

Outdoor play research project

- Examining outdoor play and forest experiences in different contexts
- Lone Hattingh and Sara Layen at Bath Spa University, collaborating with Leigh O'Brien at Geneseo University in New York, drawing on case studies in the US, Denmark and England
- Today's presentations report on data from the US and Danish kindergarten settings

Case study methodology

- The study aims to explore aspects of outdoor play in depth in order to identify cultural factors that might impact upon our understanding of 'forest' and outdoor practice and provision.
- Semi-structured interviews
- Observations of settings' outdoor play and forest practice

Perspectives on outdoor play: exploring through space and time



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Observing children

- Close observation of children prompts discussion of ‘what makes us human, how we are positioned in the world, and what our world is all about’ (Stetsenko and Ho, 2015, p. 223)
- The cultural, social and material environment of forest and outdoor play provided a lens through which to view the children and educators’ perspectives and experiences
- Valuing time by listening and observing: seeing and looking closely

Observations of outdoor pedagogy

- ‘why is no-one doing anything?’
- ‘the children are free to do anything they want’

Watching, noticing, listening

- Noticing moments of intense conversation and engagement



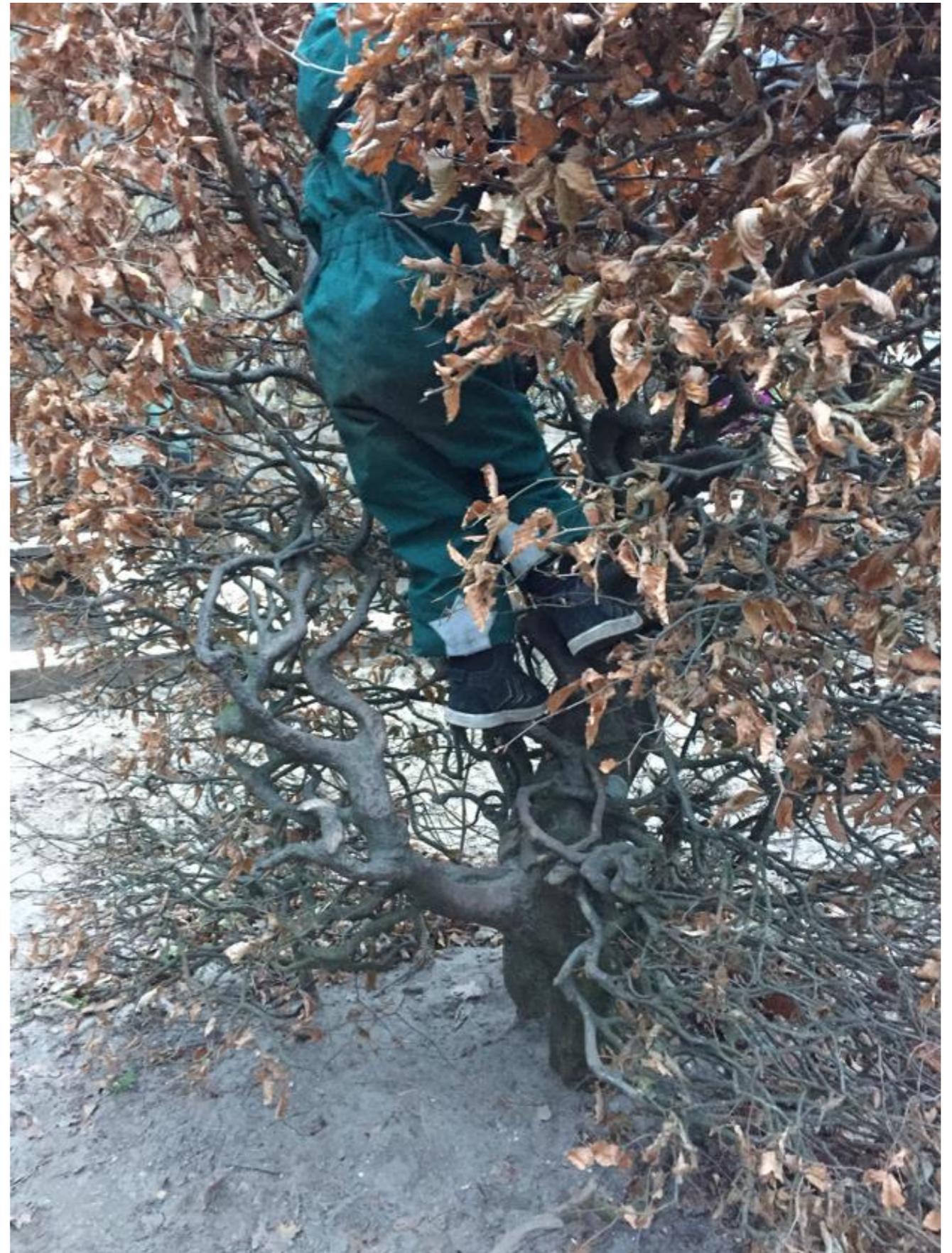
Reflections in the forest

- The child's resourcefulness/competence
- The child as an individual within a social context (Hedegaard, 2010)
- The child's competence: 'no-one complained about being cold, no-one cried when they fell over'
- We observed that the resilience of the children was 'eye-opening': energy, daily engagement with nature, collaboration between children and between children and adults, trust

Being open to possibilities through careful observation

- Observing to explore how children are making sense of their experiences
- We aimed to be open to children's own ways of making meaning, rather than trying to look for specific outcomes or achievements
- 'Each measurement disturbs what you are measuring' (Barad in Dolphin and van der Tuin, 2012, p. 62); subject and object are entangled

Possibilities are often created in the in-between spaces





Looking through a theoretical lens

- We (re)examined children's playful encounters with each other, with the pedagogues, and with the materials in the forest and outdoor environment
- Observations of children's play led to looking 'beyond the social', and to acknowledge the impact of non-human matter (Kuby and Crawford, 2018)

Space and time....

- Drawing on Lenz Taguchi (2010, p. 95) we could see pedagogical moments take place in 'circular' space-time – they were revisited and became something new and different
- We observed children and pedagogues visiting the forest every day, every month, every year



An intra-active pedagogy

- Drawing on Lenz Taguchi (2010) we reject the idea of materials as passive – matter takes on an active role in focusing on what goes on in the in-between spaces
- Children construct new meanings each time they interact with their surroundings – there is a constant flow of change and possibility in an intra-active pedagogy where learning is in a state of interdependence

Findings

- Pedagogues stood back to allow children time and space to explore and experiment
- Visible features were mutual respect, trust, and independence
- Risk, and learning through trial and error



- Findings demonstrated the need for children to have space and time in order to facilitate and acknowledge the possibilities in the development of their meaning making
- The intra-action between humans and material resources within space and time showed that these could not be separated from each other (Kuby and Crawford, 2018)

Reflecting on children's rights

The right to play is enshrined in Article 31 of the CRC. GC17 on article 31 requires that children:

- be given opportunities to structure and initiate play for themselves
- be given 'time and space (for) spontaneous play' free from adult control and management
- have opportunities for play in natural environments

'Don't disturb (that child): he is thinking'

Children initiating their own play

- GC17 defines play as activity which is unstructured, initiated and controlled by children
- Children were unhurried and had time to wonder and wander....
- Possibilities are created in the in-between spaces – sometimes it is the unexpected that has meaning

Children's rights....

- Examining and recognising playful encounters with others and with the environment
- Experiences were not static, but changed over time by revisiting spaces and places
- 'accessible space and time for play, free from adult control and management' 'space and opportunities to play outdoors' (GC17, 2013)

References and further reading

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