the construction process of this place with me. During my time there, there was not much talk about any other thing than what they were doing. I did not participate in the building process, only asked questions and watched them. I however noticed that Siri, did bring other discussion topics while playing in the sand. She told me that she wanted to be a singer, and sang some songs. While she was talking about the animals her father had, the other girls continued digging in the sand and talking together about what they were doing.*

While Siri was apparently keener in talking about something else, I noticed that the rest of the group was really focused on their current activity. It might be interesting to note that throughout my fieldwork, I had spent a considerable amount of time with Siri, as she had been seeking for my company quite often. She would usually wait for me, outside on the concrete schoolyard and regularly ask "Can we play together?" or "Can I spend the 'utetid' with you?". She seemed to be seeking my presence, or adults' attention. If I refused because wanted to look at other children, she would often start following me and then spend her time outside alone, wandering around from one group to another.

The following situation is again articulated about 'what is talked about' by the children, but illustrates another type of dialogue between a child and myself.

> *Day 18, around 3 degrees Celsius, strong wind and rain. While I was walking around the schoolyard during the 'utetid', I was called by Frøya who was sitting on a branch, between the 'synkemyr' and 'Big SFO'[41]. She asked me to come where she was, which I did. Then she asked me to hold down another branch with my feet, so she could climb on it and sit on it. Then she told me to move it up and down, so it would move her up and down. This lasted for a few minutes. Then she came closer to me and sat on another place on the branch, and I did the same thing with my foot. During all that time, we discussed several topics all brought up by her. I did not*

[41] Big SFO is on the map of Kråkebolle Primary School (Figure 1). It is a building belonging to SFO, but which is bigger than the room next to the children's classroom.

initiate any of them but answered her questions and kept the discussion going by. She told me which hand she could write or draw with, what languages her father was speaking, the fact that she had the impression to be on a boat while I was moving the branch, and that her grandparents had a boat somewhere where they lived. The activity and discussions ended when I asked a question about a presentation the class was supposed to perform. She could not answer my interrogation and decided to go and ask Håvard. We left the branch and went on the concrete schoolyard to discuss our question with him.

First of all, the reasons laying behind using these two episodes must be spelled out, as they do not clearly reflect the link between children and their encounters with nature. I argue that even if not textually expressing children's opinion or relation to nature, they are a reflection of children's encounters with nature. In these situations, nature is the setting, not the focus. Nature is the space where children's doings or talkings are happening. By having mundane discussions when in nature, I want to lift forward that children can also use nature as any other space, and therefore argue for the versatile aspect of what nature can be. Nature can be a space for learning, playing, talking, doing, which to a certain extend can be seen as closely connected to the Norwegian idea of 'friluftsliv'. By being in nature and talking about nature or not, children do put into practice what 'friluftsliv' actually is about: visiting and doing activities in the outdoor environment (Det Kongelige Klima- og Miljødepartement, 2016).

Yet, ideas about 'friluftsliv' also focus on attitudes of love and respect of nature (Gelter, 2000) and the ideas that children should develop the joy of being active - for obvious health reasons - but also to trigger sense of responsibility and awareness about the fragility and preciousness of nature (Det Kongelige Klima- og Miljødepartement, 2016). None of the examples presented above, nor the rest of this thesis shows that children have developed concerned about nature and its scarcity. This brings up questions about which orientations the national policy and school curricula are taking, as they apparently have been developed for children but in an adult perspective. They do not seem to reflect children's own preoccupations or topic of interests when being in nature.

In addition to seeing nature as a space for being that children do occupy without really worrying about its rarity, I also argue that the above-mentioned examples show that nature is so integrated in their life that they do not necessarily pay attention to it. In other words, the children from Kråkebolle Primary School are used to be outside as nature is the setting for their daily break and therefore do not pay as much attention to it than I had expected. Once again, my swiss views about nature in schools and its unusual or exceptional characteristics are the ones underlying the research questions of this thesis and influencing the choices made throughout this research.

Nevertheless, children's verbal communication in nature do reveal that what counts is not nature, but their social relations. Children seem to be more interested about what connects them together, as social beings part of a group, instead of the space surrounding them. In this regard, I argue that when talking in nature, children do actively shape and construct their peer culture. 'Peer culture', to recall, being defined as "a stable set of activities or routines, artefacts, values and concerns that children produce and share in interactions with peers" (Corsaro, 2009, p. 301). Therefore, by focusing on other topics that matters to them, children are illustrating how they are using nature and encountering nature to build up their social relations.

5.3.3 Adults talking about children participating in nature

Similarly to the children of Kråkebolle Primary School, the adults did also verbally communicate when being outside during the 'utetid'. Even if the focus of this thesis was not primarily on adults, but on children's encounters of nature, my fieldnotes contain a few episodes revealing verbal interactions between adults that are of relevance for answering my research questions. The topics or ways of starting a conversation were diverse and could focus both on private and professional matters. Keeping the research questions in mind, this section will target one precise type of verbal interactions between adults, namely, when the adults of the schools were talking about children when both children and adults were out in nature:

> *Day 4, between 5-6 degrees Celsius, blue sky, no wind. During the 'utetid', I had been watching a group of boys doing things around the larger 'synkemyr'. On my way down from it, I met a teacher from another class that was present outside during the 'utetid'[42]. Having just been told by Inger and Siri that the boys were not allowed to be around the 'synkemyr', I asked:*
>
> *Researcher: What about the boys up there, is it allowed for them to be in the 'synkemyr'?*
>
> *Åsta: Oh (smiling), this is a… controversial topic! But if you ask me, I am a partisan of leaving children experiment nature and find solutions by themselves. As long as they are doing fine and are not in danger… (she continued talking while slowly walking away). Oh, yes, and I will really be interested in reading your master thesis, by the way!*
>
> *Researcher: Yes, they said they were having fun and did not seem struggling…*
>
> *Åsta: That is fine then…*
>
> *She then walked in the direction of the boys and the 'synkemyr' and I walked down to the concrete yard.*

This example illustrates the simultaneous trust this adult has in the children, by saying to let them experiment and find solutions by themselves, but also her concerns about children when she goes towards the 'synkemyr' at the end of our encounter. By saying that it is a controversial topic, she meant a controversial topic among the adults of the school: not all of them have the same opinion about letting children play around the 'synkemyr'. Some of the teacher allowed children to play there, some discouraged the children and some even forbid them. During my fieldwork, I was told about these differences, but never witnessed an adult directly saying "No, you cannot play there" to children.

As I quickly understood that the 'synkemyr' was a place of interest for children, but also a place of disagreement for adults, I tried gathering information about these divergences. Various reasons were given for discouraging or hindering children from playing around the 'synkemyr'. Some adults did mention the fact that then children would then be wet and dirty and needed to change clothes. Others said that when stuck in the mud, some

[42] During the whole 'utetid', there were always two adults (teachers or assistants) present in each zone. After 30 minutes, another pair of adults would come out in order to be outside during the second part of the 'utetid'. If relating to my experience, I would refer to the adults' role as 'surveilling' the children. However, in Kråkebolle Primary School, the term "inspeksjon" (NO), "inspection" (EN) was used when referring to 'being outside with the children during the 'utetid''.

children would start complaining or even crying because of the unpleasant situation, as being able to get oneself out of this really thick mud was physically demanding.

However, these divergences do reflect a certain paradox. As 'the good Norwegian childhood', such as reflected but not clearly discussed in the previous parts of the analysis, places the emphasis on 'a free child', his encounter with nature but also his capacity and ability to take autonomous decisions (Gullestad, 1997; Kjørholt, 2002, 2008; Wagner & Einarsdottir, 2008), forbidding access to the 'synkemyr' can be seen as contradicting these same ideas. Thus, interfering in children's doings around the 'synkemyr', as the example of section 5.3.4 will present more deeply, can also be seen as contrasting with the values and ideas about 'the good Norwegian childhood'. Nevertheless, the divergences of opinion regarding children's use of the 'synkemyr' were reflected in the warning given by Inger and Norunn, and the fact that the group of boys was still playing around the 'synkemyr'. The two girls had probably been told to play somewhere else by another adult, and were sharing their knowledge with me.

Unlike the first situation where the adult went up to check on the group of boys, talking about children could also be done without engaging with the children in any way. Even if the concerns about children expressed in the previous example is not reflected here, the trust about children's abilities or competencies is still present:

> *Day 7 (outing at the beach). Around 11h00, Håvard turned towards me and told me that the sea level had risen. I could see the waves crushing, gently, but closer than before. I saw a pile of bags, which were soon going to be taken by the waves. I asked if we should take care of them. He answered that we could wait and see if their owners suddenly have to grab them. He added that we were not far away from them anyway and that we could do something if they were going to be wet.*

This short interaction reveals two different positions about children and their encounters with nature. My position, where I am concerned about their belongings and ask if we should move the bags somewhere else, and Håvard's positions where he tells me to wait and see, and leave the children manage this on their own.

Throughout the episodes and analytical discussion of parts 1 and 2, ideas and examples about 'the good Norwegian childhood' can be seen between the lines. By not unravelling them clearly, I have aimed to use them as watermark in order to subtly guide the reader towards a clearer picture of this 'good Norwegian childhood'. Each section of the analysis presents aspects of what it entails and how it is constructed in the northern Norwegian context: section 5.2.1 draws on clothing and weather-related knowledge children must acquire, and also reveals that children are encouraged to act autonomously. In section 5.2.2, the focus is placed on the ideas associated with 'free play' and children's exploration of the natural environment, while emphasizing the importance of 'peer culture'. Finally, section 5.2.3 aims to illustrate more cultural aspects and views about nature in the Norwegian context.

I therefore have chosen to build up on the points made throughout the analysis in order to give a better understanding of the main characteristics of 'the good Norwegian childhood'. In this regard, I argue that to be able of 'manage things on their own' is only one of the characteristics of what 'the good Norwegian childhood' must entail. As previously argued, children are encouraged to act autonomously without adult supervision, and this from their youngest age (Gullestad, 1997; Kjørholt, 2003; Wagner & Einarsdottir, 2008). Even if adults are present and do play a considerable role in

children's lives, children are encouraged to experiment various activities or situations, alone or with peers. By encouraging children to act as autonomous and free children with no intervention from adults, the Norwegian society aims to convey the idea that nothing is dangerous. This same idea hides behind Håvard's position in the previous example, but also my interaction with Åsta mentioned above. As nothing is dangerous, childhood is a time for trial and experiment. Thus, by placing the emphasis on various play activities (Kjørholt, 2008) and time spent in nature (Gullestad, 1997), I argue that 'the good Norwegian childhood' is based on a romanticized image of childhood. From my outsider perspective, I also wonder if this idealized version of childhood is still of relevance today in the Norwegian context or if childhood and its character of naturalness, playfulness and innocence might be an outdated version of 'the good Norwegian childhood'.

Even if 'the good Norwegian childhood' might be based on a potentially outdated representation, both of the above presented episodes are clear illustrations of how children and childhood can be seen in a social constructionist perspective. The difference of opinions between the Norwegian teachers and myself and our own understanding of how children should evolve in nature, or how they should experiment nature while in schools, do support social constructionist arguments. Namely, social constructionists argue that children and childhood are socially and culturally embedded and that what they represent can vary across time and space (Jenks, 1982; Montgomery, 2003). As illustrated above, my own culture and experiences came into conflict with the local values of Kråkebolle Primary School and lead me to reflect on taken for granted aspects of children's lives. Far be it from me to say that this conflict was problematic, it instead led me to argue for a social constructionist analysis of what is seen when conducting such type of fieldwork. By using this lens and therefore keeping in mind that childhoods are diverse and plural (James & Prout, 2015), it offers the possibility to not only pinpoint variations of practices and ideas, but also shed light on views and practices that have been taken for granted in other contexts.

All practices or views about children and nature, that might be taken for granted at Kråkebolle Primary School, come to light by means of my difference and foreignness. As argued in previous parts of the analytical discussion, 'cultural analysis' aims to unravel and render explicit implied elements of social life (Hastrup et al., 2011). If applying a 'cultural analysis' lens on the previous examples picturing adults talking about children, one can see the underlying norms and values about children's experiences in nature. They are encouraged to experience nature, both positively and less positively, in comfortable or less comfortable situations, in order to develop their own understanding of nature and develop knowledge about how to manage oneself in nature.

As argued by Gullestad (1989), while being the reflection of social life, culture is happening in the interaction between each other. By their actions, the teachers and the children therefore produce and reproduce the cultural values and norms valid in the Norwegian context (Nilsen, 2008). Consciously or not, it is through these productions and reproductions that the adults and children shape what are the valued attitudes or activities for the children of Kråkebolle Primary School, and what is seen as 'the good Norwegian childhood'. As argued in chapter 3.4, these ideas about 'the good childhood' are the ones underlying local and national policies, curricula, but more importantly the whole Norwegian culture, and they do surface within the school context. If setting aside the disturbing evidence that what 'a good childhood' should entail is time and again constructed in an adult perspective of what children's best interests should be (James & James, 2008), it still provides a solid basis for a cultural analysis of children's encounters

of nature in the school context. The previous examples do tick the boxes of many aspects of this 'good Norwegian childhood' such as presented and argued a few paragraphs before.

If agreeing that these episodes reflects cultural ideas about 'the good childhood' in Norway - being connected to nature, evolve in an active outdoor life and learn how to cope with nature (Fjørtoft, 2001; Gullestad, 1997; Nilsen, 2008) - the analysis can be extended towards the concept of 'the robust child' (Nilsen, 2008) and ideas about children's agency. Before explaining the parallel I want to make, a short note should however be done about the ideas encompassed behind the concept of 'the robust child' and its ability to encounter and participate in nature according to adult expectations, while simultaneously showing competence and proving resilience (Nilsen, 2008).

The two selected examples do show that the adults are acting accordingly to these ideas laying behind what a 'robust child' should be. By saying that "if you ask me, I am a partisan of leaving children experiment nature and find solutions by themselves", Åsta defends her own position about 'the good childhood', in the same way than Håvard when he answered that we could wait and see if some children would notice that the sea had risen. In these short dialogues, they brush a picture of children as competent social-actors that have knowledge and competences for coping in nature, but they also allocate children as ineluctably belonging to the category of a 'robust child'. I however argue that there are counterparts to such fixed and rigid cultural views about children: it does not leave children the possibility to decide for themselves and see whether they act accordingly to or against these social and cultural expectations. Children are therefore propelled towards what is defined as the best for them, what should be followed and aimed for, independently of their own will or ideas.

In order to wrap up my analysis and pursue a more critical view about children and 'the good Norwegian childhood', but also ideas about children's agency and how they navigate cultural ideas about their childhood, the following section will draw upon all the arguments presented in parts 1, 2 and 3 of the analytical discussion. In the same way the theoretical chapter did end on bringing together the main protagonists of this thesis, namely children, nature and Norway, I have also chosen to bring together the main characters of the analysis: children and adults. By selecting episodes that did strike me by their singularity, the following section will touch upon adults' and children's expectations about their encounters with nature.

5.3.4 Adults talking with children, children talking with adults

During the 'utetid', interactions between children and adults were often taking place. They would happen at various times, in various settings or spaces of the schoolyard. When talking with children, adults used the same vocabulary as when talking among themselves, the tone could however vary depending on which child they were talking to or what the situation was. Yet, these interactions can be seen as having two different forms: when children initiate an interaction with adults, or when adults start talking with the children. My fieldnotes reveal that these interactions emerged in clear contexts. In other words, children did initiate a dialogue while having a different reason than when adults did initiate a dialogue with the children. The latter would spontaneously come and talk with the adults when having an issue or if they wanted/needed something.

The first setting where children regularly initiated verbal interaction with adults during the 'utetid' was when asking them to "gi oss fart!"[43]. While being outside, the children did often spend time on the swings. They would very often sit down and ask the adults to help them gain some speed on the swings, shouting their names and saying "gi oss fart!". Most of the time, the adults would come, and push and pull the first child who had asked. Then a second child would ask that as well, then another one and another one. This would create a chain reaction of demands; the adults having to push and pull more than one child for an extended period of time.

One could argue that this episode is not representative of children's encounters with nature, and that it is of no relevance for this section. However, throughout this thesis I have aimed to use nature a setting or as the context for happenings, on the same level that the classroom can be seen as a setting or a context for happenings. Doing so, also described a dualistic perspective about nature by therefore creating the dichotomy between 'inside' and 'outside' (Gullestad, 1992). In the previous example, children do not explicitly talk about nature, but their interaction with adults is taking place in nature and is therefore of relevance. As previously argued, the children of Kråkebolle Primary School seem to consider nature as part of their everyday life and are therefore not paying special attention to it, nor constantly commenting about it. In addition, it illustrates that in order to get the best out of the swing experience - and probably stronger sensation due to the speed - the children did know that they needed the participation of an adult. Asking the help of a peer seemed to be out of question, as the children did not have enough strength to push and pull a classmate sitting on the swing. It is however interesting to note that children would initiate contact with adults only when using the toys available in the schoolyard. When taking part in 'curious play', or 'symbolic play', they would not seek the adults' attention.

Another type of interaction directed from children towards adults is illustrated with the following example:

> *Day 5 (during the 'utetid'), around 2 degrees Celsius, blue sky and no wind. I walked around the schoolyard with Håvard by my side. Runar, Vegard and Åsmund came running towards him. They said that they wanted to climb up the big structure with rope, but that already used by older children. The following dialogue went on:*
>
> *Runar: But we can't climb there….*
>
> *Håvard: No, you have to wait until they get down.*
>
> *Runar: Yes, okay, we will wait and then go there…*
>
> *Håvard: Yes, but it seems like they are going to be up there for a while. You can also climb up trees in 'Lilleskogen' instead.*
>
> *Runar: Yes, we can!*

The children here initiated contact with the teacher as they were confronted with an issue. The response of the adult was to suggest another type of activity, climbing up trees, that could replace the initial wanted one, climbing up the rope structure. It is interesting to note that this precise group of three boys did spend a considerable amount of time around or on this ropes structure throughout my fieldwork, which could raise some question about their use of space. If the children on the rope structure had been

[43] "Gi oss fart!" (NO) could be translated by "give us speed" (EN).

from the same class, questions about power structures in their play activities, or even Håvard's reaction to their issues, could have been raised. But by suggesting another activity, Håvard just offered some temporary distraction to the three boys, as he knew that the older children were soon supposed to leave.

Yet, adult's initiation of interaction was yet less clear-cut and seemed to be done more randomly. However, a general pattern can be found in my fieldnotes, showing that the adults-initiated contact with the children when they seemed to need some guidance or mentoring in less-comfortable situations:

> *Day 12 (around the 'synkemyr'), 2 degrees Celsius, cloudy, grey, dark and windy. During my fieldwork, the 'synkemyr' seemed to be a place of vivid interest for both girls and boys: by crossing it and experimenting where they could walk and not be stuck into the mud, foraging in the mud in order to find stones or branches, or even getting stuck and trying to escape from it, the possibilities of this terrain were almost endless. On a very rainy day, I was walking around and heard a child crying. I followed the sound up to the 'synkemyr'. At the same time, Vilde was arriving from bellow. She started talking to Frøya who was sitting down and crying. Her right shoe was laying down on the ground, her foot and rain coverall were covered with mud. I did not hear all she was saying, but she did not seem to want to put her shoe back on. She said "But it is wet inside my shoe. And my sock is wet too; I don't want to put it back on". Vilde replied that she had to put it back just for the time of walking down to the school and change clothes. She added that it was not okay to walk barefoot with this weather. Frøya was still sitting down and saying that she had lost her shoe. Vilde came and said that the shoe was right next to her; she took it and placed it on her foot while asking Frøya to stand up. They then started walking down towards the school and the following dialogue took place:*
>
> *Frøya: I am wet… there is no one who told me that I would get wet here! (still crying).*
>
> *Vilde: Yes, you are wet, and I understand that you are unhappy. I would also be unhappy if I had been wet after having been in the 'synkemyr'.*
>
> *Frøya: But there is no one who told me it would be like that. It is cold and I am wet. (loudly crying).*
>
> *Vilde: Yes, I totally agree with you, and that's why I prefer not to go in the 'synkemyr'. I don't like to get wet.*
>
> *Frøya: But there is no one who told me! (almost shouting).*

Still on the topic of verbal interactions between children and adults, another overall observation is that some words were almost never used by the adults of the school. When talking with children, adults would very seldom use the word 'danger' or say 'be careful'. These were more often used by me, during my interactions with the children. Even if being in situations that seemed not totally safe, as climbing up a high tree or running on the ice, I never witnessed such comments from the adults present. In hindsight, I cannot state that the avoidance of such words is made wilfully, or if it is just natural for adults to not use them. Nevertheless, I can argue that this is once again an illustration of some Norwegian values, and is a reflection of what 'the good Norwegian childhood' based on the idea that nothing can be dangerous, and the child should be encouraged to discover the world in an autonomous way. However, I see a mismatch between adults' values and children's needs in this precise situation. As said by Frøya, "There is no one who told me", she expresses that she would have wanted to be warned about the dangerousness or uncomfortableness of the situation she was in. Repeatedly,

she tells Vilde that she would have needed some guidance, or at least some sorts of warnings, in order to avoid getting stuck in the mud.

Having this in mind, questions about how 'the good Norwegian childhood' is and what it should entail can be asked. The gap between my understanding of what could be dangerous and theirs triggered some reflection around my own understanding of what and how childhood should be, but also to what extend should childhood be 'safe' and 'danger free'? In addition, the differences of language used is also an illustration of how cultural ideas or values about children and childhood are influencing social interactions. As underlined by Gullestad (1989), these cultural norms are shaped through the interaction between people. If seeing the choice of words, the semantic of what is said must be understood in the light of one special context. Once again, this illustrates the cultural embeddedness of all social, verbal and physical interactions or reactions.

By progressively presenting and building on the concepts of 'the good childhood', the whole analysis chapter aimed to offer a definition of 'the good Norwegian childhood'. The selected episodes and the analytical discussions tied to them gave a better understanding of how childhood was shaped in the Norwegian context. However, there is a need to overtake a simple analysis and brush a more complex and critical picture of this 'good Norwegian childhood'. The following analytical discussion will therefore be articulated around the argument that what 'the good childhood' should entail shapes every society's ideas about children and childhood. With the help of relevant fieldwork episodes, I have argued throughout the analysis that ideas about 'the good Norwegian childhood' are totally cultural. As presented in section 5.3.3, autonomy, freedom and exploration are highlights of this 'good childhood'. Yet, the idea that children should be connected to nature, evolve in an active outdoor life and learn how to cope with nature (Fjørtoft, 2001; Gullestad, 1997; Nilsen, 2008) opens up for parallels between ideas about 'the robust child' (Nilsen, 2008) and children's agency.

First of all, I argue that the cultural ideas laying behind the Norwegian construction of a 'robust child' emerge in the interactions between children and adults: when children are talking with adults and adults are talking with children. Based on the idea that children and adult share and negotiate culture with each other (Corsaro, 2011; James & James, 2012), I argue that what constitutes a 'robust child' is therefore produced and reproduced by adults, but also by children through their negotiation, sharing and meaning-making attempts. As argued by Corsaro (2011), children are affected by society and the surrounding culture, while simultaneously shaping and influencing it. I therefore state that children's encounters with and use of nature, as well as how they are expected to encounter nature, is relational and would not take place if the local culture was separated from the global culture.

By encouraging children to climb up trees like in the first example, or not blocking the access to the 'synkemyr', the school triggers the construction of a 'robust child' expressing his agency. However, I would argue that even if the teachers are teaching - or expecting - the children to act as such, it does not mean that all the children intrinsically are 'robust children' in nature. The example of Frøya contradicts with the idea that all Norwegian children act according to the ideal of a 'robust child' and that it would totally match the definition of 'the good Norwegian childhood'. This mismatch between adults' expectations and children's lived experiences can raise questions about what 'the good Norwegian childhood' really is. Gaining children's opinions would be a starting point to shed a new light on what a 'robust child' is and how it comes to life.

In this regard, I can deepen the analysis with the idea that not all children make proof of their 'expert knowledge' when caught in a 'rough physical play' situation (Nilsen, 2008). Frøya confirms this idea, but simultaneously illustrate the bodily and mental aspects of what a 'robust child' can be. By being involved in a rough and uncomfortable situation, being stuck in the mud, a situation that she had chosen herself, she shows that a 'robust child' does not only exist in its 'expert knowledge' or use of adequate material (clothes, for example). I consequently argue that a 'robust child subject' - in other word a child expressing some agency - gives a more complex and multifaceted picture of what childhood can be.

The example of Frøya and the 'synkemyr' presented just above is tightly linked to the one presented in section 5.3.3 (Day 4, short discussion with Åsta). As some teachers discouraged the children or even forbid them to play in the 'synkemyr', what Frøya is doing there is a clear example of 'resistance' (Nilsen, 2009), illustrating both her opposition to the adults and her own empowerment. As resistance can be understood as a form of agency, two distinct facets of children's encounters with nature can be seen. The first one is directly linked to children themselves. As argued by Sutterlütz and Tisdall (2019), agency is expressed through children's practices and doings. By playing around the 'synkemyr' or partaking in other types of bodily movements, the children of Kråkebolle Primary School are therefore expressing their competences, autonomy, and agency. The second facet linked to children's agency is that, by encouraging the children to experiment in nature without adult supervision, the adults are acknowledging their agency. By viewing children as 'agents', in other words as active and competent (Nilsen, 2008; Robson et al., 2007), children are not anymore seen as passive objects that only deserve protection. I therefore state that by allowing children to engage in various activities or bodily movements in nature, the adults' of Kråkebolle Primary School do actively aim to forge 'robust child subjects'.

Nonetheless, fostering 'robust children' and simultaneously seeing children as 'agents' creates a paradox. As argued by Nilsen (2008), creating this 'robust child subject' often draws on a future orientation. While seeing children as competent actors, or 'agents', is meant to underline children's abilities in the present. The mismatch is comprised in the idea that "constructions of the present (in)competent child and the future child (as an older child or as an adult) are combined" (Nilsen, 2008, p. 49). Adults' views about children might overlay a more future-oriented perspective than the acknowledgment of their competences here and now. If wanting to look at children and value them for what they are today, rethinking 'the good Norwegian childhood' and how a 'robust child' should be could help place children in the centre instead of seeing them as the reflection of society.

6 Some concluding remarks

In this study, I explored and described processes and practices by which children encounter nature in the Norwegian school context while unravelling ideas and values encompassed behind 'the good Norwegian childhood'.

The five chapters of this thesis focused on various themes and areas of relevance tightly linked to children and nature. The background chapter provided information regarding cultural, historical and educational aspects of the Norwegian society. By making clear the structure of the school system and its various curricula, but also providing a brief overflight of the history of Norway and its national culture, it aimed to lay the foundation of the ideas linked to the construction of childhood in contemporary Norway. In the theory chapter, I placed the focus on the construction of children and childhood, as well as theories about the concept of 'nature' and various aspects of children's lives such as play, 'peer culture' and 'agency'. Bringing nature and childhood together was made in the light of 'cultural analysis', while I brushed a rough picture of what 'the good Norwegian childhood' could entail. The methodology chapter set the scene for presenting my fieldwork, while focusing on the chosen methodology and methods, as well as touching upon some ethical considerations. In my analysis, I aimed to illustrate how various and diverse children's encounters with nature can be by parting it into three parts. The findings of each part, which focused on specific aspects of these encounters, will be detailed in the following paragraphs. Chapter 6, the conclusion of this study, provides answers to the research questions described in chapter 1. By reflecting on the findings and in light of the new questions that did emerge throughout the analysis, I decided to take a more macro-level perspective before offering recommendations for further research on the same topic.

6.1 Childhood and nature in contemporary northern Norway

As presented in chapter 1, this study was articulated around three research questions of equal importance: 1) How do children encounter nature in a school in Northern Norway? 2) How does this school shape/mediate children's encounters with/of nature? 3) How do children's encounters with/of nature reflect notions of a 'proper' or 'good' childhood in Norway?

Retrospectively, I can say that these three questions all focused on different aspects linked to childhood and nature, while also implicitly supporting different perspectives related to the field of Childhood Studies. By looking at children's encounters with nature, the first question did take a more actor-oriented perspective and aimed to shed light on children's daily lives and practices. It could be argued that the second question did take on a structuralist standpoint, focusing on the relational aspects between children and adults, and therefore shedding light on how the Norwegian schools mediate these encounters with nature. However, I decided to use a more social constructionist approach and focus on the practices and verbal interactions between adults and children, therefore shifting my attention towards the production and reproduction of the national culture.

The third one questioned the link between children's encounters with nature and the values and ideas encompassed behind 'the good Norwegian childhood'. First and foremost, I would like to stress the importance of looking at children's encounters with nature in context, which demands a reflexive and open approach to the field. Only then can we understand the particular meaning and content of such encounters. As presented throughout the different chapters, this thesis is based on fieldwork in one school, with 21 children and a small group of adults as participants. As such, it is an empirical micro-study and is therefore an in-depth exploration of practices in one particular location at one particular point in time. Looking at the contextual aspects of children's encounters with nature allows us to get a clearer understanding of what they do, and why they do it. In this regard, undertaking the same study in another country, or even the south of Norway, would have certainly led to other findings. As I argued throughout this thesis, taking a social constructionist stand and using the concept of 'cultural analysis' was the key for unravelling ideas, values and practices that are taken for granted in this precise context and specific time.

Before presenting the findings of my research, I have to make a short note about the word 'children', used in the research questions but also throughout my thesis. In the early stages of my research, questions about how to name the participants of my research did appear. I was unsure whether it would be more suitable to call them 'children', 'pupils' or 'schoolchildren'. As words and names are markers of social discourses and ideas and can refer to some specific contexts or situations, I have deliberately decided to use the word 'children' throughout the whole study. I could have instead used the term 'participants', but it did not reflect clearly who the participants were. Even if I consciously used the word 'children' to be in line with ideas related to Childhood Studies, I am taking the liberty to also name differently in these concluding remarks, as this chapter should reflect both my research findings and personal opinion.

Even if having three main research questions, the findings will be presented in the two following sections. The first section will focus on the findings of the two first questions, as they are both rooted in children's and adults' daily lives. The third question will be unraveled in the second section, as it goes deeper and links theory and practice.

6.1.1 Children encounters with nature in the school context

Throughout the analysis, I have shown that the temporal frame and spatial organization of the school allowed the children to have a daily encounters with nature. Thus, these encounters did not seem to be limited to the actual time spent outside: the activities and time before and after the 'utetid' were also of utmost relevance when looking at children encountering nature. Gathering knowledge about the weather and what clothes to wear, putting this knowledge into practice and getting dressed before heading out, but also changing clothes if being wet, were part of children's daily routines. Even if not happening in nature, these were the base layer of children's enjoyment outside and development of positive feelings about being in nature.

Children's relationships to nature are an integral part of their lived daily lives. Throughout my analysis, I illustrated that these encounters with nature are also done through various pedagogical activities organized by the adults of the school, but also some self-driven and spontaneous activities. When in nature, children are encouraged to play with peers, explore the surrounding nature and their own bodily possibilities through various bodily movements. A considerable amount of their time outside is spent by taking part into forms of 'curious play'. As pinpointed in the analysis, some children were repeatedly

in search of more challenging bodily movements or experiences, around the 'synkemyr' for example. These doings were sought both by boys and girls. Yet, I more often observed boys exploring the surroundings of this challenging space of the schoolyard. The analysis also shortly took upon gendered aspects of children's play, showing that boys did more often take part into 'sensorimotor play' while girls would use more time in 'symbolic/fantasy play'. In addition, I argued that throughout positive and less positive experiences, both with peers and alone, children do encounter the rough and complex terrains that nature can offer, under the caring eye of the available adults. Illustrations of these caring gestures or doings are clearly explicated in the episode presented in the analysis, namely Frøya and Liv's conversation while being around the 'synkemyr'. By their guidance and presence, the adults of the school, teachers, assistants and other employees mediated children's encounters with/of nature.

My analysis revealed that this guidance could take different forms: it could be sporadic, when an adult intervened to help a child during the 'utetid', or it could last over an extended period of time, as reflected in the routinized activities set up by Håvard. Guiding children and mediating their encounters with nature could be as simple as providing children with knowledge about nature, helping them develop a better understanding of adequate clothing, or even just letting them learn how to cope with nature in an autonomous way. By providing a safe space for learning through trials and errors, keeping an eye on children and giving help if needed, the adults of the school operated via discrete and distant supervision. Yet, even if adults were present, the children were encouraged to act autonomously and freely when encountering nature. Along with my analytical reflections, questions related to this emphasis on autonomy and its implications on Norwegian children and childhood did emerge. In retrospect, I also argue that a paradox emerges in my own findings: the adults' guidance was quite discrete and distant, but simultaneously did strikingly outline the cultural ideas and values associated with 'the good Norwegian childhood'. This near distance, or obvious discretion, were reflected in how the values and norms were conveyed to the children and reflected into activities, reactions, verbal communications or any other type of interaction.

6.1.2 'The good Norwegian childhood'

The third and last research question of my thesis was articulated around the theoretical concept of 'the good childhood' applied in the local context of northern Norway in order to elaborate on what 'the good Norwegian childhood' entails. This last question, formulated with 'how' and therefore not seeking a one-way answer, is the bridge between children's encounters with nature and the overarching cultural values. Throughout the analytical discussion and related episodes, subtle and obvious representations of 'the good Norwegian childhood' were given. In the following lines, I propose a condensed version of what it meant in the context of my research.

First of all, I argued that the Norwegian society aims to convey the idea that encountering nature is not dangerous as long as you have respect for the natural elements. Childhood is therefore seen as a time for trial and experiment, both in and outside of nature. My findings support previous research done by Gullestad (1997), Kjørholt (2003), and Wagner and Einarsdottir (2008), stating that ideas about 'the good Norwegian childhood' encourage children to take action in an autonomous way without adult supervision and as early as possible. Another emphasis is placed on various play activities (Kjørholt, 2008), in what I recognize being 'free play' or 'curious play'. But

above all, children are encouraged to take part into various exploration activities, allowing them to encounter nature but also their own bodily possibilities.

In this regard, children should spend time in nature (Gullestad, 1997) and slowly but steadily evolve towards 'a robust child subject' (Nilsen, 2008) full of knowledge and agency. As argued in my analysis, the concept of 'the robust child' such as presented by Nilsen (2008) misses an important nuance: developing a positive attitude towards and nature and enjoying being outside. Thus, I support the idea that to be able to cope with nature and manage things on their own is the last level of what 'the Norwegian good childhood' must entail.

However, the analytical discussion also raised some criticisms and questions regarding the ideas related to this 'good Norwegian childhood' and children's encounters with nature. In my analytical discussion, I mainly questioned the relevance of this idealized and romanticised version of childhood for today's Norwegian children. This 'good childhood' might be the reflection of outdated ideas about children and childhood, which does not correspond with more modern lifestyles.

In section 5.2.2.1, I raised an insoluble question concerning children's play and who was influencing who in the first place. Despite reflecting over it, I still have not found a clear answer to this chicken-and-egg problem. In my understanding, both the local cultural expectations and children's practices are influencing each other, therefore changing some values conveyed by the school while reinforcing others. Another tricky question about the 'safeness' or 'danger-freeness' characteristic of childhood was raised in section 5.3.4. As a novice scholar in the field of Childhood Studies, I hesitate to offer a sweeping explanation.

Nevertheless, by placing this last question back in context, and drawing on the divergences between my Swiss values and the local northern Norwegian ones, I would argue that the answer depends entirely on how 'danger' is defined and constructed. I support the idea that children should be protected from harm and that childhood should be a time where they can safely grow and discover the surrounding culture. Placed in perspective, encountering nature and being stuck in the 'synkemyr', or even hurting oneself by falling from a tree is far less risky/dangerous than being exposed to abuses, wars or any other harmful situations. I must therefore admit that my Swiss values have been shaken up, and that my own practices and ideas about how children should take part in nature will be rethought, if not drastically changed. As a person, I was aware of the necessity and benefits of being outside in nature but did weirdly not include that in my teaching. Before conducting this research, I had never imagined how relieved and comfortable I would feel outside by only having the adequate clothing, but also to what extend children could autonomously play in nature. Thus, and even if I was quite 'relaxed' regarding my pupils' encounters with nature and their exploration of the natural environment, I would never had imagined encouraging them to climb up trees or play in the mud. By conducting this fieldwork and having both my personal and professional experiences in the back of my head, I started to question 'the good Swiss childhood' and its aspects I had taken for granted.

6.2 Recommendations for further research

As stated in the introduction, my main aim was to explore and describe children's encounters of nature in the Norwegian public school system but also question and discuss the concept of 'the good childhood' in contemporary northern Norway. As very little research conducted about children's use and experiment of nature in the Scandinavian context has been published in English, I hope that my small-scale research might add a stone to the edifice of the knowledge about children and nature. Being an outsider myself, both to Norway and to the ideas related to 'the good Norwegian childhood', I hope I have been able to bring a new perspective on this concept and shed light on what it does entail.

In addition, knowledge about children's encounters with nature can be of relevance for understanding childhood and ideas associated with nature elsewhere, e.g. how children encounter nature in Swiss primary schools. Exploring and understanding practices and cultural values as they occur in a particular context can illustrate how they are closely connected to historical, cultural, political and social circumstances. With this study, I hope to not only provide material for future comparative studies about children's encounters with nature, but also stimulate new interrogations and reflections on the use of nature in schools all around the world. It may also challenge the unspoken and taken for granted ideas that shape the way one thinks and theorizes about schoolchildren and childhood in various contexts, both in Norway and abroad.

If this study were to be extended, I would support using more time for fieldwork in order to gain an even more detailed picture of children's practices in nature. As initially planned but unfortunately not fulfilled, conducting fieldwork in multiple seasons would also contribute broadening our understanding of children's relationship with nature. The differences in practices and their seasonality could be of relevance for painting a more detailed picture of children and nature. In the same idea, following the same children over several years could shed some light on how these practices evolve throughout their childhood. Even if time and resource consuming, doing so would allow researchers to see changes in children's encounters with nature. Thus, it could give some hindsight on how relevant are the cultural ideas associated with 'the good Norwegian childhood' for teenagers or even young adults. As stated in the literature review (cf. section 3.5), taking an actor-oriented perspective and gaining children's own understanding and ideas about their encounters with nature is missing on the existing research side.

More studies using child-centered methodologies would allow us not only to gain understanding of children's opinions on their practices, but also extend the reflection on what 'the good Norwegian childhood' means for them. As the word 'childhood' is totally linked to its main actors, children, one cannot flout their competences and opinions. Ideas associated with 'the good Norwegian childhood' are defined and discussed by adults, valuing children for their status of future Norwegian citizens. Only seeing children as a social investment does not recognize who they are in the present and genuinely value their opinions. Therefore and even if childhood might be the reflection of society, there is a need for including children, and asking for their understandings in matters that directly affects them.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical approval letter NSD

Appendix B: Information letter children (Norwegian)

Appendix C: Information letter children (English)

Appendix D: Information letter and informed consent form schools (English)

Appendix E: Research tool (observation) guide

Appendix A: Ethical approval letter NSD

NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

NSD sin vurdering

Prosjekttittel

Children and nature in schools: a qualitative study from northern Norway

Referansenummer

773876

Registrert

29.06.2020 av Marie Elise Laubscher - marilaub@stud.ntnu.no

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet / Fakultet for samfunns- og utdanningsvitenskap (SU) / Institutt for pedagogikk og livslang læring

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

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Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, student

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Prosjektperiode

15.08.2020 - 01.09.2021

Status

27.07.2020 - Vurdert

Vurdering (1)

27.07.2020 - Vurdert

Our assessment is that the processing of personal data in this project will comply with data protection legislation, so long as it is carried out in accordance with what is documented in the Notification Form and attachments, dated 27 July 2020, as well as in correspondence with NSD. Everything is in place for the processing to begin.

NOTIFY CHANGES
If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project it may be necessary to notify NSD. This is done by updating the information registered in the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the

changes.

TYPE OF DATA AND DURATION
The project will be processing general categories of personal data until 01 September 2021.

LEGAL BASIS
The project will gain consent from data subjects to process their personal data. We find that consent will meet the necessary requirements under art. 4 (11) and 7, in that it will be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous statement or action, which will be documented and can be withdrawn. The legal basis for processing personal data is therefore consent given by the data subject, cf. the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 a).

PRINCIPLES RELATING TO PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA
NSD finds that the planned processing of personal data will be in accordance with the principles under the General Data Protection Regulation regarding:

- lawfulness, fairness and transparency (art. 5.1 a), in that data subjects will receive sufficient information about the processing and will give their consent
- purpose limitation (art. 5.1 b), in that personal data will be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes, and will not be processed for new, incompatible purposes
- data minimisation (art. 5.1 c), in that only personal data which are adequate, relevant and necessary for the purpose of the project will be processed
- storage limitation (art. 5.1 e), in that personal data will not be stored for longer than is necessary to fulfil the project's purpose

THE RIGHTS OF DATA SUBJECTS
Data subjects will have the following rights in this project: transparency (art. 12), information (art. 13), access (art. 15), rectification (art. 16), erasure (art. 17), restriction of processing (art. 18), notification (art. 19), data portability (art. 20). These rights apply so long as the data subject can be identified in the collected data.

NSD finds that the information that will be given to data subjects about the processing of their personal data will meet the legal requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13.

We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about their rights, the data controller has a duty to reply within a month.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES
NSD presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

To ensure that these requirements are met you must follow your institution's internal guidelines and/or consult with your institution (i.e. the institution responsible for the project).

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT
NSD will follow up the progress of the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded.
Good luck with the project!

Contact person at NSD: Simon Gogl
Data Protection Services for Research: +47 55 58 21 17 (press 1)

Appendix B: Information letter children (Norwegian)

Klassen din skal være med et forskningsprosjekt som handler om…

"Barn og natur i skolen: en kvalitativ studie fra Nord-Norge"

Hei,

Jeg heter Marie og skriver en oppgave ved universitetet i Trondheim (NTNU). Oppgaven min handler om hvordan du lærer om naturen, og er ute når du er på skolen. Jeg kommer fra Sveits, og der er det ikke vanlig at barn er ute når de er på skolen. Derfor er det viktig for meg å forstå hvordan dere gjør det i Nord-Norge. Jeg er nysgjerrig på å se hva dere gjør når dere er ute og også hva læreren gjør sammen med dere.

Hvis du deltar i prosjektet mitt, er det bare å gjøre som vanlig når du er sammen med klassekameratene og læreren din. Jeg skal ikke be deg om å delta i spesielle aktiviteter, men håper du bare sier det er greit at jeg er i klasserommet ditt for å se hva dere gjør.
Jeg har lyst til å følge klassen din fra morgen til ettermiddagen, og lære av dere: hva dere gjør sammen, hvordan dere lærer, hva dere gjør når dere er ute, hvordan dere leker sammen i pausen. Det betyr på en måte at du blir min lærer og kan vise meg hvordan det er å være elev i Norge. Jeg vil bare vite mer om hva dere gjør i skolehverdagen. Du kan kanskje tenke at jeg vil være som en liten og stille mus som bor i klasserommet ditt i noen uker, eller at jeg er en ny, men litt gammel, klassekamerat som virkelig er nysgjerrig på alt.

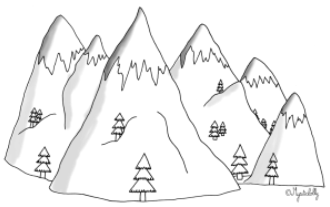
Du trenger ikke å snakke med meg hvis du ikke har lyst selv om de andre gjør det. Det er ditt eget valg, med foreldrene dine sin tillatelse, å la meg se på hva du driver med på skolen. Det er også helt greit å ombestemme seg og å si i fra om du en dag ikke vil at jeg skal observere deg eller stille deg spørsmål, da kan du bare si at jeg må slutte. I løpet av dagen skal jeg skrive ned det jeg ser i boka mi, slik at jeg kan huske hva vi gjorde når jeg skriver ferdig oppgaven min. Hvis du ikke vil at jeg skal skrive om deg, så er det bare å si ifra. Det er kun meg som skal lese notatene mine, jeg skal ikke dele dem med andre du eller jeg kjenner.

Når jeg skriver oppgaven min, kan det være at jeg skriver om noe dere gjorde eller snakket om, men jeg kommer aldri til å bruke navnet ditt. Navnet ditt, hvor du bor eller hvor gammel du er kommer jeg heller aldri til å fortelle eller å skrive ned i boka mi. Selv om foreldrene dine sier at det er greit at du snakker med meg, men at du ikke har lyst, så trenger du ikke det.

Jeg skal også avtale med læreren din når det passer for meg å komme, sånn at jeg ikke forstyrrer dere. Og, selvfølgelig, du kan stille meg så mange spørsmål du vil før du deltar, eller også når jeg er i klasserommet ditt.

Jeg håper at du vil vise meg hvordan du lærer om natur i Nord-Norge!

Marie Laubscher



Appendix C: Information letter children (English)

Your class is taking part in the research project:

"Children and nature in schools: a qualitative study from northern Norway"

Hello,

My name is Marie and I am doing a report for my studies at University. My report is going to be about how you learn about nature and are in nature when you are at school. In Switzerland, where I come from, children do not really do things in nature during school time, and I think it is important for me to understand how you do it in your country.. I want to see what you do when you are learning to be in nature and how your teacher is helping you to learn that.

If you agree to participate, you will just have to be yourself and be at school with your peers and teacher as usual! I will not ask you to participate in special activities, but just to let me in your school and have a look at what your class is doing every day.

I want to follow your class from the beginning of the day until the end of the school day, and learn from you: what you do together, how you learn, what you do when you are outside in nature and how you play together during the breaks. I means that you will be "my teacher" and you will show me how it is to be a pupil in northern Norway. There will be no right or wrong things to do. I just want to know more about what you do every day. If it helps, you can imagine I will be like a small and quiet mouse living in your classroom for a few weeks, but also sometimes like a new classmate that is really curious about everything.

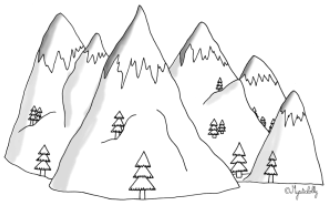
You do not have to talk to me if you do not want to, even if the others do talk to me. It is your own choice together with your parents'/caretakers' permission to let me look at what you do at school. If one day, you don't want me to look at what you do or ask you questions, you have the right to tell me to stop. During the day, I will write down what I see in my journal so that I can remember what we did for my report. If you do not want me to write something about you, you have to tell me. Nobody, except me will read the notes, and I will not share them with anyone.

When I write my report, I might write about some of the things we have done or talked about, but I will never use your name. I will never write your name, where you live, you age of where you come from, down in my notebook. Even if your parents/caretakers might have said it is okay for you to talk with me, but if you do not want to you do not have to do it.

I will also talk with your teacher to make sure that my presence is not disturbing. And of course, you can ask me any question you like before you agree to take part, but also when I am there.

I wish you will agree to show me how you learn about nature in northern Norway!

Marie Laubscher



Appendix D: Information letter and informed consent form schools (English)

Are you interested in taking part in the research project:

"Children and nature in schools: a qualitative study from northern Norway"

This is an enquiry seeking your participation in a research project where the main aim is to explore children's relationship to nature within the Norwegian school system. This letter will give you information about the purpose of this project and what your participation, as headmaster and teacher of the school, will involve.

My name is Marie Laubscher and am a Swiss primary teacher. I am a student at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, where I follow a Master program called Childhood Studies at the Norwegian Centre for Child Research**,** Institutt for pedagogikk og livslang læring**.** This program focusses on researching children's lives all around the world, what their childhoods are, and gain their opinions and views. In the context of my Master thesis, I am interested to understand primary school children's experiment and experience of nature in school. The aim of this project is to see how the Norwegian school system shape/mediate children's relationship with nature. The final aim is to publish the outcomes of the research in a master thesis.

What does it mean for you and your pupils to participate?

In my project, I wish to do participant observation of everyday life in school. You and your pupils will participate by allowing me to visit your class and letting me be part of your activities and lessons in a timespan that we agree upon. If it is suitable for you, I would like to start in October and to stay with you for a few weeks. By doing so, I wish to learn about how children are experimenting and experiencing and using nature during the lessons, the breaks, outdoor activities, etc. I might also ask you to provide some information about how the educational system mediate children's experiment of nature in an interview. This will be done to gain more details and a better understanding of specific situations that I would have observed. I will take audio recordings and notes of this interview if you agree. Even if being a teacher myself, I will not evaluate pedagogical choices and your educational practice, I will also not interrupt the planned activities and only follow your schedule.

It is voluntary to participate in the project; you can therefore withdraw from it at any time without explanation. There will be no negative consequences for you if you choose to not participate or later decide to withdraw. All personal information will be anonymized and deleted at the end of this project. The information letter and consent form that are given to the teachers will be enclosed. Thus, the pupils will not be observed if they/their parents do not agree.

The next page details how your personal information will be used, and your rights regarding this. You will also find a consent statement that the teacher(s) will need to sign if deciding to participate in my project. The children will not need to sign one, as they will not be asked any questions regarding their personal information nor will be interviewed.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, by email or telephone. I would be really happy to help clarify your expectations as well as mine.

Thank you very much for your time!

Kind Regards,

Marie Laubscher

Your privacy and your rights as a participant in this project

The data produced during the activities (observation and maybe interviews) will be anonymized and treated in accordance with the data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act). The results of the project will be published in my Master Thesis but preserving the anonymity and confidentiality will be my main preoccupation. It will not be possible to recognize the participants of this research. The school, places and persons will be given fictious names. During the data collection, all information will be securely stored, and I will be the only person having access to it. At the end of my project (June 2021), any personal data, on which the results of the project depend, will be anonymized and securely stored. Again, I will be the only person having access to these information.

As long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

I will not visit your school-class without gaining your consent. Based on an agreement with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), *NSD* – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) via
  Marie Laubscher (student) or Randi Dyblie Nilsen (supervisor)
  Email: marilaub@stud.ntnu.no Email: randi.dyblie.nilsen@ntnu.no
  Phone: 004791622454 Phone: 004773596248

- Our Data Protection Officer: Thomas Helgesen, Data protection officer
  Email: thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no

- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: 004755582117

Consent statement

By signing this consent form, I confirm that I have received and understood information about the project "**Children and nature in schools: *a qualitative study from northern Norway"***, and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that:

- I agree to participate in observations and interviews.
- I understand that I am free to ask for more information at any stage of the project.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time without explanations or cost.
- I understand that I will not participate in this research without giving my consent.
- I understand that my research data will be anonymized and securely stored. And that all personal information will be destroyed at the end of this project.
- I understand that only the researcher (student) and her supervisor will have access to my personal information once the transcript is made.
- I understand that the results of the project will be published but my anonymity will be preserved.
- I understand that I will be given a copy of my signed consent form.

☐ I have read the information given in the letter and this form and agree to participate in this study.

(Signed by project participant, date)

Appendix E: Research tool (observation) guide

Fieldnotes TKS Day, date (day of fieldwork nr)

Date of session: Time of session : Research tool: How and when the notes were taken :

Place of data collection : Short description of place : Weather : Activities title :

TITLE OF ACTIVITY/EPISODE

Detailed description of the activity, the participants, the place, etc.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS
Detailed description

GENERAL COMMENTS
Detailed comments about the day, place, activities, episodes, interactions, participants, time schedule, etc.

Marie Elise Laubscher

"Det er deilig her" - An ethnographic study of children's encounters with nature in northern Norway

NTNU
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology